

Homily Palm Sunday 2026

'Jesus Christ Superstar' portrays Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem in the most exuberant of cinematic scenes. "Hosanna, hosanna, 'sanna, 'sanna, ho.." ...Jesus is so joyful riding into Jerusalem on a donkey, a symbol of humility and a sign of his 'servant kingship'. The apostles are ecstatic as they expect Jesus to take the city by force. The crowds happily wave palms and throw branches before their King. The Passion of The Christ, Mel Gibson's masterpiece in stark contrast, portrays the raw pain and suffering endured by that same Jesus, just a few days later, as he is arrested, scourged, crowned with thorns, humiliated spat upon and nailed to the cross. The joy is turned to pain. ecstasy to despair and happiness to desolation as Jesus endures his Passion and Death to atone for our sins. How fickle people can be sometimes!

Today, in our church porches, narthexes and annexes, we relive the joy, ecstasy and happiness of Palm Sunday as we listen to the priest or deacon proclaim The Gospel. However, the mood changes very quickly as we enter church and begin The Mass. We then relive, through The Sacred Liturgy of The Word and The Liturgy of The Eucharist, those horrible events of Jesus' suffering foretold by Isaiah, recounted by St Matthew in his Passion Narrative and reflected on by St Paul in his Letter to The Philippians.

The Liturgy today relives not only the fickleness of the crowd who turn on Jesus, nor that of the apostles who scatter but also our own fickleness as we too, so often, turn our back on Christ. How frequently do I too betray him, disown him, deny him and doubt him? It is so easy to piously absolve ourselves of any responsibility for Jesus' pain and suffering, but haven't I been just as culpable as the crowd and his closest allies? I too should weep like Peter, feel ashamed like the disciples and, like Thomas, fall on my knees in shame and exclaim, 'My Lord and My God!'

Today, we are all given the opportunity to humbly acknowledge our pride and sinfulness as well as the pain we have inflicted and the suffering we have caused Jesus. Yet, despite our iniquities, all our sins have been paid for. As St Paul so eloquently states in Philippians 2:6-11, 'Christ Jesus, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore, God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

If you get a chance, and indeed if you can stomach it, watch Gibson's The Passion of The Christ **but only if you need further proof of just how much God in Christ loves you.** How stunningly beautiful is 'God's Letter of Love'?