

Lent V ~ Year C
April 1, 2007 ~ Palm Sunday
The Reverend Dr. Howard J. Hess

“Reflection on Palm Sunday Liturgy”

The Gospel of Luke was written to emphasize the theme of taking a journey. Jesus was steadily moving toward Jerusalem in this gospel just as Paul as moving toward Rome, in the Book of Acts, also written by Luke. This morning we have re-enacted in our liturgy the enthusiastic greeting Jesus received as he entered triumphantly through the city gates. Jesus rode on a donkey while on-lookers shouted *‘Hosanna’* and waved palm branches. Both the donkey and the palms were signs of royalty in the ancient world. The fact that Jesus chose a donkey over a horse to ride was also significant. Kings at war rode horses; kings entering in peace rode donkeys. Jesus came on the first Palm Sunday very intentionally as a loving king. He also entered Jerusalem as a courageous king. Jesus rode into the city knowing that he was attracting the attention of the Romans and the wrath of the Jewish leaders. Jesus knew what awaited him. He was a loving king riding into the city where he would be killed. This Jesus of ours is remarkable.

We have come to meet him today, you and I. We have waved our palm branches and we have sung *‘All glory, laud and honor to Jesus Christ our King.’* We have gone out of way to welcome Jesus, and then, just moments later, we have shouted, *‘Crucify him. Crucify him.’* How changeable we can be. How easy it is for us to get caught up in the moment. How easy it is for us to worship Christ together and then turn right around and push him away. We love him, we really do, but we’re tempted to run off and leave him, especially when the crowd gets rough.

It’s startling that Jesus is so constant even though we vacillate; that his love is so unconditional though we can be so ambivalent; and that his commitment to us is lived out in action even when we don’t comprehend what he is doing. We are love; we are blessed; we are marked as Christ’s own forever.