

Pastor's Column

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What Manner of King Is This?

In this celebration of Jesus' entry into Jerusalem, we hear words like "triumphant," "King," and "Blessed is the King Who Comes in the Name of the Lord."

Does this celebration of Palm Sunday have a triumphal edge to it? Are we honoring a king, as the world understands a king with all the trappings of privilege, comfort, and luxury?

What and who do we celebrate on this Palm Sunday of the Lord's Passion?

The words of Philip Yancey, from his book, *The Jesus I Never Knew*, may help us in better understanding what and who we celebrate this day:

"The triumphal entry has about it an aura of ambivalence and as I read all the accounts together, what stands out to me now is the slapstick nature of the affair. I imagine a Roman officer galloping up to check on the disturbance. He has attended processions in Rome, where they do it right. The conquering general sits in a chariot of gold, with stallions straining at the reins and wheel spikes flashing in the sunlight. Behind him, officers in polished armor display the banners captured from vanquished armies. At the rear comes a ragtag procession of slaves and prisoners in chains, living proof of what happens to those who defy Rome.

In Jesus' triumphal entry, the adoring crowd makes up the ragtag procession: the lame, the blind, the children, the peasants from Galilee and Bethany. When the officer looks for the object of their attention he spies a forlorn figure, weeping, riding on no stallion or chariot but on the back of a baby donkey, a borrowed coat draped across its backbone serving as his saddle.

Yes, there was a whiff of triumph on Palm Sunday, but not the kind of triumph that might impress Rome and not the kind that impressed crowds in Jerusalem for long either. What manner of king was this?"

As we begin this Holy Week, as we walk with Jesus and unite His Paschal Mystery to ours, let us reflect upon what kind of king we honor and for whom we give our lives.

F. Mike