

HOSANNA IN THE HIGHEST

Jesus enters Jerusalem this day riding on a donkey. The crowds of Passover pilgrims recognize him. They understand that by entering Jerusalem riding on this beast of burden Jesus is fulfilling the prophet Zechariah. “Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout in triumph, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; He is just and endowed with salvation, humble, and mounted on a donkey, Even on a colt, the foal of a donkey. (Zechariah 9:9). Many believe Jesus is the long awaited Messiah. A reminder: God’s ways are not our ways.

In Saint Paul’s letter to the Philippians, he writes that “Christ Jesus, although he was in the form of God, did not deem equality with God something to be grasped at. Rather, he emptied himself...” Yes. We believe that Jesus emptied himself out. For us. For each of You. For me. Why? God does that. All of creation is God the Father emptying himself out. The Incarnation is God the Son emptying himself out. Pentecost is the Holy Spirit being emptied out and sent into each of us.

This emptying is a dying, of sorts. It is familiar to us as human beings. Parents empty themselves out for their children. Children empty themselves out for their siblings or their parents. Women and men empty themselves out for those they assist or serve. But in each case it is not so much that we offer something up for another. In each case, we offer ourselves up for another. That is what Jesus did. Jesus shows us the way. Jesus shows us how to live our lives as human beings. Jesus chooses to live—not for himself—but for others. For you. And me. Not only to live for us. Jesus chooses to die for us.

Why? Because we are all sentenced to death ever since sin entered the world, by the envy of the devil. And with sin, came death. We who are under the death sentence cannot save ourselves from this judgment. We need another. We need someone who is stronger than death—and full of life. That person, we believe, is Jesus of Nazareth.

Jesus chooses to offer himself on Calvary—in a horrific death—for our redemption, for our salvation, for our being freed from the terrible punishment of death, to set us free from the powerful impact of sin upon us. In the disfigured person hanging on the cross we slowly start to realize that only for love would anyone do this. We start to realize that only love is capable of setting us free from death and the impact of sin. We start to grasp that Jesus is love. Jesus is love incarnate.

We start to realize that despite our condition, despite our own sins and despite the sins of others against us, we are forgiven. We are rescued. We are loved by a God who chooses to banish our sins and restore us to life. So that we may spend eternity in the Divine Kingdom.

We begin today joining our voices as we sing “Hosanna in the highest.” We will finish contemplating Jesus’s tragic death on the cross. In between we will begin to see what our God has done for us. And what our God is asking of us. And so we give thanks. We enter into Eucharist, in a spirit of deep gratitude. Jesus lives. He has left himself to us as bread for our journey.