

Homily: Palm Sunday 2013, St. Cecilia Parish, Ames, Iowa

Everybody loves a parade.

Today, we came into church carrying palms----much like the people who welcomed Jesus into Jerusalem nearly 2000 years ago.

The crowds in Jerusalem welcomed him just like we might welcome a rock star today.

They spread their cloaks on the ground---like a red carpet leading to a celebration, fit for royalty.

They shouted "Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord!" AND then--in just a few short days ... they crucified him!

What went wrong?

- The same crowd that cheered Jesus also condemned him.
- The voices that praised him also called for his death.
- Those who loved him and promised loyalty, also, abandoned him, denied him and betrayed him.
- And if you want to know who did that, just look at the hands that carried those palm branches into church today.
- **We are all guilty.**

While we may not want to admit it, Christ's passion goes on today. We continue to betray him in so many ways-- both big and small.

- How often do we praise God on Sunday, and then ignore him for the rest of the week?
- How often do we reject him in our everyday busyness?
- How often do we turn away when the demands of our faith become too difficult or the rules too hard or the challenges of Christian life too taxing?
- How often do we reject those who are a little different from us--those who don't quite measure up to our standards - socially or economically or by any other criteria that we choose?

- How often do we see suffering in the faces of those in need, and then look the other way?

Christ continues to bleed and weep and cry out, "Why have you abandoned me?"

We encounter him at work, at home, in our community.

We may not realize it but we see Jesus every day, read about him in the newspapers, hear about him in the news. He is everywhere that there is someone who is suffering, in need, neglected or discarded.

Palm Sunday is not just about the triumphant entry of Jesus into Jerusalem---it is also about his exit-- carrying a cross.

The crowd that acclaimed him was the same crowd that shouted "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!"

As we leave this church today --with these blest palms in our hands, may they be a reminder and a challenge.

We cannot just wave our palms and march blissfully into Easter.

We must remember that "these palms" take us **to the passion and crucifixion** that lead **to Easter**.

We experience the triumph of following Jesus not just in the triumph of the palms, but also in the triumph of the cross.

Our liturgy today may look like it is about two events, the entrance with palms into Jerusalem and the exit with a cross to Calvary.

But it is really about one event: the call to follow the Lord wherever He leads us - in joy and in sorrow.

Deacon Gary L. Aitchison 3-23/24-2013