

On Palm Sunday, we hear the Gospel story of Jesus' entry into Jerusalem followed by a procession of palms before moving onto the readings of the Mass, including the Gospel reading of the Passion. We are able to reflect on what happened to turn a rejoicing crowd of wellwishers waving palm branches one week into a group calling for Jesus' death.



The people were rejoicing as Jesus entered Jerusalem. They were all for him like the crowds of people we see when Pope Francis visits another country or when King Charles III was crowned. But the crowds in Jerusalem soon turned away from Jesus.

We, too, can be like the crowds in Jerusalem. We claim to be followers of Jesus, yet we turn away from God when it suits us.

*So Jerusalem rang with their praises.
"He is here, he has come", they said.
They were singing and dancing and laughing,
As their palms before his feet they laid.*

*Sing hosanna, sing hosanna, sing hosanna to the king of kings.
Sing hosanna, sing hosanna, sing hosanna to the king.*

*His love touched the air and they knew him.
The sun blazed high in the sky.
The choruses claimed, "He is master
and we'll love him 'til the day we die"*

*That last day of glory forgotten,
They denied him and turned their eye.
They handed him up to the Romans,
But it was all of us who hung him high.*

The readings from the prophet Isaiah and St Paul to the Philippians lead us into Marks' account of the Passion and Death of Jesus:

"I made no resistance, neither did I turn away. I offered my back to those who struck me, my cheeks to those who tore at my beard; I did not cover my face against insult and spittle. The Lord comes to my help."

"Christ was humbler yet, even to accepting death, death on a cross. But God raised him high and gave him the name which is above all other names."

In Mark's Gospel, Jesus' passion and death are presented as the consequence of the tension between the Jewish authorities and Jesus that had been building throughout his public ministry. This tension reached its breaking point when Jesus drove the merchants and moneychangers from the Temple. After this event, the chief priests and scribes began seeking a way to put Jesus to death. And we know how easily crowds can be manipulated.

Mark does not portray the disciples of Jesus in a good light. They insist that they would never betray him; they fell asleep at Gethsemane; they are nowhere to be seen as Jesus is crucified. His female disciples, however, did not abandon him, even if they remained at a distance.



What would you have done if you had been there?

What prevents you from standing up for your beliefs in Jesus in our world today?

What does it mean to you to make the statement of faith that Jesus is the Son of God?

Let us remember that Jesus lived and died out of love. Love, therefore, should be the centre of our lives. If we follow Jesus, we follow love.

