

**PALM SUNDAY - YEAR B**  
[Is 50:4-7; Phil 2:6-11; Mark 14:1–15:47]  
(Excerpts from Pope Benedict's Homily 2012)  
by Father Charles Fillion  
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Brothers and sisters,

Palm Sunday is the great doorway leading into Holy Week.  
We know from the Gospels that Jesus had set out towards Jerusalem  
in company with the Twelve,  
and that little by little  
a growing crowd of pilgrims had joined them.

Jesus arrives in Jerusalem from Bethphage and the Mount of Olives,  
that is, the route by which the Messiah was supposed to come.  
Jesus riding on the donkey,  
leafy branches and the festive acclamation,  
expresses the **unanimous** conviction that, in Jesus,  
God has visited his people,  
and the longed-for Messiah has finally come.

What is really happening in the hearts  
of those who acclaim Christ as King of Israel?  
Clearly, they had their own idea of the Messiah,  
an idea of how the long-awaited King promised by the prophets should act.

Not by chance, a few days later,  
instead of acclaiming Jesus,  
the Jerusalem crowd will cry out to Pilate: “Crucify him!”,  
while the disciples, together with others  
who had seen him and listened to him,  
will remain mute and will disperse.

The majority, in fact,  
was disappointed by the way Jesus chose to present himself  
as Messiah and King of Israel.  
Therefore, a crucial question must be asked.  
Who is Jesus of Nazareth for us?

What idea do we have of the Messiah,  
what idea do we have of God?  
It is a crucial question, one we cannot avoid,  
because during this very week  
we are called to follow our King  
who chooses the Cross as his throne.

We are called to follow a Messiah who promises us,  
not an easy earthly happiness,  
but the happiness of heaven, divine beatitude.  
Therefore, we must ask ourselves:  
what are our true expectations?

What are our deepest desires,  
with which we have come here today to celebrate Palm Sunday  
and to begin our celebration of Holy Week?

Palm Sunday can be a day of decision for you,  
the decision to say yes to the Lord  
and to follow him all the way,  
the decision to make his Passover, his death and resurrection,  
the very focus of your Christian lives.

It is the decision that leads to true joy.  
Brothers and sisters, may these days call forth  
two sentiments in particular:  
**praise**, after the example of those who welcomed Jesus into Jerusalem  
with their “Hosanna!”, and thanksgiving,  
because in this Holy Week the Lord Jesus will renew  
the greatest gift we could possibly imagine.

He will give us his life, his body and his blood, his love.  
But we must respond worthily to so great a gift,  
that is to say, with the gift of ourselves,  
our time, our prayer,  
our entering into a profound communion of love with Christ  
who suffered, died and rose for us.

The early Church Fathers saw a symbol of all this  
in the gesture of the people who followed Jesus on his entry into Jerusalem,  
the gesture of spreading out their coats before the Lord.

We must spread out our lives, ourselves,  
in an attitude of gratitude and adoration.  
We have clothed ourselves with Christ’s grace.  
Today let us too give voice to that sacred chant:  
“Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, the King of Israel”.