**Deacon Steve’s Reflection on the Sunday Readings**

**March 25, 2018 – Palm Sunday of the Passion of the Lord**

**Isaiah 50: 4-7 Psalm 22: 8-9, 17-20, 23-24**

**Philippians 2: 6-11 Mark 14: 1 – 15: 47**

The Season of Lent has passed swiftly and this weekend, we enter into Holy Week, the most solemn time of the liturgical year. Beginning with today’s Palm Sunday of the Passion of the Lord, we move into the Sacred Liturgy of the Triduum, which includes Holy Thursday (the Lord’s Supper), Good Friday (the Passion of the Lord), and the Easter Vigil in the Holy Night, which begins the great celebration of Easter.

Today, we recall both the triumphant entry of Our Lord into Jerusalem, when Jesus entered the city to the cries of welcome and praise of the people, who spread leafy branches upon the path where Jesus rode on the back of a colt. As he entered triumphantly, the crowds could be heard shouting: *“Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the kingdom of our father David that is to come! Hosanna in the highest!”* The liturgy features both the blessing and distribution of the palms as well as the proclamation of the Passion – this year from the Gospel of Saint Mark. It is a powerful liturgy that sets the tone for the events of Holy Week and a prayerful beginning to days of contemplation of Our Savior’s great redemptive sacrifice.

The significance of Jesus’ paschal sacrifice is expressed in today’s second reading from Saint Paul’s Letter to the Philippians: *“Christ Jesus, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God something to be grasped. Rather he emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, coming in human likeness; and found human in appearance, he humbled himself, becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.”* As Jesus was full human as well as fully divine, he was capable of experiencing genuine pain and suffering. His words in the Garden of Gethsemane revealed the depths of his agony and anguish, his ultimate obedience to his Heavenly Father, and perfect fidelity to his mission. During the periods of intense prayer before his betrayal and arrest, he offered this plea: *“Abba, Father, all things are possible to you. Take this cup away from me, but not what I will but what you will.”*

By accepting the cup of his passion, his suffering and death, Jesus won for all men and women, the reconciliation with God lost by the sin of Adam. Through his passion, death and resurrection, he would restore the proper relationship between humanity and God, fulfilling the old covenant and replacing it with a new covenant, which would be realized in Christ Jesus. Upon his death on the cross, sin and death were conquered forever not just for the chosen people, but also for men and women of all nations. As we heard in today’s Gospel: *“The veil of the sanctuary was torn in two from top to bottom. When the centurion who stood facing him saw how he breathed his last he said, ‘Truly this man was the Son of God.’” (Mark 15)*

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