

17. February 2025

THE GOSPEL OF ST. JOHN
“Hosanna to the Son of David”

Jn 12:12-24

The next day a great crowd who had come to the feast heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem. So they took branches of palm trees and went out to meet him, crying, “Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel!” And Jesus found a young ass and sat upon it; as it is written,

*“Fear not, daughter of Zion;
behold, your king is coming,
sitting on an ass’s colt!”*

His disciples did not understand this at first; but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that this had been written of him and had been done to him. The crowd that had been with him when he called Laz’arus out of the tomb and raised him from the dead bore witness. The reason why the crowd went to meet him was that they heard he had done this sign. The Pharisees then said to one another, “You see that you can do nothing; look, the world has gone after him.” Now among those who went up to worship at the feast were some Greeks. So these came to Philip, who was from Beth-sa’ida in Galilee, and said to him, “Sir, we wish to see Jesus.” Philip went and told Andrew; Andrew went with Philip and they told Jesus. And Jesus answered them, “The hour has come for the Son of man to be glorified. Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.

For a short time, the reality in Jerusalem was as it should be. The people greeted the true King of Israel and went out to meet Him. In this happening the truth is manifested and the mission that Israel was called to fulfil for all mankind is recognised. This was not a human king, but the King of heaven who came to earth to redeem His people. He enters the ‘city of the great King’ (Mt 5:35), that is, Jerusalem, the city chosen by God. What joy and what grace the Eternal Father bestows on His people! The One who deserves all praise, honour and glory is coming.

And how does He enter His city? This King is deprived of the outward splendour and pomp intended to emphasise a person's importance and position. The King of heaven, on the other hand, comes to the daughter of Zion riding on a donkey, just as the Scriptures had foretold. And the shout of jubilation should never die out, but continue to resound for all eternity: 'Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!' All this happened before the eyes of His disciples, but they would not understand it until after Jesus was glorified. Later, when the Holy Spirit descended upon them and enabled them to understand in His light many things that had hitherto remained veiled to them, they realised that in this event the Scriptures had been fulfilled.

The news of the raising of Lazarus did much to help people recognise Jesus, for the testimony of those who had witnessed this extraordinary sign reached the ears of those who had gathered in Jerusalem for the feast. Many went out to meet Him with palms in their hands and songs of praise on their lips.

Again, we find the contrast between light and shadow. On the one hand, we see how faith in the Messiah, so necessary for salvation, spreads. People rush to meet the true king of Israel and their hearts should open wide so that the Lord can gather His own 'as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings' (Mt 23:37). What would have happened if all the people had allowed themselves to be touched by grace? Thanks to the words of St. Paul, we can get an idea of what a blessing this would have been for all mankind:

'If their rejection means the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance mean but life from the dead?' (Rom 11:15).

But, unfortunately, many of the religious leaders of the time took a stand against the Lord and clung to their closed-mindedness.

The hour of the Lord is at hand, as He Himself affirms: *'The hour has come for the Son of man to be glorified'*. The hour when He will show His abysmal love for the Father and for us men; the hour when He will be *'obedient unto death, even death on a cross'* (Phil 2:8); the hour when He will be slain as the Lamb of God to pay for the sin of the world (cf. Jn 1:29).

The glorification of which Jesus speaks is different from what people usually imagine. It is not glorious triumphs on the battlefield, nor medals for great sporting achievements, nor first-class scientific successes that glorify man, but acts of true love for God and neighbour. This is what Jesus shows us: what is most glorious is His love for God, His Father and our Father, and His love for people, whom Jesus makes His brothers and for whom He lays down His life.

'Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.' This is what our Lord does, and so He is glorified.