

The Reflection from Pastor Fr. John Carlos, Holy Cross Church, Harrison, NJ, April 5, 2020

EXALTATION TO HUMILIATION

Today we commemorate, the triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem to celebrate His Paschal Mystery. However, the evocation of this event takes place only at the liturgical entrance; then, in the Liturgy of the Mass, the texts do not speak of this triumph. The three readings of the Mass refer to Christ Sufferer.

The liturgy of Palm Sunday of the Lord's Passion teaches us that the Lord has not saved us by his triumphal entry or by means of powerful miracles. The Apostle Paul, in the second reading, epitomizes in two verbs the path of redemption: Jesus "emptied" and "humbled" himself. These two verbs show the boundlessness of God's love for us. Jesus *emptied himself*, he did not cling to the glory that was his as the Son of God, but became the Son of man in order to be in solidarity with us sinners in all things; yet he was without sin. Even more, he lived among us in "the condition of a servant" ; not of a king or a prince, but of a servant. Therefore, he humbled himself, and the abyss

of his humiliation, as Holy Week shows us, seems to be bottomless.

Symbolically, Palm Sunday contrasts two popular attitudes: the people, who acclaim, and the people who insult and ask for the death of the one who they acclaimed. Christ, too, first organizes His entrance into the holy city, knowing that they would acclaim Him, but then he cries and ends up assuming that he is a man of sorrows, who humbles himself to death on the cross. This dichotomy, humiliation - exaltation, is the tonic of hope for those who take up the cross with Christ: "If we die with Christ, we are risen with him." But the cross and the suffering must be assumed, not simply accepted with resignation. The active attitude towards the cross is a value that is being rediscovered.

Christ took up His cross, though feeling the natural, instinctive reaction of fear and anguish. He prayed for strength. Prayer should be a tonic in the life of the Christian, and particularly of the one who has to go through difficult situations.

With affectionate prayers,

Father John Carlos

