

Today, Palm Sunday (passion Sunday), marks the beginning of Holy week. On this day we commemorate Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem where he was acclaimed King. Is this a shift in focus on the life and work of Jesus?

So far Jesus was revealed as the Beloved Son of God. God declared it at his baptism and transfiguration. The people viewed Jesus as the great miracle worker, rabbi... you name it. On the first Palm Day, Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a young donkey. It is interesting that it was Jewish expectation that the Messiah would come riding on a horse, overthrow Roman rule and reestablish theocracy (rulership by God alone). The Messiah riding on a horse is supported by Zechariah 9:9, but Jesus was not revolutionary in the sense of physically overthrowing earthly governance. He knew that his kingdom was not man-made. However, as Jesus rode into Jerusalem, the people quickly executed an impromptu coronation, because now they accepted Jesus as KING.

People from all over had converged on Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover or feast of unleavened Bread. The crowd created a victory scene for the impromptu coronation. Notice the way in which their "order of service" unfolded: At first, they spread their cloaks on the road for the King to ride on. Then they spread branches in the way and waved some more in the air as a sign of victory. Sandwiched between the crowd Jesus rode triumphantly giving the crowd a glimpse of what it will be like when the saints go marching in.

We should not limit or ration the praise we give to God. The people shouted with all they were and all they had, "Hosanna to the son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!" We repeat this every Sunday during prayers at the Holy Eucharist. Do we really reflect on the meaning of this acclamation? The word 'hosanna' (same spelling in Greek) is spelt "hosiana" in Hebrew and "oshana" in Aramaic. The word (despite the different spelling), means "save, savior, rescue". Therefore, the people were desperately pleading before the king to save them.

In referring to Jesus as the Son of David, the crowd was acclaiming him as King, like his ancestor David. It was also Jewish expectation that the Messiah would come from the royal line of David or from the priestly line of Aaron. However, as our Creeds state, Jesus was begotten of the Father

and as scripture tells us, he was after the order of Melchizedek (an Old Testament king who had no known parents).

The crowd also echoed other sentiments which was in the form of adoration and an affirmation of their belief. They shouted, "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord." It was their belief that the Messiah would be authenticated by the Father, the Lord. Therefore, the Lord would send him to save them. Wasn't Jesus already saving them from sicknesses, diseases, death, evil spirits, ignorance and most of all, sins? What more did they need? It goes back to what I said at the beginning; they wanted to make Jesus an earthly King and create a theocracy for themselves alone. However, Jesus is inclusive, not exclusive. Jesus rode on into Jerusalem and symbolically cleansed the temple, saying, "My house shall be called a house of prayer; but you have made it a den of thieves" .

People all over the world are now crying out "hosanna!" in many ways. Some petitions are overt; some are private. People are petitioning for economic salvation, salvation from loneliness, salvation from many impactful contexts. Most of all, they are crying out even on this Palm Sunday for the ability to be well again, the ability to be delivered from the ravages of this pandemic that is endangering everybody's life.

As we transition into Holy Week let us all pray for an end to this pandemic. During the Triduum this week, reflect on God's deliverance from sin to life, from despondency to hope, from being lost to being saved through Jesus our Messiah, our Savior. With confidence we can sing, "All glory laud and honor to the redeemer king"!