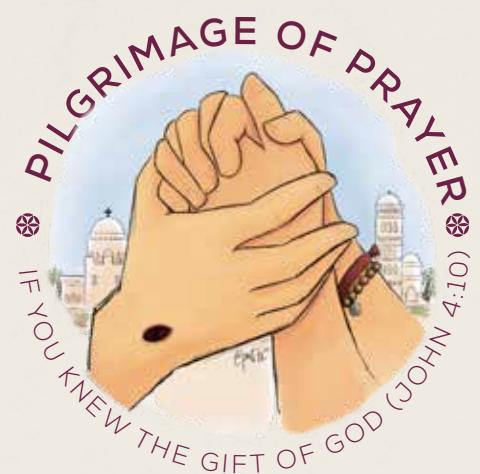


Day 40

Petitions of the Our Father



For Personal Reflection & Prayer

- Do I pray and really desire that everyone, all mankind, be saved and be brought to heaven, knowing this is what makes God's name hallowed?
- Hosanna is a Hebrew phrase that means "I pray, save us!" When was the last time and what were the circumstances that I found myself in, when I ardently prayed to be saved by God?

Take these considerations to the Lord in prayer, asking for light and strength.

Offer a prayer inspired by the words of Scripture:

He emptied himself, taking the form of a servant...

He became obedient unto death, even death on a cross.

Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him

The name which is above every name

That at the name of Jesus

Every knee should bend of those in heaven,

and on earth and under the earth,

And every tongue confess

That Jesus Christ is Lord,

To the Glory of God the Father

Philipians 2:7-11

Palm Sunday, Benedict XVI



Palm Sunday is the great doorway leading into Holy Week, the week when the Lord Jesus makes his way towards the culmination of his earthly existence. He goes up to Jerusalem in order to fulfil the Scriptures and to be nailed to the wood of the Cross, the throne from which he will reign for ever, drawing to himself humanity of every age and offering to all the gift of redemption. 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. Saint Mark tells us that as they were leaving Jericho, there was a “great multitude” following Jesus (cf. 10:46)...

The preparations made by Jesus, with the help of his disciples, serve to increase this hope. As we heard in today’s Gospel (cf. Mk 11:1-10), Jesus arrives in Jerusalem from Bethphage and the Mount of Olives, that is, the route by which the Messiah was supposed to come. From there, he sent two disciples ahead of him, telling them to bring him a young donkey that they would find along the way. They did indeed find the donkey, they untied it and brought it to Jesus. At this point, the spirits of the disciples and of the other pilgrims were swept up with excitement: they took their coats and placed them on the colt; others spread them out on the street in Jesus’ path as he approached, riding on the donkey. Then they cut branches from the trees and began to shout phrases from Psalm 118, ancient pilgrim blessings, which in that setting took on the character of messianic proclamation: “Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the kingdom of our father David that is coming! Hosanna in the highest!” (v. 9-10). This festive acclamation, reported by all four evangelists, is a cry of blessing, a hymn of exultation: it expresses the unanimous conviction that, in Jesus, God has visited his people and the longed-for Messiah has finally come. And everyone is there, growing in expectation of the work that Christ will accomplish once he has entered the city.

But what is the content, the inner resonance of this cry of jubilation? The answer is found throughout the Scripture, which reminds us that the Messiah fulfils the promise of God’s blessing, God’s original promise to Abraham, father of all believers: “I will make of you a great nation and I will bless you ... and by you all the families of the earth shall bless themselves” (Gen 12:2-3). It is the promise that Israel had always kept alive in prayer, especially the prayer of the Psalms. Hence he whom the crowd acclaims as the blessed one is also he in whom the whole of humanity will be blessed. Thus, in the light of Christ, humanity sees itself profoundly united and, as it were, enfolded within the cloak of divine blessing, a blessing that permeates, sustains, redeems and sanctifies all things.

Here we find the first great message that today’s feast brings us: the invitation to adopt a proper outlook upon all humanity, on the peoples who make up the world, on its different



cultures and civilizations. The look that the believer receives from Christ is a look of blessing: a wise and loving look, capable of grasping the world's beauty and having compassion on its fragility. Shining through this look is God's own look upon those he loves and upon Creation, the work of his hands. We read in the Book of Wisdom: "But thou art merciful to all, for thou canst do all things, and thou dost overlook men's sins, that they may repent. For thou lovest all things that exist and hast loathing for none of the things which thou hast made ... thou sparest all things, for they are thine, O Lord who lovest the living" (11:23-24, 26).

Let us return to today's Gospel passage and ask ourselves: 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 be struck dumb and will disperse. The majority, in fact, was disappointed by the way Jesus chose to present himself as Messiah and King of Israel. This is the heart of today's feast, for us too. 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, not least 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 a facile earthly happiness, but the happiness of heaven, divine beatitude. So 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?

https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/homilies/2012/documents/hf_ben-xvi_hom_20120401_palm-sunday.html

