

St Pius & St Anthony Homily Palm Sunday Year C (2025) Luke

Here we are: Palm Sunday leading into Holy Week! We are into, a lot, and there's a lot more to come! The sheer amount of scripture we are going to hear/read this week is immense. But, we **don't want to miss a tree** for the forest! We often hear that saying, the other way around: don't miss the forest for the trees, meaning that we need to keep the big picture in mind—the forest as the main point, and not to get stuck on a tree (But, ironically in Holy Week, that is just what happens to Jesus-getting stuck on a tree! *Gal 3:13*). So, I'd like for us to focus on individual tree-details instead of getting lost in the larger picture of the forest. I am saying that there is so much scripture proclaimed this week that we can be just washed over, and numbed to what is happening (so much sweeping over us that we don't have any point or edge to grab a hold of). So much! For example, we just heard two gospels today, one at blessing of palms beginning Mass and one just now at typical gospel time in Liturgy of Word. Two gospels?, does that mean I get to give two homilies? I'm not, and the good news for us all, is that I want us to microscope in, on a detail, and not telescope out and lose focus on our detail. So, I encourage each of us to focus on the detail that particularly strikes us (for each, that will be different) that and keep that detail as a prayer focus throughout the week, as we walk with Christ all through Holy Week and until Easter!

We can be surprised when we really look close for details! Here is one! Today is Palm Sunday, right? In our first gospel reading that told of the apostles securing the donkey from the anonymous donor, who heard any mention about palms? Surprise- the word wasn't used-Luke doesn't mention palms - (Only John 12:13, 18 mentions palms by name – Mark & Matt only say that **branches** (*not palms by name*) are cut and used). So, Luke doesn't say that the crowds, waved & welcomed Jesus with Palms. But they do wave and lay something else out on (their cloaks) the roadway before Jesus – and that is the detail that I want to reflect upon today. This detail (their cloaks) says a lot about the crowd 1)identifying with Jesus and sharing in a 2)genuine sacrifice with Him as disciples. To cut branches and place them on road, well that is the tree's sacrifice (*I hope they'd ask the tree if it wanted to give away branches?-Like that donkey, was that voluntary?,*) but to take off my own cloak and place it on the road-that is my sacrifice. That's a little closer to me, and I am going to personally **feel** that sacrifice! So, let's look closer at those cloaks? (*Please note that this detail, is not picked out of the blue- I'm following Luke's pointing-finger at cloak emphasis.*) Luke mentions giving cloaks **twice** in this reading: when the two disciples secure the donkey, & bring it to Jesus, Luke 19:35 says they "threw their cloaks over the colt" to seat Jesus comfortably upon an improvised saddle. **These disciples know how to serve**, giving their own clothes to help Jesus' mission (shirt off one's back we say). Then

secondly, we will hear about the crowds of people, **offering their own cloaks** and laying them down along the roadway path into Jerusalem. What does that mean? I understand this laying down of cloaks to be a personal way of ‘rolling out the red carpet’ or ‘setting out the welcome mat at my door’. It is a sign of my joyful reception of Jesus, and all that He brings with His visit! I’m eager to welcome him, preparing for Him, by an action readying the way for His approach-like when our nation’s military servicemen/women come home from a deployment, and we have a parade of yard signs posted like arrows, all the way down the street directing them back to their homeplace! Welcome! But with Jesus here, this advance preparation is not just any ‘carpet’ or signage, it is the **people’s actual cloaks**! That is so personal and very Jesus, to me!

Think of this gesture as a friend taking a jacket off, which I witnessed recently at a graveside burial service, and wrapping a grieving widow to protect her from both the rain and the cold wind. That corporal work of mercy-sacrifice is really welcoming Jesus—and I think that’s why Luke emphasizes the cloak detail! Think of the legend about Sir Walter Raliegth, the ever gallant gentleman, taking his velvet coat and laying it over a mud puddle for the Queen, Elizabeth, to step on without soiling her feet- chivalrous, but still sacrifice). But a more relevant story for us Christians (nothing against Sir Raliegth) to Luke’s emphasis on sacrificial discipleship, (*our Christ who taught us that when your cloak is demanded, “give away even your tunic”-Lk 6:29 and when sent on mission ‘don’t drag along second tunic”-Lk 9:3, or the example of a true disciple answering Jesus’ call, Bartimaeus threw aside-giving away- his beggar’s cloak to follow Jesus, & this same Jesus who when dying for us, giving us everything of his life, gave away even his own clothing being stripped before being executed, Luke 23;34 & Jn 19:23-24*). Well, St Martin, a soldier when he was in process of converting to Christ, was riding along the road and encountered a shivering cold beggar. Martin had already been giving away his fine clothes, and had only what he wore that day on him, so he took his sword, cut his cloak in half and wrapped the beggar in it. How this all goes, later that night in his prayers, he receives a vision of Christ, who now happens to be clothed in that half cloak of Martin’s own! He realized the prophecy fulfilled, “Whatever you do to the least of my brothers and sisters, you do to me” Matt 25:40 So, today, the point of the cloaks being laid in the road as a reception welcome to Jesus is a sign of discipleship, sacrifice for him, but also identification with Him. When we follow Him, and take up corporal works of mercy, and act of service sacrifice for others in His name, we give like He gave, we throw in our shirt, surrender to him and follow (on Christ’s team, like when as a kid in a pickup basketball game at the corner court, one team was identified as “the shirts”, one team was “the skins”!). By sharing our cloaks on the ground before Jesus’ coming, we welcome Him by any act of charity shared with the least of his brothers/sisters.