

Fr. Rudy's Reflections  
Palm Sunday of the Lord's Passion  
March 24, 2024

## The Cross of Wood

My Brothers and Sisters in the Risen Lord,

Today we celebrate Palm Sunday, as we journey alongside Jesus as he enters Jerusalem amid cheers and adoration. This pivotal moment, captured in our processional reading, is the essence of Christ's ministry as well as the paradox of his kingship for his followers here on earth. Jesus is greeted by crowds waving palm branches and shouting "Hosanna!" Yet, woven into this scene of jubilation is the foreshadowing of Jesus's impending passion and crucifixion. It serves as a poignant reminder of the transient nature of human acclaim and the depth of Christ's sacrificial love. Palm Sunday asks us to reflect on the humility of our Savior, who willingly embraced suffering for the salvation of humanity. He chose not a throne of gold, but a cross of wood. And his journey from his triumphal entry to crucifixion demonstrates the self-emptying love that we must try to emulate as his disciples.

Today, in Mark's Gospel, we encounter Judas's betrayal, the agony of Gethsemane, and the trial before Pilate. Each of these scenes unveils the depth of Jesus's obedience to his Father's will and his unwavering commitment to the salvation of mankind. In the face of these horrific moments, Jesus remained steadfast in his courage and willingly accepted his fate. The arrest in the Garden of Gethsemane captures Jesus's human vulnerability; in his anguished prayer, "Abba, Father, all things are possible to you. Take this cup away from me, but not what I will but what you will. . .," Judas's betrayal is a stinging reminder of greed and ambition, yet Jesus responds with compassion and forgiveness. The trial before Pilate unfolds with stark irony as this innocent stands before earthly authority, accused of blasphemy and sedition. Pilate, ultimately succumbs to the demands of the crowd, condemning Jesus to death. In this moment, we confront the harsh realities of injustice and the cost of discipleship.

The climax of Mark's narrative is Jesus's crucifixion, a scene of profound suffering and redemption. As Jesus hangs upon the cross, abandoned by his disciples and scorned by onlookers, his abuse reaches its climax in his humiliation and suffering, from passersby, priests, and scribes, and even from the corrupt men crucified with him. Yet in this shocking ordeal, Jesus conquers sin and death, offering salvation to all who believe in him.

As we commemorate Palm Sunday, let us embrace the humility and strength of purpose of Jesus Christ, who endured suffering and death for our sake. May we follow in his footsteps, bearing our own crosses with courage and faith. And may the palms we wave serve as symbols of our commitment to walk the path of discipleship, trusting in the promise of resurrection and eternal life.

*"He had not come to our earth to share his crowns with us, but to shoulder his Cross for us. And now, once again, in his Mystical Body, the Church, he lays his beautiful hands—the strong hands of the carpenter, hands familiar with the feel of wood—upon the precious wood of the Cross of Calvary."—Rev. George Berwanger, Hear His Voice*

Yours in Christ,  
Fr. Rudy