

A Coffee with Alessio



Holy Week- “The blue ribbon event of the Liturgical Year” – Part I

I don't know where time has gone, but Lent has flown by this year! Holy Week begins this Sunday, with Palm Sunday of the Lord's Passion. Therefore this week is part 1 of a two- part column on Holy Week. Holy Week is the climax of the Liturgical Year, and hence I am likening Holy Week to the blue ribbon event of the liturgical calendar. Why is that? Well, it is a week full of drama, pageantry, joy, tears, sorrow, confusion, uncertainty and questions about commitment – that of the Apostles as well as that of our own.

Everything starts off wonderfully on Palm Sunday, with Jesus riding into Jerusalem on a donkey, and people waving palm branches, singing “Hosanna”. Jesus certainly made a triumphant entry into Jerusalem. He had “celebrity status.” It was wonderful, no one was in any trouble, and everyone was having a great time. However, that was all about to change!

There are two important aspects to our Palm Sunday liturgy that the Church to this day still incorporates into the liturgy to this day. Firstly, the blessing of palms, which is usually followed by a procession, with people carrying palms into the church. I think that's great!- anything for a bit more drama in the Mass. I hope you have a triumphant hymn and or processional piece of music to accompany the procession. I'll be “pulling a lot of the stops out” to create a triumphant and dramatic beginning to Holy Week.

Secondly, we hear the Passion story. This tells the story of the lead up and the eventual crucifixion and death of Jesus on the Cross.

I don't think the Twelve Apostles had any idea of what they were getting themselves into when they accepted Jesus' call to follow him. Jesus chose twelve ordinary men from different walks of life to follow him. When things were going well, it was easy for them, as it was on Palm Sunday. But as the week progressed they became scared, confused, and were probably almost ready to "take their bat and ball" and go home. I know if the Roman soldiers came and asked me questions, I'd be organising "witness protection" for myself! (I wonder if that thought crossed Saint Peter's mind when he denied Jesus three times? More about him in the next couple of columns).

Our daily life experiences can be like those of the twelve Apostles. Just when we think we have everything figured out, everything goes pear shaped, or what I like to call "God having a surprise for us". You know yourselves, as musicians in parishes, what sort of things can go awry. People forget to bring their music, people don't show up for choir practise or a liturgy, the priest forgets the information you told him, the organ breaks down and so on. As you know, I am a teacher, and for those of you reading these columns, who are teachers you know how the best prepared lesson can just turn into a mess in an instant. I've had that happen to me, just as some liturgies have "gone with the wind." All these and other situations require a great deal of thinking on the spot. Everything was planned, only to be turned upside down. That can be a challenge, but we do our best to take everything in its stride.

You will notice the border for this week's column is red. That's because the liturgical colour for Palm Sunday (that is, the colour the priest will wear on Palm Sunday) is red. I encourage you to wear red to Mass this weekend. In that way, we can be like the "red army", not for the Perth Wildcats, but for Jesus, who loved us so much that he died on the Cross for you and for me.

I know I haven't really mentioned coffee or any of my other pastimes this week. There is a reason for that. As Grace McKinnon states in her article *The Meaning of Holy Week*: "Holy Week is a time to clear our schedules of unnecessary activities. Our minds and hearts should be fixed on Jesus and what he did for us." I'm not saying you're not

allowed to have a coffee this week. I wouldn't survive without one!
Rather, I'm saying just keep it simple and low-key.

Enjoy your coffee, and I hope Holy Week begins well for you.

To be continued....

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