

Palm Sunday Homily

By: Fr. Paul Magyar

In the gospel of Matthew 21:1-11 Jesus enters into Jerusalem riding a donkey and people greet him by putting their cloaks and palm branches in front of him to walk on.

To prepare for His entrance into Jerusalem, Jesus stops with his disciples in the town of Bethphage, which means: "house of unripened figs." Bethphage is located on the Mount of Olives, east of Jerusalem. It is one of the only two towns that is there because the Mount of Olives does not have a water source. Bethphage is opposite of the town of Bethany, which means "house of my pain and sorrow."

The Donkey and the colt are tied up at the crossroads, '+', between the two towns. Jesus never returns the donkey and the colt indicating that this is a one way mission into Jerusalem. Before walking into the city, Jesus' mission is incomplete, just like the unripened fig of Bethphage. The only way Jesus will walk out of the city is by carrying His cross in the state of pain and sorrow just like Bethany.

Jesus enters the city of Jerusalem riding on the donkey with the colt through the eastern gate. This takes place four days before the passover. The temple high priest has already gone to Bethlehem and chosen the national lamb of God from the certain field. The high priest walked back up to Jerusalem and entered through the eastern gate carrying the lamb on the back of his shoulders. Jesus waits until the high priest enters and then He enters after him.

The population of Jerusalem during the passover festival increases from about 30,000 to 130,000. Jesus enters Jerusalem riding on a donkey signifying a peaceful mission. It was well known in ancient times that when a king arrives with his army and rides through the city on a donkey then he is only stopping for supplies and pass through. However if the king rides in on a horse then he is ready to take over the city.

The messiah is to enter through the eastern gate, Jesus is the messiah who is here to enter into our hearts, into our lives. To bring liberation from our sins, not by the way of a military leader, rather through the penetrating power of love, forgiveness, sacrifice, and truth.

Praying for all of you

Fr. Paul Magyar