



SUNDAY GOSPEL

A Humble King

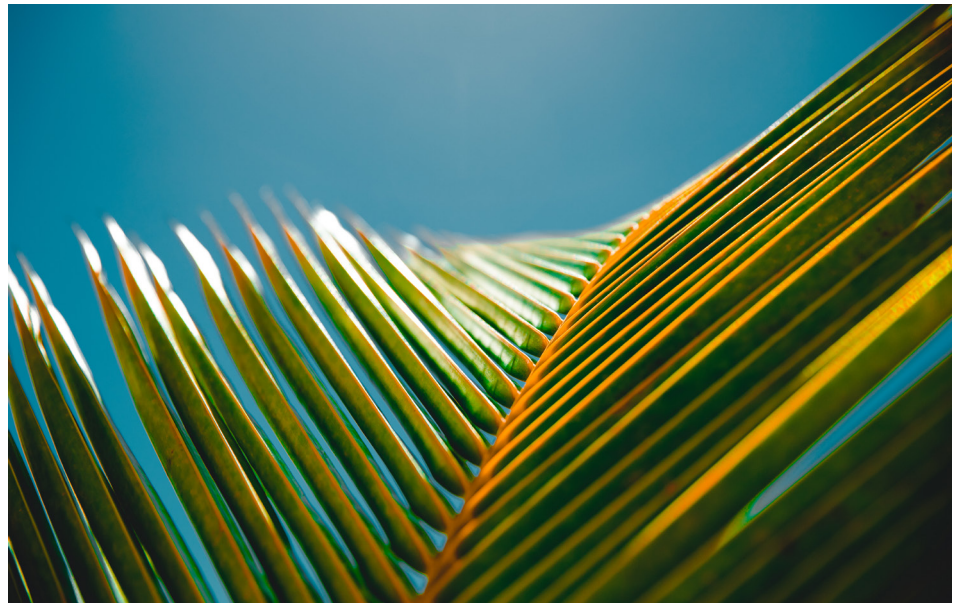
Matthew 21:1-11

When they had come near Jerusalem and had reached Bethphage, at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, saying to them, 'Go into the village ahead of you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her; untie them and bring them to me.

If anyone says anything to you, just say this, "The Lord needs them." And he will send them immediately.' This took place to fulfil what had been spoken through the prophet, saying, "Tell the daughter of Zion, Look, your king is coming to you, humble, and mounted on a donkey, and on a colt, the foal of a donkey."

The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them; they brought the donkey and the colt, and put their cloaks on them, and he sat on them. A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road.

The crowds that went ahead of him and that followed were shouting, 'Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest heaven!' When he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was in turmoil, asking, 'Who is this?' The crowds were saying, 'This is the prophet Jesus from Nazareth in Galilee.' ■



GOSPEL REFLECTION

Fr Mark De Battista

On Passion/Palm Sunday the Church gives us the entire passion of St Matthew to meditate upon as our entry into the holiest week of the year. Although the reading of the passion and death forms the basis of the liturgy of the word, nevertheless, it is the triumphal entry into Jerusalem beforehand which provides the context of what follows in the narration of the passion and death of Jesus during the mass.

At first glance the entry of Our Lord into Jerusalem (the 'city of peace' where Christ finds anything but peace) on a colt, the foal of a donkey, seems nothing more than a gesture of

humility while indicating his identity as messiah and Son of David. The custom for a king or general returning from war with the spoils would have been on horseback. But here the triumphalism would be tinged with worldly outlook. The gesture of Our Lord is not so superficial. On the contrary, it is a direct parallel of what David did with his son Solomon when he made him ride on his own mule as a sign that he will be the future king at a time precisely when the kingship of Solomon was in dispute in Israel (1 Kg 1,33). God too is upholding the kingship of his son, when it is being disputed. Yet it is not a kingship of this world, hence, the mood changes rapidly and within a few days he is put to death. ■

A WORD FROM POPE FRANCIS

Jesus' revelation of himself as king is most clearly seen in the event of the Cross! Those who look at the Cross cannot but see the astonishing gratuitousness of love. One of you could say, "Father, that was a failure!". In the failure of the Cross, love is seen, a love that is gratuitous, which Jesus gives us. For a Christian, speaking of power and strength means referring to the power of the Cross, and the strength of Jesus' love: a love which remains steadfast and complete, even when faced with rejection, and it is shown as the fulfillment of a life expended in the total surrender of oneself for the benefit of humanity. On Calvary, the passers-by and the leaders derided Jesus, nailed to the Cross, and they

challenged him: "Save yourself, and come down from the cross!" (Mk 15:30). "Save yourself!". But paradoxically the truth of Jesus is precisely what is hurled at him in a mocking tone by his adversaries: "he cannot save himself!". Had Jesus come down from the Cross, he would have given in to the temptations of the prince of this world. Instead, he cannot save himself precisely so as to be able to save others, precisely because he has given his life for us, for each one of us. To say: "Jesus gave his life for the world" is true. But it is more beautiful to say: "Jesus gave his life for me". And today, in this place, let each one of us say in his or her heart: "He gave his life for me, in order to save each one of us from our sins".

The kingship of Jesus doesn't oppress us, but rather frees us from

our weaknesses and miseries, encouraging us to walk the path of the good, of reconciliation and of forgiveness. Let us look at the Cross of Jesus, let us look at the "good thief", and let us all say together what the good thief said: Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom". All together: "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom". Ask Jesus, when we feel that we are weak, that we are sinners, defeated, to look at us, and say to him: "You are there. Don't forget me".

Faced with so many lacerations in the world and too many wounds in the flesh of mankind, let us ask the Virgin Mary to sustain us in our commitment to emulate Jesus, our king, by making his kingdom present with gestures of tenderness, understanding and mercy. ■

TALKING POINTS

1. What often seems mundane or 'average' by onlookers, like Jesus riding a donkey in Jerusalem, can often be the exact thing that God is using to show that we are sons and daughters of God. Have you discovered this in your own life? What are some examples of this?
2. Pope Francis highlights that in refusing to save himself, Jesus was indeed saving us. Making it even more personal, he goes as far to say, 'Jesus gave his life for me'. What does this mean to you? Do you find it difficult to think of salvation in personal terms and, if so, why?

PRAYER POINTS

Pray for each other: Ask about and pray for the needs of the group members. Individuals might pray for themselves or ask someone else to pray for them

Reflect: The thought of Jesus "remembering us" can be confronting. In our weakness and defeat, strong feelings of shame and accusation are often felt but Jesus always looks upon us with mercy and love. Spend a few moments in prayer and ask God to reveal His love for you.

Response: *Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.*

Closing Prayer: Pope Francis' prayer: (Pray together) "Lord, you are here among us. Fix your gaze on me and tell me what I must do, how I must weep for my mistakes, my sins, and with what courage I must continue on the path you have travelled before me. Amen"

