

# The Catholic Parish of Petworth & Midhurst

## West Sussex

Fr Peter's Homily for Palm Sunday (Year B)  
Sunday March 28th 2021

As we visualise the crowd lining the streets, the shouting and the cheering, the branches waving, the clothes scattered across the road, there can be no doubt that Jesus' entry into Jerusalem is more than just the practical business of getting from A to B. He is staying just outside Jerusalem and he could easily have walked: he doesn't need a donkey to travel the distance. This entry into Jerusalem is clearly something deeply symbolic. This is made even more clear by asking what happens when he has entered the city. There is a bit of a discrepancy among the Gospel writers, some say he went to The Temple and threw out the moneychangers that day before leaving for home; but according to St Matthew, having entered on a donkey he turns around and goes straight out again to spend the night in Bethany. Either way, they all agree that he doesn't spend the night in the city. This entrance is deeply symbolic, it is telling us something about who he is.

We could also ask the question 'What happens next' with regard to the quotation from Zechariah that St Matthew uses:

*'Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion!  
Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem!  
Lo, your king comes to you;  
triumphant and victorious is he,  
humble and riding on an ass,  
on a colt the foal of an ass.'*

What does Zechariah say next? He goes on:

*'I will cut off the chariot from E'phraim  
and the war horse from Jerusalem;  
and the battle bow shall be cut off,  
and he shall command peace to the nations;  
his dominion shall be from sea to sea,  
and from the River to the ends of the earth.'*

This is very clear: Jesus enters Jerusalem in humility, to usher in a rule of peace, not just for the city but for all people. The will of God is that the Kingdom of God is a kingdom of the poor, a kingdom of the humble (who ride donkeys, not horses), a kingdom of simplicity. Stop for a moment and look at some of the details of this story. Jesus is riding a borrowed donkey, which has been covered with borrowed clothes, while people wave borrowed branches; he and his friends will celebrate the Passover in a borrowed room, and in a few days time he will be buried in a borrowed tomb. This is not like any king that we have ever known before.

On Palm Sunday Jesus invites all of us, every one, to walk with him. It is a simple procession for simple folk; ordinary people will feel at home here more than the rich and famous, really. It is a model of his kingdom where no-one is excluded, no-one is left out, no-one looks sadly in because they don't have the knowledge, or the clothes, or the finances, or the social status to get in. It is, frankly, a motley bunch of people, who would probably not have chosen each other as friends, but have become so because each of them is friends with the Lord. So let's not hang about, let's each of us throw in our lot with him and join him in this procession that leads us to the strangely beguiling and exciting kingdom of God