

## Will you Walk with Him All the Way? Palm Sunday Year B

This Sunday called the Passion of Christ we enter into the liturgy completely by processing with palms, with the words of praise in singing “O glory, laud and honor,” and the shouts of Hosannas of those that are witnesses of the great things that Jesus has done in His ministry thus far. The palm branches make a gilded path for a different kind of king.

Beginning today and all week, we are invited to be participants of the divine drama and not just spectators. Today we do not come to sit in a pew and just hear words, but to walk in unison, as millions of pilgrims have done for centuries. Why do we process? It is the only way that we can get to the cross of our Savior.

And during this procession we walk with sadness at the cries that turn from Hosannas to crucify Him! Before we can get to the cross we must become the crowd where our history unites with their history. Their rejection of the Messiah becomes our rejection. If we are honest with ourselves we admit with the crowd, that Jesus’ blood will be upon us and our children. This week we must enter into the greatest sorrow a human being could possibly suffer. And we cannot experience that for ourselves by just sitting in a pew. We need to walk and process, physically and emotionally, with our Savior in the final leg of His journey.

As we process in the company of Christ we walk behind a donkey that bears Him to Jerusalem where He will be tried, scourged and cruelly nailed to timbers in the shape of a cross. There He will be left to hang until dead.

The donkey is a sign that as Jesus enters Jerusalem He also enters our own souls humbly, as the Prince of Peace and not as some war hero on a horse. Our souls are in need of this sign of peace and solace in hope that Christ will be able to complete His mission on earth for the sake of the world.

We may know how the divine drama comes out in history but as we walk with the crowd now, we are caught up in the knowledge of the brutal future that rides upon so gentle an animal.

As an animal that is a beast of burden, the donkey reminds us that Christ is carrying upon Himself the sins of the world. The donkey shares with Jesus this burden as well. The donkey will not fail to carry her burden into Jerusalem. Neither will the flesh of Jesus fail to bear the sins of the world when He arrives at His ultimate destination, the cross. We also must carry the burden of our flesh to the cross because it is at the cross that we can unload our burdens. The flesh is a burden to both Jesus and us because the flesh represents sin. What a wonderful example Jesus is to us who are laden with the cares of the world. We can also exclaim with the hymn, “What a wonderful Savior is Jesus my Lord!”

Walking with a common purpose today reminds us that we go to “Jerusalem” together as friends whether we like each other or not. We need to help each other

if we are to be able to complete the journey that will take us to Gethsemane, the cross and Good Friday. This vision of peace that Jesus brings is what we hope to find in Jerusalem. After all, the city's name means City of Peace.

Lastly, as we process with our Savior to Jerusalem, we hope to find a heavenly city whose streets will lead us to God. We left the Hall a short while ago to come into the church a symbol of the Holy City of Jerusalem. The city is where the Temple of God is found. The city is a mixture of people whose journeys all differ but where all seek to be at home with God. So it is with the church. In our walking into the church we entered a building made with human hands. But we enter seeking much more than that; a home not made with hands, but a heavenly place whose center is filled with the glory of God.

This is the glory of Jesus Christ that He will share with us during this week's journey. It is the promise of eternal life He gives when we come to the end of this life's journey and our work is done. It is the grain of wheat that will die and be buried to come forth again and feed many.

The road we take leads us on as we follow the crowd and this man on the donkey. Jesus invites us to join Him. It is a slow walk. He is in no hurry. Friday will get here soon enough. And then the crowds will disperse, the Hosannas will cease and a cruel fate will greet our Savior. Will we have the courage to follow Him up the hill all the way? Will we meet Him and celebrate one more time, the Last Supper before He gives Himself over to the burden of sin He carries for the world and for us?

"Let us go together and die with Him," said His closest friends. Surely we would not let Him go alone. His words are life. He gives us everything. Keep walking then, for the road to life has just begun. Let's keep walking, keep following, keep holding on to the palms. It's hard to realize that in just a few days hence all we will have left to hold are the palms. Let's go together with Him, to remember the Passover, to pray with Him. We can make it if we try. Just a little further – just a little longer – let's hold on to our Savior while we climb the hill. I invite you to pray:

Gracious God, on this first day of the Passion Week of our Savior, we have walked, we have sung, we have praised the deeds that Jesus has done. The road to Calvary leads us on; we look to you for strength and helping hands to go along. Keep us in prayer all week long. May our minds and our souls be filled with the love of you – in Spirit keep us strong. Amen.