

Friends, Palm Sunday is a day of striking contrasts. We begin with triumph—Jesus entering Jerusalem as the long-awaited King, riding not on a war horse but on a humble donkey. The crowds shout “Hosanna!” They wave palms, lay down cloaks, and proclaim Him as the Son of David. For a moment, everything looks right. Israel is recognizing her Messiah. The world seems ready to receive its Savior.

But the Gospel does not let us stay in that moment for long. The same city that cries “Hosanna” on Sunday will cry “Crucify Him” on Friday. The same people who welcome Him with palms will abandon Him in the garden. And the Apostles—those closest to Him, who had witnessed His ministry and had every reason to have the strongest faith in Him—will fall asleep, run away, deny Him, and betray Him. Palm Sunday forces us to confront a painful truth: the human heart can shift quickly, and even the most devoted can move from belief to denial in a matter of days.

This is not just their story. It is ours.

Last weekend, I was on retreat with the Discalced Carmelites at Mepkin Abbey. It was a beautiful, quiet time with the LORD—one of those rare moments when the noise of the world fades and the voice of God is allowed to become unmistakably clear. But on Sunday afternoon, as I drove home along those winding back-country roads of South Carolina, something unexpected happened. I must have passed a three or four dozen churches—maybe more. And if there really are forty thousand non-Catholic Christian denominations, I felt like I passed thirty thousand of them that afternoon, with all kinds of names. I’m still trying to figure out who Saint John 4B is that one church was named after in Greeleyville.

But as I drove, I noticed something else. Outside many of those churches were groups of people standing around after services, talking, laughing, socializing. And a question rose up in my heart: If there are so many Christians—so many churches, so many believers—why is the world still so broken? Where is Christian identity? Why is it not shaping our society? This was one of the topics brought up in my retreat.

And then it hit me. It’s because we love being Christians on Sunday. But the rest of the week, we often hide it. We keep our faith quiet because we don’t want to offend anyone. We keep our beliefs private because we don’t want to be judged. We keep our discipleship invisible because we don’t want to be labelled as different.

And suddenly, everything about Holy Week came into focus. Because that is exactly what happened in Jerusalem. On Sunday, the crowds shouted “Hosanna!” By Friday, they shouted “Crucify Him.” There was a shift in identity.

On Sunday, they claimed Jesus publicly. By Friday, they denied Him, abandoned Him, betrayed Him. And if we’re honest, that same temptation lives in us. To praise Him when it’s safe—and disappear when it’s costly. To be Christian when the crowd approves—and silent when it does not. We are so blessed here in America, Christians are not persecuted like in China, Nigeria, or Pakistan. We can now even add Canada to that list, as their Parliament this week passed a law making it a hate crime to quote Scripture. It’s not the law of the land yet, but it’s believed that their Senate will rubber stamp it, and then it will be.

Holy Week confronts us with the truth: Christian identity is not meant to be a Sunday garment. It is a way of life, a public witness, a visible belonging to Christ. And those areas where persecution of Christians are prevalent, where faith is worn as a garment for all to see, the Church is flourishing and vocations are exploding. The Church does its best under extreme pressures, and that is why the gates of Hell will never prevail against it.

Palm Sunday invites us to examine our Christian identity. Who are we when the crowd is cheering—and who are we when the world is not? Do we belong to Christ only when it is safe, or do we belong to Him always? The Church teaches that in Baptism we were marked with an indelible seal—we belong to Jesus Christ forever. That identity is not meant to be hidden, apologized for, or set aside when the world grows hostile. It is meant to be lived publicly, joyfully, and courageously.

The Passion narrative shows us what happens when fear replaces faith. Peter denies Jesus because he is afraid of being associated with Him. Judas betrays Jesus because he prefers control over surrender. Judas had the opportunity to be a great Apostle had he only repented, but he committed the unforgiveable sin, Blasphemy of the Holy Spirit. He thought his sin of betrayal was unforgiveable. Imagine his story had he sought forgiveness from the same Christ who forgave the thief crucified beside Jesus. He could have been able to say “I betrayed Jesus who was crucified, but He still forgave me!”

The disciples flee because they are afraid of suffering. But Jesus—Jesus remains faithful. He does not hide who He is. He does not shrink from His mission. He does not deny the Father’s will. He shows us what true identity looks like: a love that does not waver, a faith that does not bend, a courage that does not collapse under pressure.

And that is the invitation of Holy Week. To stay with Him. To claim Him.

To journey with Christ from the triumphant palms of Sunday to the sorrowful Cross of Friday is the essence of authentic Christian discipleship. Throughout His Passion, we see powerful examples of unwavering faith and courage—especially in the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Women of Jerusalem, Veronica who compassionately wiped the face of Jesus, and Mary Magdalene who lovingly sought Him at the tomb. In their steadfast presence and love, these women embody what it means to claim our Christian identity, regardless of fear or suffering. The Church honors these women, recognizing their strength and fidelity as foundational to the Christian community and a model for all believers. Their witness challenges us to stand firm in faith, to accompany Christ even when the path leads through darkness, and to let our lives reflect His love.

Let us strive to transform our joyful “Hosanna” on Sunday into a resolute “I am His” on Friday, remaining faithful to Christ not just in moments of celebration, but also in times of trial. By embracing this call, we live out our baptismal identity—marked forever as belonging to Jesus—and become witnesses of His love and hope in the world.

So as we enter these sacred days, let us ask for the grace to remain faithful. To be Christians not only in church but in public. Not only when praised but when challenged. Let us refuse to be ashamed of the One who was not ashamed to suffer and die for us.

Year A, Palm Sunday 2026

And may our lives proclaim, with courage and conviction, that we belong to Jesus Christ—yesterday, today, and forever.

May the LORD bless you and keep you, and make His Face to shine upon you, and give you peace.