

# A View from the Pew

by Deacon Greg Kandra

## *Seven Days That Shook the World*

After spending the last few weeks in the desert of Lent, suddenly we find ourselves in an oasis, clutching long leaves of palms.

But like so many things you see after being in the desert, it's a mirage. What we see, or think we see, is about to shift before our eyes.

Soon enough, the palms will be whips. The leaves will be thorns. Jubilation will become jeers. That is the paradox and the mystery of Holy Week.

The liturgies of this week are powerful and primal. In the days to come, there is silence and smoke, fire and water, shadow and light. We are a part of something both ancient and new, and what we do this week reminds us of that. The altar will be stripped. The cross will be venerated. The tabernacle will be emptied. The Blessed Sacrament will be moved. Bells will be stilled.

And yet here we stand, at the gates to Jerusalem, palms in our hands and hosannas on our lips, beginning the arduous trek to Calvary.

It is easy to be distracted by the events of the world and not really pay attention to what we will do this week. Somewhere, wars are raging and politicians are squabbling. Somewhere, Easter eggs are being sold and chocolate is being inventoried, and plastic grass is lining wicker baskets.

But not here. Not now. Not yet.

This week, take the time to wonder about what we are doing, and what we are remembering.

For over 2,000 years, we have gathered like this, in places like this, to light candles and chant prayers and read again the ancient stories of our deliverance and redemption.

But are we aware of what we are doing? Do we understand what it means? Do we realize the price that was paid? A proper accounting is impossible. The ledger—His life, for our souls—seems woefully unbalanced.

So, this Holy Week, try this: Take a moment in each day that passes to wonder: What was He doing during this time of that one week all those centuries ago? What was crossing His mind on Monday, on Tuesday, on Wednesday? What sort of anguish? What kind of dread?

Has anything we have ever worried about, or lost sleep over, or agonized about, even come close?

He was a man like us in all things but sin. He must have been terrified, His mind buzzing with questions. Long after the others had drifted off to sleep, did He stay awake and worry? Maybe He sat up alone, late at night, whittling a piece of wood, the way His father had taught Him, until a splinter sliced His skin, drawing a rivulet of blood. He might have flinched and thought: Well, this is nothing. And still it stings. How intense would the pain of death become? How long would it last? How much humiliation would He be forced to endure, stripped and bleeding? And what about His mother? Is there anything He could do to spare her from this?

As you shop for Easter baskets and dye, think of this. Ponder it Wonder about it. Make it a kind of prayer.

And then, remember what we are doing, and why. Because of all the calendars in all of human history, this is the week that changed the world.

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