

**St. Vincent Ferrer – Sermon for Palm Sunday (3)
Matt 21:1-9**

“Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord,” Mt 21:9.

This text is taken as the basis of our sermon. It is a short and very devout song composed by the Holy Spirit, and today devoutly sung to Christ, when he solemnly entered the city of Jerusalem. We sing it today many times, representing that solemnity and coming of Christ into the city of Jerusalem, saying, “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.”

The whole solemnity of Palm Sunday today consists of three points:

- First is about the honor and solemnity coming to Christ shown today by the city of Jerusalem in which he was received honorably [receptus honorabiliter].
- Second is about the solemnity which we today give, representing him appropriately [repraesentando appropriate].
- Third is about the path which Christ walks today, as he comes into the city of Jerusalem virtuously [veniendo virtuose].

And for each of these in particular and for all of them in general we should sing and say to God, Blessed is he who comes,” etc.

RECEIVED HONORABLY

The first point today is about the honor and solemnity shown by the Jews. They praised and blessed Christ as he came into the city of Jerusalem to the temple. He was received honorably with great joy and festivity, which was very remarkable. I find that often and for many reasons Christ came to Jerusalem, and never was there given any celebration or honor like today.

- First Christ came to Jerusalem for the presentation, fifty days after his birth, when the virgin Mary presented him in the temple. We do not read that there was a solemn reception then, except for Simeon and Anna, who adored him, as is clear in Luke 2. He was tiny, and the procession was tiny. But his body grew, and his compassion grew, and the time came when he was not carried in the arms of the virgin, but on the back of an ordinary donkey, not to be bought back with [sacrificed] birds, but he would redeem us all by his blood.
- Second, Christ came to the city of Jerusalem for disputing, namely when he was twelve years old. There was no celebration for him at that time.
- Third, he came for prayer, because according to the law, he would come to Jerusalem on every feast day, and would enter the temple.

- Fourth, he came to extirpate, namely the sins and notorious vices, because the high priests from their avarice had made of the temple a house of business, Jn 2. Nor was there any celebration for him then.
- Fifth he came often to preach, because that metropolis was the capital of the province.
- Sixth, he came to manifest his divinity by working miracles, healing the sick, and raising the dead. Not even then was there a celebration.
- Seventh, he came for sacrificing himself. Today he wished to enter Jerusalem, where he would suffer for the redemption of the human race. Then there was a great festival for him and a solemnity celebrated.

For this reason, I reply that although Christ had performed many good works for us, nevertheless we are more bound and obliged to him for the work of his passion and death, that for all the others. So we are bound to praise and bless him for the work of the incarnation which he did out of love for us. Also for the teaching and preaching which he had given going from village to village. But above all we are bound [to bless] him for the work of the passion, because the Lord himself wished to die for his servants, the king for his subjects, a just man for the unjust, the innocent one for sinners, So Bernard: "Above all, good Jesus, the chalice of the passion which you drank, the work of our redemption, renders you beloved to me." See the reason why God put it into the hearts of the people that he be received so solemnly when he came to Jerusalem for sacrificing.

This solemnity consists in six circumstances or ceremonies which were done for him.

First, because he wished to enter riding. It is not read anywhere that Christ ever rode an animal. Only today, when he entered Jerusalem. And then he rode on a colt, of an ass, according to the prophecy of Zechariah 9: " Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion, shout for joy, O daughter of Jerusalem: Behold your king will come to you, the just and savior: he is poor, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass," (Zech 9:9). Thus that prophecy was fulfilled.

Read practically how from Bethphage he sent two disciples, according to the Gloss [anonymous Commentary on Scripture], Peter and Philip, for the donkey and colt, etc. A tethered ass signifies the Jewish people, or the synagogue bound by the chain of the law of Moses. This chain has three links, the three kinds of precepts: the ceremonial precepts which order a person toward God. Second, the judicial precepts, which order one to the neighbor. Third, the moral precepts which order a person with respect to himself, how everyone should live. The colt which had not yet had been tied, nor had ever borne a burden on its back, signifies the Gentiles, who had no chain of law around its neck, nor burden of precepts on its back, It shows that Christ had come not only to redeem and save the Jews, but also the Gentiles and pagans. He observed this ceremony, because he first wished to ride on the ass, which he had to untie, because at the time of the Messiah king all prefiguring and ceremonies should cease. Second, he wished to ride on the unbroken colt, not out of necessity, but that scripture and the prefiguring should be fulfilled, for the gentiles should also be converted to Christ. Thus the Apostle, "and whosoever believes in him shall not be confounded," (Rom 9:33).

The second ceremony or circumstance is this. He wished today to enter Jerusalem in a procession, because a great crowd preceded him and followed him, and with the apostles he went in the middle. Just as we do today in processions in which many precede and many follow, and the bishop or priest who represent Christ, in the middle with the priests.

