

PALM SUNDAY OF THE PASSION OF THE LORD YEAR B

I'll tell you a secret: As much as I love Palm Sunday it's one of the hardest days of the year to prepare a homily for – not because there's not enough to say, but because there's so *much* to say. We have not just one Gospel but two, and one of them is the beautiful and evocative Passion Narrative. Each of the readings and psalm also contain many treasures. How can a preacher possibly bring together the many theological and emotional elements of today's celebration?



And the preacher senses that the occasion of Palm Sunday, marking our entrance into the holiest of Weeks deserves some truly thoughtful words. Add to this the fact that Mass today is a little longer than usual and that we have become accustomed in Australia to Masses that do not exceed one hour. Perhaps we take Jesus a little too literally when he says "could you not stay awake one hour with me"? The preacher also feels pressure today from Holy Mother Church who instructs that only a *brief* homily is to be given on Palm Sunday.

So, for the sake of brevity let's take a glimpse at just our Second Reading today from Saint Paul's letter to the Philippians. It's one of the key passages in the New Testament and it sums up what today and much of Holy Week is about. It's a meditation on what theologians call Jesus' *kenosis* or self-emptying – his humility. It reminds us of the humility of our God:

- God the Son is Divine, but he came to earth not in the form of God but as a man like us. That's humility!
- He came not in the form of a great man but of a humble common man. That's humility!
- He was so humble that he permitted other men to put him to death. That's humility!
- Not just any death, but the most humiliating death possible – on a cross. That's humility!
- He did this out of loving obedience to his Father and love for us. That's humility!
- This is how Jesus Christ redeemed us and became the Saviour of the world.
- The Father was so pleased in Jesus that he has raised him on high, to the highest heavens, where he is and always will be acclaimed by us as Jesus and Lord.

I could now perhaps encourage us all to imitate Jesus' humility, but I won't. Instead, I'll just say this: Let the events of Holy Week and the mysteries we celebrate in our Holy Week liturgies speak to your heart. Or rather, through these events let *God* speak to your heart, remembering that God does not only want to touch our emotions this week, he wants to deepen our faith. Allow God to do this and our imitation of his humility will come of its own accord.

