

Palm Sunday, Year A
Mt 21:1-11 (Procession)
Is 50:4-7
Ps 22 *passim*
Phil 2:6-11
Mt 26:14-27:66

Deacon Bob Cassey
St. Petronille Parish, Glen Ellyn
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Palm Sunday. Palm Sunday ushers in the holiest week of the year, so holy in fact that it's called Holy Week. Next Sunday we'll be gathering with a large number of our friends and neighbors to celebrate Easter. And in between time we will have this special week called Holy Week.

The Church celebrates a liturgy this week that extends over three days. We identify this 3-day liturgy with the Latin word that means "a period of 3 days": triduum. If you're playing Scrabble and you're stuck with 2 U's, then in addition to "ukulele" or "luau" or "usual" or "vacuum," you can use "triduum." The Triduum begins on Holy Thursday evening, with the Mass of the Lord's Supper. It continues on Good Friday when we re-convene to remember the Lord's Passion and Death. And it ends on Holy Saturday, after sundown, when we celebrate the Resurrection of the Lord at the Easter Vigil.

Please consider making all or any part of the Triduum a part of your own Holy Week observance. Various things happen on these three days that are unique in our worship. Come and see. Come and be part of it.

But for most of us, I know, this Palm Sunday Mass will be our only formal liturgical observance of Holy Week. And that's ok. As beautiful and meaningful as the Triduum liturgy is, this Palm Sunday can sustain you through the coming week right up to Easter Sunday. Haven't we gotten a giant helping of Holy Scripture today? Two big chunks of the Gospel according to St. Matthew. One of the Prophet Isaiah's Songs of the Suffering Servant. The dark brooding of Psalm 22: *Like wild dogs a pack of evildoers closes in upon me. They have pierced my hands and my feet. Pain shoots through my every nerve fiber; I can feel it in every single bone.* And in the midst of all that, we hear from St. Paul as he writes to the church he founded in the city of Philippi.

Here's the Palm Sunday message St. Paul gave to the Philippians, which they preserved so that he can give it to all of us too: The second Person of the Holy Trinity, having all power, all glory, all right and title to everything, he gave all that up to become a real, true, genuine human being. We look at the Gospel stories, and we're tempted to say, "That doesn't apply to me. After all, Jesus was God, and me, I'm just a plain old human being." In that way we excuse ourselves; we cop out. But, says St. Paul, in becoming a human being, God the Son emptied himself; he poured himself out. In a manner of

speaking, he put his divinity, his God-ness, into escrow. His power, his glory, his sovereignty, all of that he would pick up again later, but every moment of his life and every aspect of his death was totally and thoroughly human, unsupported by his divinity. He emptied himself, and he humbled himself. He was descended from King David, but he wasn't born into royal privilege; he didn't live in a royal palace. He didn't come as the Emperor of Rome. No, he led a simple life of relative obscurity. But he lived a human life of perfect integrity, and thereby showed that it's possible for us, for each one of us, to lead a life of integrity. And God rewarded Jesus for his self-emptying and his humility and his integrity: God exalted him. At the name of Jesus every knee should bend, and every tongue proclaim to the glory of God the Father, "Jesus Christ is Lord!"

Spend time in this Holy Week thinking about the love that pours itself out. Think about how you are called to self-pouring love. When you're tempted to say, "Hey, I've got my rights!" remember the God who poured himself out, and who calls us to pour ourselves out.

There is no Easter Sunday without Good Friday. Not for Jesus, not for us. The path from grace to glory leads through the Cross. For Jesus, and for us.