

Palm Sunday

Intro. We march into the church and begin a week unlike any of the other fifty-one.

I. The disciples had been to Jerusalem several times before, but this was very different. Crowds lined the streets like a Fourth of July parade in downtown Green Cove Springs. Some people were cheering Jesus; others were suspicious of him. But the disciples must have had a jazzed feeling of excitement to be identified with Jesus of Nazareth, in what felt like the triumphal entrance of a king into the city. Imagine: several fishermen, a tax collector and a variety what some would call ne'er-do-wells, meaning sinners. If they had cell phones, they would have been taking selfies for the folks back home because no one was going to believe them. After

this awesome experience they went to Bethany to the home of a man named Simon who appears to have been cured of leprosy. During the meal a woman – unnamed by Mark, but identified by John as Mary, the sister of Martha and Lazarus – did a really crazy thing. She broke a jar of very expensive perfumed oil and poured it on the Lord's head. There was a collective gasp by all in the room. How would the Lord react? Why did she do that? We know the Lord's response: kindness and gentleness. She did it because she obviously experienced the Lord's "healing, forgiveness or unconditional love" [*The Gospel of Mark*, Mary Healy, Baker Publishing, 2008]. This was her expression of love for the Lord from whatever gift she had received from him. Anointing someone's head with oil had several meanings. It was a sign of welcome offered by the

host. When we invite guests to our home we meet them at the door, point out the place to wash their hands and ask if they would like something to drink. But anointing also had a much more powerful meaning: a king or prophet was so anointed. And the Messiah was referred to as “the anointed,” the Christ. The Lord also made reference to this as the anointing after death. His own. From the joyous entrance to Jerusalem and festive dinner, the events of the week became more serious and tragic.

Concl. There are many people, named and unnamed, who were part of these final days of the Lord’s life [Jaime Waters, *America* magazine, March, 2021]. Too many to focus on in one homily. I encourage all us to spend time this week reflecting on who they might have been *before and after* their experiences in the presence of the Lord. We might

be able to find something of ourselves in them: uncertainty, doubt, fear, pain, faith, joy. And most of all, hope.

Fr. Michael Pendergraft

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