

Palm Sunday 2018 Deacon Joe

This week we are called to hear.

And we start this week by holding in our hands palm branches, a symbol of victory. We declare and celebrate Christ's joyful entrance into Jerusalem. His coming through the gateway in the walls of Jerusalem. But this celebration is also a gateway to incredible events that will follow.

On the one hand, we are filled with joy. As Jesus enters Jerusalem, throngs of people rejoice. The promised Savior has finally come! The Messiah is here! Redemption is at hand!

And, on the other hand, we will soon turn towards the sorrowful narrative of our Lord's rejection, suffering, and death.

How can a day of triumph be filled with both joy and sorrow? Because what seems to be Christ's defeat is actually His victory, the victory of everlasting love. "A man can have no greater love than to lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13). That's what Jesus taught, and that's what he did in his passion, to prove beyond the shadow of a doubt that his love for us has no limits.

Thirty three years earlier, the angels sang "Glory to God in the Highest" when Jesus was born in Bethlehem; now the people, sing, "Hosanna in the Highest" as Jesus enters Jerusalem. Both events were a gift of God's love for us, the gift of His Son's life starting in Bethlehem and the gift of His Son's life on the cross – all because God loves us.

The source of our sorrow is sin, our sins, the cause of Christ's suffering. But the source of our joy is Christ's love for His Father and for us, the very reason Jesus was willing to suffer, and the very power that, [through his sacrifice on the cross], conquers our sins.

And so, we Catholics and Christians can always live inside the wonder of Palm Sunday, can always find joy, the joy of Christ's limitless love, even in the middle of the most profound sorrows.

During the first Holy Week, two thousand years ago, Jesus achieved victory over sin and evil. During this Holy Week, he wants to extend that victory into our lives, into the parts of our lives that still need it. He wants to come into our hearts this Holy Week in the same way he came into Jerusalem, humbly and peacefully, riding on a donkey colt. The donkey that brings Christ into our hearts is the Church.

We are entering into God's infinite love for us. This is God's triumphal love. His love has conquered all. His perfect and complete love that is awaiting something. What? Our acceptance.

We just have to open the gate in the walls around our hearts. And we can do that by making this week different: by turning off the radio and television more often than usual, by spending more time in prayer than online or on Facebook, and, most importantly, by making our own sacrifice, so precious in God's eyes: the sacrifice of our time. It takes time to join this family of believers for this week's liturgies, praying, worshipping, contemplating, receiving the sacraments, and discovering what God has to say to us this Holy Week.

Make yourself and your family fully available for all the Liturgies this week; Holy Thursday, Good Friday, Holy Saturday and culminating with our Lord's Resurrection.

Jesus knows what he wants to say to each one of us this week, this the holiest week of the year.

Let each of us give him the time and attention He deserves, because whatever it is He wants to tell us, will be exactly what we most need to hear.