And the gospel says that both the ones preceding and the ones following were looking back saying "Hosanna to the son of David," (v. 9). In this is shown that all who preceded, from Abel down to Christ, namely the Patriarchs and Prophets, as well as also those who would follow, down to the end of the world, all look upon Christ through faith, saying, "Hosanna," etc. For no one can be saved, unless through Christ. Therefore Gen 49: "I will look for your salvation, O Lord," (Gen 49:18). And, in Acts 4: "Neither is there salvation in any other. For there is no other name under heaven given to men, whereby we must be saved," (Acts 4:12).

The third circumstance is this. The entire route, from the mount of Olives up to Jerusalem was covered. Such was the devotion of the people, that not with caps [cappis] or other decorations [ornamentis], but they spread out on his path their coats and capes, both men and women. The Evangelists says, " And a very great multitude spread their garments on the way," (v. 8). And why this? I reply that this was a figure of future martyrs, as is clear in sacred scripture. The human body is called the clothing of the soul, which clothing the vast crowd of martyrs would lay down on the way, dying for their faith in Christ. So David says, in the person of the martyrs: " Because for your sake we are killed all the day long: we are counted as sheep for the slaughter," (Ps 43:22). Also in the Apocalypse 7 it says of martyrs: "These are they who are come out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and have made them white in the blood of the Lamb," i.e. of Christ, (Rev 7:14).

The fourth ceremony was of the tree branches. The Evangelist says that "others cut boughs from the trees, and strewed them in the way," (v. 8), flowers and leaves and branches from trees. It was a sign. For in sacred scripture men are called trees. Mark 8: " I see men as it were trees, walking," (Mk 8:24). These trees, flowers, leaves and branches of merit and good works are to be spread out before the way of Christ, namely that they be done for him, because otherwise they are worthless. Jn 15: "for without me you can do nothing," (Jn 15:5), worthy of merit.

The fifth was that he wished to be praised and blessed both by the great as well as by the small, and Hosannas cried out, according to that of David: "Out of the mouth of infants and of sucklings you have perfected praise," (Ps 8:3), to show that by virtue of his passion not only adults and great ones are saved through penance, but also children through innocence. Wis 6: "for he made the little and the great, and he has equally care of all," (Wis 6:8).

Sixth, because all, both the great as well as the small, with one voice were saying, "Blessed is he that comes in the name of the Lord," (v. 9). In which it is shown that he was the universal redeemer of all. Authority: "For there is one God, and one mediator of

God and men, the man Christ Jesus: Who gave himself a redemption for all," (1 Tim 2:5f).

From this is the reason why and how this solemnity was today celebrated for Christ and not otherwise. About this Zechariah had prophesied and the father of John the Baptist, saying: "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; because he has visited and wrought the redemption of his people," (Lk 1:68).

REPRESENTED APPROPRIATELY

The second point is about the solemnity which we make, representing that solemnity given appropriately today to Christ, because just as Christ today with solemnity and procession came to the place of his passion, so also we today with great solemnity and procession, come to the passion which is read in the mass today. Someone might remark: "Why is the passion of Christ read today with such solemnity?" Because the passion of Christ, so sad and painful, ought to generate the same in the hearts of the faithful, and not joy and gladness. Note at this how the passion and death of Christ can be taken in four ways, according to which it is read in church four times, using the four gospels.

First it can be taken and thought about according to personal dignity, considering the person who suffers, who is Christ: king, father, Lord, innocent and pure. And according to this consideration the passion of Christ gives to Christians sadness, pain, tears and sighs. And in this respect the passion of Christ is read on Good Friday, when the bells are not rung, and people fall down sad, bowing their heads. In this respect the prophet Jeremiah considered the passion of Christ saying, "And I was as a meek lamb, that is carried to be a victim," (Jer 11:19).

In a second way the passion of Christ can be received and considered according to human necessity, because we are all weak and wounded by the plague of sins, nor can we be cured except by the blood of Christ, who willed to suffer for our sins. Isa 53: "But he was wounded for our iniquities, he was bruised for our sins," (Isa 53:5). And according to this point of view the passion of Christ brings us to contrition and sorrow for our sins, for which it was necessary for Christ to suffer and die. And in this respect the passion of Christ is read in the church on Wednesday [of Holy Week], according to Luke.

A third way can be considered according to judicial perversity, because the Jews who had been honored by God, the sons of the prophets and patriarchs, the people chosen by God, had so strongly rebelled against their God. In this respect the passion of Christ gives us an occasion for compassion for that reprobate people, destroyed and damned by the passion of Christ. And according to this consideration the passion of Christ is read in church on Tuesday. In this sense Zechariah the prophet was considering the passion of Christ, saying: "What are these wounds in the midst of thy hands? And he shall say: With these I was wounded in the house of them who loved me," (Zach 13:6).

