

THIS IS POWER. THIS IS GLORY.
Meditation for Palm SundayB: Mk 14:1-15:47
LPC, 4/5/09

We just heard a lengthy and terribly dramatic narrative that took us from Jesus being welcomed by a crowd to Jesus being condemned by a crowd.

Some of you may remember that in the old days, Palm Sunday, the story of Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem, was a stand-alone. We used to hear the story of the colt and the cloaks and the leafy branches and the hosannas unblemished by the story of Jesus' Passion: his arrest and humiliation, his torture and death.

Hearing those words, "Crucify him!" coming from our own mouths puts quite a damper on the party, doesn't it? Wouldn't it be nice to be able to enjoy the story of Jesus' happy arrival in Jerusalem a little longer?

The problem is that our culture has long since become one where church is a once-a-week practice for most Christians, if that. A person coming to church on Palm Sunday and not again until Easter, the following Sunday, misses out on the story of Good Friday, when Jesus' Passion is particularly commemorated. So the revisers of the current prayer book included the Passion with the Palms, to make sure everyone gets it.

At issue here is the heart of the Christian message. The Christian message makes no sense without Good Friday. Resurrection at Easter is just another miracle from an omnipotent but remote God without the awesome Good Friday message that almighty God was willing to undergo the worst degradation known to humankind: to be humiliated and unjustly condemned, and to undergo pitiless ridicule even in the agonies of dying.

Further, the salvation offered to humankind through the divine act of resurrection is likewise meaningless without an acknowledgment of the depths to which humankind can sink, *and* an acknowledgment that any of us is capable of these depths. This is where "Crucify him!" comes in.

Yes, it would be fun to celebrate the joy of Christ's triumphant entry into Jerusalem without having rain on our parade (or Jesus' parade.) But then, we might become fixated, as Jesus' fair-weather friends did, on the earthly trappings of power and glory.

The power and glory we Christians await is a different kind of power and glory: a power and glory that the cross cannot kill. Indeed, the cross is an inextricable part of it.