

Philippians 2.5-11

Our reading from Philippians is often referred to as the 'Philippians Hymn'. It forms part of Paul's letter, but is thought by many experts possibly to be a much older formula. It may even have been some sort of early hymn or creed used by the earliest Christian communities to express what they believed about Jesus. We see in this hymn that from the earliest times, Christians knew that God's Son was divine before he was even born as a human, that there was something about the Son of God that existed before even time itself. Not only did God's Word exist before all things were created, but the act by which he became human was one of immense humbling. Christ emptied himself twice – not just to be born as a human, but then a second time, to be crucified for our sins. At the heart of what it means to talk about Jesus being divine is God's humility and self-emptying, his giving of himself for the creation he brought into being.

Elements of the Mass

Processions

The Procession on Palm Sunday represents Our Lord's entry into Jerusalem, and as such is distinct from the Mass which follows, which commemorates the Passion itself. The account of the fourth century Holy Land pilgrim, Egeria, includes a procession into Jerusalem; and texts from the eighth century in the West would seem to suggest that a procession had become normal on this day. In the Middle Ages the procession often set out from one church and went to another, where the palms were blessed and distributed, before returning to the church from which it came. Sometimes the Blessed Sacrament was carried in procession, a French custom which spread to England at the end of the 11th century. The procession was abolished in the Church of England at the Reformation, but made a comeback in the twentieth century, largely following modern Roman Catholic practice: away from the church building, palms or other greenery are blessed, followed by a reading of one of the gospel accounts of the triumphal entry into Jerusalem, and then the procession itself into the church, often whilst singing 'Gloria, Laus et Honor'/'All Glory, Laud and Honour'. This is followed by the Mass of the day, beginning at the collect.

14th April
2019

Palm Sunday

All Glory, Laud and Honour



As the crowds welcome Jesus as Son of David and Saviour, the Pharisees in the crowd tell Jesus to 'rebuke his disciples'. 'I tell you,' he replied, 'if they keep quiet the stones will cry out.' These are the stones of Jerusalem that Jesus predicts will not be left standing one on another. These are the stones of Jerusalem, which Luke tells us is the place that marks the beginning and end of the Gospel. In the beginning Zechariah is in the Temple, at the end the two disciples rush back to Jerusalem from Emmaus to confirm the resurrection. These stones stand witness to the whole history of God's people. They are witnesses to siege and victory, to religious revival and terrible apostasy. This is the city of David; this is the place where God's name chose to dwell. These stones are the inevitable destiny of Jesus. It was for this time, for the fulfilment of all hope and prophecy, which they have waited for. Jerusalem was built to welcome this carpenter who with the wood and nail of the cross would initiate the building of a new Jerusalem; built not with stones, but with gold and precious gems, with gates of pearl and enclosing the River of Life.

From the Fathers

'Let us go together to meet Christ on the Mount of Olives. Today he returns from Bethany and proceeds of his own free will toward his holy and blessed passion, to consummate the mystery of our salvation. He who came down from heaven to raise us from the depths of sin, to raise us with himself, we are told in Scripture, above every sovereignty, authority and power, and every other name that can be named, now comes of his own free will to make his journey to Jerusalem. Let us run to accompany him as he hastens toward his passion, and imitate those who met him then, not by covering his path with garments, olive branches or palms, but by doing all we can to prostrate ourselves before him by being humble and by trying to live as he would wish. Then we shall be able to receive the Word at his coming, and God, whom no limits can contain, will be within us.'

Extract from a Palm Sunday sermon by Andrew of Crete (c. 660-740, bishop, theologian)