

Palm Sunday, Year C
April 13, 2025

Some of us may remember the old days when the week before Palm Sunday was Passion Sunday, the day we read the account of Jesus' passion as we heard it today. Palm Sunday back then was a sort of pre-Easter party, followed by Holy Communion on Maundy Thursday which many didn't attend because everything was black and depressing in the midst of the two back-to-back Easters and who takes Communion in the middle of the week except for Catholics? Friday was the three-hour service, often with Jesus' Seven Last Words being the theme in "messages" from guest preachers from around town, our focus less on Jesus' suffering and more on who preached the best or how much better our guy is than theirs. Saturday was egg-dying and hot cross bun eating, and then of course Easter Sunday – the Sunday of hats - when the little ones were in the pews with parents and grandparents rather than in Sunday School, bouncing off the walls like rabbits, having already consumed much of the contents of their Easter Baskets. The "minister" preached an Easter version of his Christmas sermon which included the entire catechism, addressed to too many of his flock – the captive audience prodigals - who attended church only on Christmas and Easter and were in desperate need of religious instruction: Right Now! As the bouncing bunnies began to fall asleep, mothers and fathers and grandmothers and grandfathers filed to the front, accompanied by loud triumphant resurrection music from the choir, to receive the Gifts of God. The *Gloria in excelsis* (during which the bunnies came alive), final prayer, and final hymn were the frosting on the Easter Sunday cake, before we moved on to Easter Sunday Dinner, second only in splendor to its first cousin, the Thanksgiving feast.

Then, there is now. Since 1979 and the publication of the "new" prayer book, we have grown at least somewhat less uncomfortable with Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem – the city that kills the prophets - morphing quite rapidly into our acknowledgement of our own complicity in Jesus' kangaroo trial, his arrest and his murder by crucifixion. Even though we have lived with the shift in emphasis of the Palm Sunday liturgy for nearly 50 years, the message continues to be no less jarring: we finish singing "All Glory, Laud and Honor" only to be plunged into that cold-water reality of our own accountability in Jesus' suffering and death. Have mercy upon me, O Lord, for I am in trouble; in your loving-kindness, save me. May we die daily to sin, that we might be worthy to share in the eternal triumph of Jesus' resurrection.