



## GOSPEL GOSSIP

**'Blessed is the King who comes  
in the name of the Lord.'**

**Luke 19. 28-40**

**Sunday 13 April**

People will know this Sunday simply as 'Palm Sunday'. It is also 'Passion Sunday', the day that marks the start of Holy week, the final few days of Jesus' earthly life, continuing with the Last Supper, the betrayal and arrest of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane, his trial and condemnation, and finally, his crucifixion. The feel of worship on this Sunday is two-fold: joy and excitement as we join with the crowds and their cry cited above as the Church celebrates the 'liturgy of palms', then sorry and despair as in the liturgy of the passion, we here St Luke's account of what happened next.

The vents of Palm Sunday are ones with which we can empathise with. How often have we been caught up in an emotional crowd? This might just be watching a 'weepee' at the cinema, the attending of a funeral of someone other than family, the outpouring of grief at a natural disaster, or at a national event such as the death of someone much-loved but unknown personally; maybe at a football or sports stadium. When we stop to think about it, there are many occasions, when we are swept along with the crowd.

- As Jesus triumphally enters Jerusalem, are you merely caught up with the crowd?
- Do you understand the significance of the event?
- Are you, perhaps like the disciples, happy to bask in Jesus' reflected glory?
- How would you show your joy amidst all the others?
- What would you take home with you in your heart after the event?

It is easy to be carried along with others. That is not to say that God does not understand or dismisses praise because of suspect motive. But too often we can get too emotional. Yes, we must acknowledge and show our feelings before ourselves and others, but we cannot just respond to events with emotion. What needs to be present is compassion. 'Passio' is the Latin for 'suffering', which is why we talk about the Passion of Christ. 'Com-passion' means 'suffering with'.

Bluntly, the outpouring of grief by itself achieves nothing except for the individual showing it. That is emotion. Compassion allows us to show and feel grief, but also to go beyond and deeper. In showing compassion, we demonstrate – or attempt to – empathy. By entering into suffering and not merely reacting to it, means that our response can go beyond 'mere' emotion, and lead us into positive ways of coping with that suffering.

- How can you enter in the 'passion' of Christ'?
- Do you shy away from the prospect of 'suffering'?
- Can suffering ever produce positive results?
- If you are honest, what has emotion by itself ever achieved in you which is long-lasting?
- Are you ever changed by suffering, and if so is this positive or negative?

Palm Sunday is the beginning of the time when we are truly confronted with the reality of the passion, the suffering of Christ. Too many airbrush the suffering out the story of Christ's redeeming acts and move, either literally or metaphorically, straight from Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem, to the empty tomb. To do so is to miss much of the Christian message, that suffering, although real and painful, comes to be transformed and renewed by the message of next Sunday – Easter Day. Holy Week isn't optional for us any more than for Christ – it is an essential for salvation.