**Palm Sunday C 10 April 2022**

**Hope brings Joy** As we began our Mass today, we began with a piece of bonus scripture; Luke’s account of Jesus’ triumphant procession into Jerusalem. As we recounted the events of that day, I want to call our attention to the enthusiasm of the people rushing to see and greet Jesus. People are abandoning their daily responsibilities and rushing for the opportunity of simply getting a glimpse of this man called Jesus. We are told that the people laid cut branches and their cloaks on the road before him; what we might equate to rolling out the red carpet for him. And they screamed, cried out “hosanna” and “blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.” This event might not seem that spectacular to our 21st century minds. Afterall, when we review the events of that first Palm Sunday, we do so with the certain knowledge that Jesus is the promised Messiah. However, the people paving the way for Jesus with their garments 2000 years ago simply could not have known for sure.

Those people assembled on the streets of Jerusalem were inspired, not with certainty that Jesus, the Nazorean, was the fulfillment of the Scriptures but with only the HOPE that he might be. Sure, Jesus had worked some terrific miracles and he spoke with authority as no prophet had ever spoken before him (or since for that matter). But Jesus’ station in society was in stark contrast to the great King that most believers expected. And yet, their hope led them to offer a joy-filled reception to a poor carpenter’s son riding on the back of a colt. In the face of Roman oppression and darkness, hope provided a source of light at the end of their tunnel. Hope in Jesus filled their hearts with joy and they acted on it.

The crowds that formed that procession believed that Jesus could be THE ONE but we know that he was the ONE; the one who would sacrifice his life for our eternal salvation. And yet, even with this knowledge, how many of us will let the challenges of our everyday lives beat us down physically and emotionally? How many of us will allow despair and disappointment to dominate our waking hours? How many of us will fixate on the dark aspects of the Lenten season. Traditionally, when we think of Lent, our thoughts gravitate to dark images of fasting, ashes, abstinence, penance, scourging and crucifixion. I believe that Palm Sunday is a reminder for us to approach Holy Week with hope and joy in our hearts.

So, as we begin Holy Week, let us remember that our attitudes and our active participation in the liturgies of the week can transform an Ordinary Week into a Holy week, a sometimes somber week into a hope filled week. Our Holy Week liturgies offer us an opportunity to get a unique glimpse of Jesus – a view of Jesus unlike the view that we experience during the rest of the year. Thursday’s Mass of the Lord’s Supper connects us in a special way with the institution of the Eucharist and the call to serve, exemplified by the foot washing. On Good Friday, we contemplate the love and mercy of our God through the Crucifixion. And Holy Saturday is highlighted by the Easter Vigil in which we celebrate the Resurrection and the new life that the Resurrection offers each of us. In short, our Holy Week liturgies are meant to offer us hope. To rouse our love and appreciation for our loving God and his Paschal Mystery.

Those people lining the streets on that first Palm Sunday had hope that Jesus was the Messiah, the fulfillment of the Scriptures and that their time under Roman oppression might be coming to an end. On this Palm Sunday, we draw hope from the certain knowledge that Jesus is our Savior, and through the sacrifice of his life, he ended the oppression of sin and made our eternal life possible. So like our ancestors before us, today let us praise God with joy and shout, “hosanna.” “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.”