

PALM/PASSION SUNDAY, YEAR A, MARCH 29, 2026

There are two words that are prominent in today's liturgy and they refuse to be tamed. Those two words are palms and hosanna. And if we are honest, we have domesticated both of them. We have turned palms into a decoration that we wave in a procession. We have turned "Hosanna" into a celebratory cheer which it is not.

So what are they? The palm branch, in the ancient world, was not a symbol of comfort. It was a symbol of confrontation. It was what you waved when a tyrant had fallen. It was what you held when an empire had been brought to its knees. It was what you dared to lift when you believed oppression would not have the final word. To raise a palm branch was to make a public claim: The powers that be do not get the last word.

And "Hosanna"? "Hosanna" is not a cheer. It is a plea. "Save us now." It is the cry of people who have run out of patience with injustice. It is the prayer of people who refuse to normalize suffering. It is what rises up when people can no longer breathe under the weight of violence, division, and fear.

So let us recognize what this procession is really about. The crowd is not hosting a parade. They are staging a protest. They are crying out against Caesar. They are crying out against systems that grind the poor into the dust. They are crying out against a world where power protects itself and calls it peace. "Hosanna" is what you shout when you are done accepting what should never have been accepted.

And yet here is the unsettling truth. The same crowd that shouts "Hosanna" will soon fall silent. The same hands that wave palms will not stop the cross because it is one thing to cry out for salvation. It is another thing to recognize it when it comes.

The people wanted a savior who would crush their enemies. Rather they received a savior who would expose them. They wanted a king who would overthrow Rome. They received a king who would overturn the very logic of domination. And that is where this day becomes prophetic for us because we are not so different.

We, too, wave palms. We, too, speak of justice, of hope, of God's reign breaking in. But the question is not whether we can shout "Hosanna." The question is: What kind of salvation are we actually asking for? Do we want God to fix the world without changing us? Do we want resurrection without a cross? Because Jesus does not enter Jerusalem to reinforce the systems we have learned to live with. He enters to expose them. To unmask them. To dismantle everything that masquerades as life but deals in death. And that includes more than Rome.

It includes every system that devalues human life and every structure that thrives on fear. Every lie we have agreed to believe because it is easier than the truth. It includes the violence we justify, the divisions we protect and the indifference we excuse. So when we cry "Hosanna," we are not just asking God to save us. We are asking God to disrupt everything. Everything in the world, in the Church and everything in us. And that is why this day is not comfortable. Because if God answers that prayer, and God does, then something will have to change. Something will have to die.

So yes wave our palm branches. But know what we are doing. We are declaring that the powers of death do not win. We are aligning ourselves against everything that crushes and diminishes life. We are stepping into a story that will lead to a cross before it leads to an empty tomb. So shout "Hosanna." But mean it. Cry out for a salvation that is not cheap. Cry out for a God who does not simply console but transforms. Cry out for

a kingdom that will not leave this world as it is. Because Jesus is already answering that prayer. Not with spectacle or with force. But with a love that will go all the way to the cross and refuse to turn back.

So stay with Jesus. Stay with him when the palms fall to the ground. Stay with him when the shouting fades. Stay with him when the cost becomes clear. Because that is where salvation is revealed and that is where victory, real victory, begins. Amen.