

**PALM SUNDAY OF YEAR B HOMILY ESSENDON 2021**  
**WELCOME TO JERUSALEM AND PASSION**  
*Mk 14.1-15.47      Is 50.4-7      Phil 2.8-9*

Welcome to Holy Week 2021, but without any frills or big processions this year. At least let's be thankful we are back into action together as a worshipping community of faith, as opposed to lockdown and virtual connection in 2020!

We begin with the usual commemoration of Jesus entering Jerusalem to the welcoming and joyful crowds of ordinary people, waving their olive branches and palms as a sign of greeting, respect and homage. Yet, as we know, the tone quickly and ominously changes for the worse, as the dark side of the religious leaders, the Pharisees not specifically mentioned, emerges with the account of the Passion, Mark's being the first.

In fact, Mark's Gospel has been described as a Passion narrative, with a long introduction! The whole Gospel portrays Jesus as determinedly heading towards his fate, but with the emphasis on the Good News of outreach, healing, forgiveness, compassion and inclusion along the way.

Just to focus briefly on the distinctive characteristics and characters of Mark, we have first Jesus for dinner, significantly at Simon the Leper's place (presumably a former outcast), where and when the unidentified woman pours the expensive oil over Jesus' head, as Jesus foretells his impending fate, with a reminder to care for the poor.

Next we have the dark side of betrayal by Judas (with the *Judas kiss*), the Agony in the Garden, the weak, but sleeping apostles, and then denial by fearful Peter, when the heat was on him. At the end of the story so far, we end up with Simon of Cyrene, commandeered without much choice, it seems, to help Jesus carry his cross, the faithful ever-present women, and finally the courageous prominent Jewish member of the Council, daring to come to Pilate to request the body of Jesus for burial, out of respect and love for Jesus, indicative of his faith and hope in him. Do we fall short, and do we sway with the wind or the fickle crowd, when the heat is on us?

We can all identify with these characters in one way or another, as we face up to our own crosses in life and do our best to live out our faith, especially in adversity.

**Again, we are reminded the Project Compassion theme for this Lent of 2021 is "*Be more*".** So, as part of our Lenten commitment, let's continue to support the cause through your envelopes or boxes, or by credit card or on-line, and please return your boxes and envelopes to the church or parish office after Easter weekend.

*john hannon*

*28<sup>th</sup> March 2021*