



WEEKLY GOSPEL REFLECTION



Palm Sunday

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"I tell you, if these were silent, the stones would shout out." Luke 19:40

After a long journey, Jesus approaches Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives, the source of oil for anointing of the Anointed One, the Messiah. Jesus has a plan and he has arranged what is needed, the colt, to fulfill his plan. He engages his disciples by giving them instructions. They are to find a colt and tell the bystanders that the Lord needs to borrow it, but will return it. By borrowing the colt Jesus is demonstrating his gentleness and impoverished lowliness. Solidarity with his people down to the lowly ones is imperative for his followers to grasp. This instruction invites the disciples deeper into the mind of their master. Jesus has created the conditions necessary to personally experience his power of prophesy. He has prepared them not only for the upcoming events of the joy of his procession, but most especially for his passion and death. Even in their devastation they will have been prepared for what is about to occur. The disciples then as today are learning a lesson at the feet of the school of Jesus.

Riding this colt evoked a well-known prophecy from Zechariah: *"Rejoice heartily, O daughter Zion, shout for joy, O daughter Jerusalem! See, your king shall come to you; a just savior is he, meek, and riding on an ass, on a colt, the foal of an ass" (Is 9:9)*. Luke's account stresses the royal aspects of this event. But this servant king does not ride the steed of the conquering war hero but a colt, the symbol of the peaceful ruler of creation.

Luke conveys the meaning of the crowd's response by quoting the song of the angels at Jesus' birth. This subtly reminds us that the events of Bethlehem will reach their fulfillment in Jerusalem. The peace and glory promised at his birth will only be realized through his death and resurrection.

In reflecting on this passage, remember that Luke is stressing a story of royal triumph, a joyful entry of the king of Jerusalem. This is the climax of the long journey toward Jerusalem. Recounting the exchange with the Pharisees in the final verse, *"...the stones would shout out,"* heighten the point that even inanimate stones recognize the divine nature of Jesus as King of Creation.

Reflect on the reality that Jesus is not to be a victim of powerful people. He has predicted and is now in full control of his destiny. As you reflect, try to connect the suffering, passion and death of Jesus to an unfolding of this revelation of God's love. God the Son Incarnate (see the Second Mass Reading from Philippians 2) is revealed as a fellow sufferer, one who is present wherever and whenever his adopted children are in need of mercy. Reflect in a way that draws you through St Ignatius' principal of Holy Imagination, as your soul rises up in wonder and awe into joy and praise, then the passion which is to follow leading ultimately to the joy of resurrection. In our time of need, divine mercy will enfold us in the embrace of Jesus, where we gaze up into his compassionate eyes as he consoles our sorrow and suffering.

Palm Sunday Procession

A Reading from the Holy Gospel According to Luke

Jesus went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem.
When he had come near Bethphage and Bethany,
at the place called the Mount of Olives,
he sent two of the disciples, saying,

*"Go into the village ahead of you,
and as you enter it you will find tied there
a colt that has never been ridden.
Untie it and bring it here.
If anyone asks you, 'Why are you untying it?'
just say this, 'The Lord needs it.'"*

So those who were sent departed
and found it as Jesus had told them.
As they were untying the colt, its owners asked them,
"Why are you untying the colt?"
They said, *"The Lord needs it."*

Then they brought the colt to Jesus;
and after throwing their cloaks on the colt,
they set Jesus on it.

As he rode along,
people kept spreading their cloaks on the road.
As he was now approaching the path
down from the Mount of Olives,
the whole multitude of the disciples began to praise God joyfully, and with a loud voice,
for all the deeds of power that they had seen, saying,

*"Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!
Peace in heaven,
and glory in the highest heaven!"*

Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to him,
"Teacher, order your disciples to stop."

Jesus answered,
*"I tell you,
if these were silent, the stones would shout out."*

The Gospel of the Lord

