

## **Palm Sunday of the Lord's Passion**

**Year A**

Is 50:4-7

Ps 22:8-9, 17-18, 19-20, 23-24

Phil 2:6-11

Mt 26:14 - 27:66

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A good question to ask ourselves this morning is, Where will these palms be in a month? Where will they be in two months?

Will we find them three months from now as we pack for vacation, stuffed under the car seat, dry and cracked? Will we find them four months from now, perhaps carefully folded into the shape of a cross, tucked into the junk drawer or fallen behind a bedroom bureau? Will we find them in six months, wedged between the cushions and the couch?

If we are honest, we will admit that if we arrived at church today and no palm was available, we would not be happy. It's Palm Sunday, and the church is supposed to give out palm. Very good - but where will this valuable palm be come

When I was a child, my mother used to place a piece of palm between the mattress and box spring on each of our beds. I don't know from where this custom came. I used to think she did this to keep the palm safe from our sacrilege. Beneath our mattresses, the palm wouldn't find itself wrapped like a noose around our throats, or cut into little pieces and slipped into a sandwich, or set on fire during one of our endless experiments. But as I grew older, I came to think that was only part of what she was doing. Probably she did it in part as a mother's prayer to God to keep her children safe. But I think one of her intentions was that months later, when we flipped our mattresses as part of spring cleaning, we would see the palm there, and in the midst of a hectic Saturday morning far removed from Palm Sunday, we would remember who we are, remember we are followers of Christ, not just at the happy times, not just when we are being handed something, but even during ordinary time, even during difficult times.

The crowds welcomed Christ into Jerusalem, shouted his name and sang his praises. Less than a week later, they were gone. Their excitement crumbled and blew away, like the palms they threw down to make a carpet for the Lord. On this day, they will not let his feet, or even the feet of his colt, touch the earth; but on Good Friday, when he is pinned to the earth, nailed to rough wood and thrust into the blood-stained dirt of Golgotha, none of the crowd is there to shield him, nor sing their songs to cheer him, nor worship and revere him. Today, they call him "king," but on Good Friday only Pilate does, as he orders a sign to be fixed at the top of the Cross: "Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews." Crowds of people admire him today, but on Good Friday they scoff and mock, and his only admirer is the centurion who watches him die, his only companions that day are two thieves.

Will we forget this day, and the Holy Week before us, as easily and quickly as they? Are as quick to praise Christ and as quick to abandon him as they? As the long days of Lent and winter grey draw to their close, and the joy of Easter and spring arise, and the hymns have a faster

tempo and a happier message, and school ends and vacations come and barbecues begin and pools open, will the message of this Lent - "Repent, and believe the Good News!" - fall to the back of our minds and drop to the bottom of our hearts, left to dry out and gather dust until the next Ash Wednesday? Will Christ, who took the form of a slave for our salvation, be tucked away till Advent?

It does not need to be so. This palm does not have to wind up in the junk drawer. We can resolve today to visit the sick next week, to come to confession in May, to read the Scriptures at home for ten minutes morning after morning in June, to make sure that before we start vacation we make a donation to the poor. We can resolve today to give this palm a place of honor in our homes, set over a doorway or laid on a mantle, or even slipped beneath a mattress. somewhere we will see it all the time or only on occasion. And whenever we see it next, let us remember, and give God thanks, and live a little differently on that day because of what we celebrate on this Palm Sunday.