Fourth, the passion of Christ can be received and considered according to its ultimate usefulness. We have been freed by the passion of Christ from damnation to hell, from mortal sins, and so we have grace in this world and glory in the next. See the final utility

of the passion of Christ. In this respect the passion of Christ generates in us joy, happiness and exultation, and consolation. And from this point of view the passion of Christ is read today with such solemnity, joy and happiness, singing, "Glory and praise." So this is why Isaiah says: "Rejoice, and give praise together, O ye deserts of Jerusalem: for the Lord has comforted his people: he has redeemed Jerusalem," (Isa 52:9). Note, the "deserts of Jerusalem," about which the Apostle says in Galatians 4: "But that Jerusalem, which is above, is free," (Gal 4:26), and from this [city] all men of the world have fled by sins. But now we must rejoice, " for the Lord has comforted his people," by paying for them the price. This is the reason why the passion today is read with joy.

Here note the six differences of today's joy as opposed to the six sorrows of Good Friday. The first sadness, because on Good Friday the holy bells are not rung, moreover they are silenced. Reason is because in the passion and death of Christ, the bells, i.e. the apostles whose sound of preaching goes out to the whole world, according to the prophecy of David, lose their sound, because none dared to announce Christ. Moreover the greater bell, Peter, was broken by denying Christ, nor did John, who stood next to the cross, dare to say anything in favor of Christ. But today, considering the final utility of the passion of Christ we make a great solemnity by ringing bells.

The second sadness, because [on Good Friday] the tables are struck, which is the sound of sadness and pain. This signifies the sound of derision and blasphemy which they heaped on Christ in the passion. But today the priests sing with a high and clear voice. And the reason for this is, because of the passion of Christ the blessed souls shall sing with the angels in glory.

The third sadness, because on Good Friday the holy images, crosses and icons are hidden and covered, just as in the passion of Christ, the Virgin Mary, Mary Magdalen and John and others covered their heads out of grief and sadness. They could not look upon the cruel passion of Christ. But today the cross is held high, solemnly, in a sign of the utility of the passion of Christ.

The fourth sadness, because on Good Friday, the holy passion is commemorated with tears and sorrows, to show the tears and sighs of the Virgin Mary and the others. But today it is remembered with joy and gladness according to the ultimate utility.

The fifth sadness, because on Friday, people, with sadness, prostrate themselves with shoes off, and many fast on bread and water. But today people process with great joy, well dressed carrying branches in their hands which signifies the victory which we have over our enemies by the passion of Christ.

The sixth sadness, because then the passion is sung without procession and order, for the apostles were dispersed, separated and divided. Today a solemn procession takes place, and we all go, gathered and ordered, because from the passion of Christ we all are united and gathered, according to that of John 6, Christ was to die "to gather together in one the children of God, that were dispersed.," (Jn 11:52). So we sing with joy: "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord," (v. 9).

THE WAY TO JERUSALEM

The third point is about the route which Christ took coming into Jerusalem, which way is made up of six stages.

The first, Christ, today, in the morning departed from Bethany and came to Bethphage. Second, from Bethphage to the Mount of Olives. Third from the Mount of Olives he descended into the Valley of Josephat. Fourth from the Valley of Josaphat he came to Jerusalem. Fifth, from Jerusalem he went into the Temple of God. Sixth, from the Temple he returned to Bethany with the twelve apostles, as in Mark 11 In which it seems that he had six stations.

And this represents our path which we walk by sinning and returning to grace through the way of penance.

First, through sin we depart from Bethany which is interpreted "house of obedience," from which we withdraw whenever we break the precepts of God for the sake of having some prize. In this withdrawal there should be weeping. So when Christ left Bethany, leaving Mary Magdalen, Martha and Lazarus, thanking them, because often they had received him into their home, then Mary Magdalen began to weep saying to Christ, "Lord where do you wish to go? because it is already decided in Jerusalem that they should kill you. So keep the paschal feast here, and your mother will come here." The apostles said the same, and Martha and Lazarus. They were afraid. Christ replied to them, "It is necessary to fulfill the will of him who sent me." Magdalen and all the others wept, saying, "Perhaps we shall never see you again." See, tears in the departure from Bethany, in which it is shown that man, when he departs from the house of obedience ought to weep, through contrition, according to the prophecy of Jeremiah, 2: "Know you, and see that it is an evil and a bitter thing for you, to have left the Lord your God, and that my fear is not with you," (Jer 2:19). So, the first station.

