

## **PALM SUNDAY**

Our Gospel reading today was about Jesus having a parade. I love a parade, don't you?

I remember when I was a kid we would go downtown for the Christmas parade, sit on the curb and wait.

In my hometown, we didn't have too many parades. We had Christmas, St. Patrick's Day, and our version of a Founder's Day parade.

But in some cities, like New York, you can find a parade almost every week if you tried. Good, cheap entertainment.

But who doesn't enjoy a good parade?

In my hometown, it didn't matter what the purpose of the parade was, my friends and I, well, we were always there for the candy.

See, as the people in the parade drove by us, they used to throw out handfuls of candy.

So like any other kid, we would run out in the middle of the street, and grab as much candy as we could then run back to the curb again.

We didn't get excited about the bands – they never threw out candy. We used to laugh though, because they always, without fail, put the bands behind the horses.

But as far as the candy goes, the politicians always had the best candy.

But there was always some purpose for those parades – and they were usually well planned.

But from today's Gospel reading, it makes you sit back and ask yourself, what was the purpose of this parade? How did it get started? I don't even think it was well planned, and I definitely don't think it had any floats.

I think it got started by Jesus telling his followers to go into town and get a donkey. He was going to make his entry into Jerusalem on a donkey.

Then he hops on his donkey, and proceeds towards town. Some people fall in behind him, other stand off to the side and before you knew it, they had a parade.

There weren't any high school bands to march behind him, but since it was a parade, you have to have noise so the crowd started chanting, "Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the Highest."

And then, they started waving palm leaves in the air, while others laid palm leaves and their coats on the ground in front of Jesus as he came up to the city.

Palm leaves have a special meaning of heartfelt love and joy. The word Hosanna means "Highest Praise" So saying Hosanna in the Highest is a way of giving high praise to God.

So, if you are familiar with the gospels, or if you have been coming the past few weeks, you may remember that the disciples really didn't understand who Jesus exactly was.

The ones that believed that he was the savior that the prophets spoke about, didn't quite understand what kind of savior he was.

But all of a sudden, here is Jesus on his donkey coming down the street in his little impromptu parade. And the light bulb came on for people.

Maybe some of them remembered what the prophet Zechariah said, "Your king comes to you, triumphant and victorious is he. Humble, and riding on a donkey."

Many of them were like, "Aha! I get it!" He is this king that is coming to save us, and they joined in the parade.

Of course they still didn't fully get it. They expected him to ride into town and rally the people together, to kick out the occupying army of the Romans.

That was one of the big fears of the religious authority back then. Yes they were worried about Jesus' teaching and how they wouldn't be so important if people focused on God more than them. But they were very worried about how the Roman armies would respond to anything that had the slightest smell of a rebellion.

So the crowd was celebrating and yelling and chanting – having a great time. But you know, I always wonder what Jesus' mood was like during that parade.

Think about it for a minute. For three years before this parade he pretty much stayed out of Jerusalem – concentrating mainly in the area North of the city.

He knew for a fact that going to Jerusalem would mean his death. He knew that the religious authority was scared of him, scared of this new message – scared of how the Romans would react to Him- and they wanted Jesus stopped – at all costs.

So Jesus was coming into Jerusalem in a parade of sorts, a great celebration, fulfilling prophecy, knowing he was going to die soon.

We like to look at the Godly examples Jesus has set for us, but he was also a man. He had fears, he had emotions.

So while others were celebrating, he knew his time was about over.

But he knew his mission. He knew that he would have to give up his life – for us – you and me. He knew that by his death, our sins would be forgiven.

So Jesus and his parade kept marching on.

But when you think about the people shouting Hosanna – or high praises to God – and waving palm leaves – it makes me wonder, where were those same people a few days later when Jesus was betrayed and arrested?

They scattered – they ran – because what was going to happen to Jesus - could have happened to them as well.

But we can't be too hard on them. How many of us would have done the same thing?

Today we join together singing praises, or Hosanna to God. What about the next time something bad happens in our lives?

When our choices are hard – and we are tempted to run away, maybe, just maybe, we can be like Jesus – and keep marching on.

To help us keep on the right path – and keep marching on, we need to take a tip from Jesus – and keep in a Christian community.

To strengthen ourselves as Disciples of Jesus, we need to keep His Word in front of us. Read the Bible and read devotions. We also need to keep strong in our Christian Community.

Come to church, but more than that – get to know other Christians that come here. We all have something in common. We need to get to know one another.

Easter season is a celebration of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. But it is also a time for us to come together as a community.

One way we can come together is through the sacrament of Holy Communion.

Through Holy Communion we come close to Christ in a Sacred Moment – Where we can reflect on the sacrifice he made for us.

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