



A Reflection on Palm Sunday
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Jerusalem

Jerusalem.
Holy city, home of the Temple.
Jerusalem.
Place of wealth and of poverty;
place of wisdom and of foolishness.
Jerusalem.
Where everything important happens,
where the faithful go to celebrate the Passover,
the great freeing of the Israelites.

Jesus' journey leads him from desert, to village, to Jerusalem. It is in Jerusalem that the final moments take place. It is here that Jesus' journey ends—or so it seems. The final week of Lent begins in glory and ends in apparent disaster.

The week begins with Jesus' entry into Jerusalem. This is no ordinary entry into the city. It's a parade with people shouting, crying, "Hosanna," honoring Jesus as Messiah and Savior and praising God for all that they have seen in Jesus.

The week ends with Jesus stumbling out of Jerusalem, falling under the weight of a cross, on the way to his death. There may be crowds, but they aren't crying "Hosanna." His friends have fled. He is alone in his suffering. His mother and some women follow him, but they cannot take away his pain and his humiliation. They only share in it. This "Good Friday" scene is not like movies where the hero miraculously escapes death. This hero dies—alone and abandoned—even, it seems, by God. He does not lose his life, but instead gives his life for the sake of all—even those who crucify him. Jesus endures the worst the world has to offer, and he continues to love throughout the entire ordeal.

This week was the holiest of weeks in Jerusalem. It was the celebration of the Passover, the great event when God heard the cry of the Israelites and acted to free them. This is the event that began their 40-year journey in the desert. During the celebration of this feast Jesus reveals himself for who he truly is. He takes on the role of the servant and gets on his knees and washes the feet of his disciples.

This beautiful and poignant scene is one of love and of teaching. The Gospel of John describes it and says, "Jesus, having loved his own, loved them to the end."



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Jesus then teaches his disciples, “Do you know what I have done to you?” I, your leader, have become the lowest of servants, and this is what you must do for each other. You are not conquerors, you are not heroes, you are servants. For that is what I am.

Before the end, there are betrayal, humiliation, rejection, beatings, useless discussions, hatred. The journey now is “the way of the Cross”—the way of shame and defilement, the solitary walk toward death. The end. Or, so it seems.

This week, the final week of Lent, is a time to let the sorrow of this event rest on our hearts. It is also a time to let the deep love of Jesus mingle with our sorrow. It is a week to remember that we are never condemned. We are always forgiven. ... Someone has died to show us that.

“Jesus, when you rode into Jerusalem the people waved palms with shouts of acclamation. Grant that when the shouting dies we may still walk beside you even to a cross.” (A New Zealand Prayer Book)

The Catholic Health Association would like to thank Jon Sarta for allowing us to use his music from the albums “The Catholic Music Project Volume V: Lent,” and “The Catholic Music Project Volume VI: Easter” for the podcast version of this reflection. His music can be obtained from mljmusic.com.