Second he comes to Bethphage, which literally means the "house of the cheek" or "house of the mouth." See here oral confession. After you have left Bethany, i.e. the house of obedience, with tears of contrition, it is necessary that you come to Bethphage, i.e. to the house of confessing your sins by mouth. Bethphage is a village of priests. So confession has to be done to priests, because no one else, no matter how holy, can forgive sins, for only to priests did Christ say, "Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them," (Jn 20:23).. Note they are forgiven them, he does not say they will be forgiven, because at the very moment they are forgiven by a confessor, they are forgiven by God. "and whose sins you shall retain," namely by withholding absolution, because they were unwilling to abstain from sinning, or because they were unwilling to make restitution, or because they were unwilling to forgive injuries, "they are retained," (Jn 20:23) by God. Thus the second station.

Third, from Bethphage he went up the Mount of Olives. So, the works of satisfaction. The Mount of Olives has three conditions in which are signified the three works of satisfaction. First because the Mount of Olives is difficult [to ascend]. This stands for the

difficulty of fastings, of vigils etc. Second because it is high it is like the height of prayer, which according to Damascene is the "elevation of the mind to God." Third because olives grow there, which are medicinal, and so this means the outpouring of alms. "Bring forth therefore fruit worthy of penance," (Mt 3:8).

Fourth, from the Mount of Olives he descended into the valley of Josaphat, which means "the judgment of the Lord." Thus the payment of debts, because the Lord shall judge irrevocably whether everyone repays his debts. Although you are on the Mount of Olives through satisfactory works, it is also required that you descend into the valley of Josaphat, by restoring things taken in two ways, either spiritually or temporally. Spiritually, a clergyman descends into the valley of Josaphat who obtained his prelacy or dignity or benefice by simony, for he has committed theft. John 10: "He that enters not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbs up another way, is a thief and a robber," (Jn 10:1).. The door stands for a legitimate election without your assistance, or dealing, or a spiritual appointment is pure, because the Pope put you there without your knowledge or dealing. Otherwise, if you wish to be saved it is necessary to descend into the valley of Josaphat by making reparations, saying, "Lord I have stolen this, so I restore it to the hands of your vicar." In a secular matter, he who stole a castle, a villa, a home, a field or possessions or money, or something else descends into the valley of Josaphat, when he restores it. It is necessary to descend from the evil state. Do not be deceived.

Also if you defame someone, it is necessary to descend to restoring to him his good name if it not true what you said, or if it is hidden or a secret. If it is said that it shall be embarrassing to recant or dangerous for you, I respond, it doesn't matter, because the sin is not remitted until what was taken is restored. (14. q. 6 si. res.)[reference to theological text].

Fifth, from the valley of Josaphat he comes to Jerusalem which is interpreted as "peaceful". Behold here the forgiveness of injuries, when a man makes peace for himself with his enemy. So David: "Pray for the things that are for the peace of Jerusalem: and abundance for them that love you. Let peace be in your strength: and abundance in your towers," (Ps 121:6-7). Note: "abundance," because unless a greater person is at peace with lesser and vice versa, and the greater among themselves do not "abound," then there will be the poor and the earth will be sterile. So the Apostle says: "Follow peace with all men, and holiness: without which no man shall see God.," (Heb 12:14). Note peace and holiness go together, because some have peace but no holiness, but malice and sin like robbers among themselves, like procurers with their prostitutes. Thus the buyer, seller and manager have peace, but not holiness, when they defraud each other.

Sixth, from Jerusalem he enters the temple of the Lord. See here Holy Communion. After you have done the previous stations, you go to the temple of the Lord for communion, nor do you expect that the Lord would come to you in your weakness, etc. Gen "Come in, you blessed of the Lord: why do you stand without?...And bread was set before him," (Gen 24:31,34), which is allegorically said to every Christian. Behold the way to paradise which Christ, coming into Jerusalem, showed to us. And so: "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord," (Mt 12:9).

Matthew 12: 1-9 Douay translation

1 And when they drew nigh to Jerusalem, and were come to Bethphage, unto mount Olivet, then Jesus sent two disciples, 2 Saying to them: Go ye into the village that is over against you, and immediately you shall find an ass tied, and a colt with her: loose them and bring them to me. 3 And if any man shall say anything to you, say ye, that the Lord hath need of them: and forthwith he will let them go. 4 Now all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying: 5 Tell ye the daughter of Zion: Behold thy king cometh to thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of her that is used to the yoke. 6 And the disciples going, did as Jesus commanded them. 7 And they brought the ass and the colt, and laid their garments upon them, and made him sit thereon. 8 And a very great multitude spread their garments in the way: and others cut boughs from the trees, and strewed them in the way: 9 And the multitudes that went before and that followed, cried, saying: Hosanna to the son of David: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord: Hosanna in the highest.