

Palm Sunday 2020-03-29 Matthew 21. 1-11 EXTRACT – Canon Anne

Normally we begin our Passion/Palm Sunday outside on the Common and walk in long procession into the cathedral. Today we cannot meet on the Common, or in a park, or walking the streets of Goulburn with our palms and crosses and then concluding the gathering with the short reading from Matthew that sets the stage for our celebration. - this is the beginning of the rites of Holy Week. Celebrate you say? Well yes, because the word in former times meant “to hold in regard” and that is what we do. We are to frequent the company of and honour the Suffering Servant, the crucified One and all those who today wear the mantle of pain laid on them by a world that still experiences violence, despair, hatred and sickness as a normal way of living.

The crowd draws near to Jerusalem, entering Bethphage on the Mount of Olives. They have come to celebrate the feast of freedom, the feast of Passover, the memorial of God drawing the people out of slavery and oppression into hope and an embrace of belonging as God’s people. Jesus has come to celebrate with his disciples and friends a last time, and he sends two of the disciples off with instructions to prepare for his arrival and entrance into the city. They are to take an ass that they find tethered and her colt, and if anyone tries to stop them, they are to reply: “The Master needs them.” That is how Jesus will come into the city. The prophets will be remembered and their words repeated: *“Tell the daughter of Zion. Your king comes to you without display astride an ass, astride a colt, the foal of a beast of burden.”* Jesus stays close to the earth, close to the poor and the labourer and the slave, those people made beasts of burden by the mighty and haughty

So the disciples lay their cloaks on the animal, the people lining the streets spread their cloaks on the road and others cut branches laying them in his path. These are honours and signs that their hope and their lives have been offered to him. They cry out: “Blessed is he comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.” This is a portion of the Sanctus which we cry out and sing with the angels and all of creation acknowledging God. We serve only God, no other power on earth. For the people of Jesus’ time, the words expressed a religious and heartfelt hope laced with nationalism born of long persecution, loss of sovereignty and dignity, heavy taxation and grinding poverty. The prophet Jesus is the Saviour from the north, from the place where revolution is fomented and rebels abound, a place of struggle on the boundaries of Israel. There is excitement, expectation, fear. Plots are already afoot. Jesus knows what he is walking into. He has come to confront Jerusalem – and to stand before each of us and invite us to choose. We remember that beginning of the week called holy, called passion, by carrying our own small palm crosses.