

In the Name of the Father, and of the ✠ Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

“Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is He who comes in the Name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!”

Colt and donkey bear Him in. Zion’s daughter rejoices at the entry of her King. No armies flank Him, no Prophet leads Him, no Priest goes before Him, as was Israel’s tradition. This One alone, the One to whom they shout “Hosanna”, “Save now!”, He alone is Prophet, Priest and King. And still He comes lowly, fulfilling the Promise God made through the Prophet Zechariah made half a millennium before. The hope of the ages enters the Holy City. Blessed is He who comes in the Name of the Lord!

They render their vestments to cover the donkey and colt, they strew His way with palms. They go before Him and behind Him proclaiming Him to be David’s Promised Son, the One who comes in the Lord’s Name to save Israel. And yet a strange King He is. He rides into a city that is not His. He teaches the people to pay taxes to another. The palace before Him in the City of Peace is not empty, the throne is already occupied. As it was in Bethlehem, so now it is in Jerusalem – there is no room for Him.

Those who cry out around Him obey a different king. And the rulers of the people seek to take His life. They want no part of this King, nor of His Kingdom. They rebuke and revile Him, and although He silences them, still they murmur against Him. Soon their grumblings will turn to shouts. Soon “Hosanna” will be “Crucify!”

And still He rides in. He does not hesitate, He does not turn back. He knows well what is before Him. The Blessed One will be cursed. The One mounted on the cloaks of others will be stripped of His tunic. He would teach and preach, but soon be silenced. And the fig tree He cursed would not be the most cursed of trees.

He is anointed in Bethany, prepared for burial while He still lives. He came to die. He gives His Body and Blood to the Twelve. And singing a hymn, He goes to the Mount of Olives. The crushing weight of the sins of the world and of the Holy Law would be His press at Gethsemane, His soul overwhelmed, His sweat Blood.

And it is yours this day to hear the account of His Holy Passion. But you hear those awful Words not as an innocent bystander. Faith knows that what He does, He does for you. The sins that wrought the horrible condemnation He suffers are your sins. The life so painfully poured out should rightfully be your life. The agony He endures ought to be yours.

Because it is not only Peter that has denied Him. With every sin you have committed, you too have said “I do not know the Man.” With the crowds that cried out on the hilltop you too have wanted a different king, a worldly king that grants temporal gifts to those obedient to him.

By hiding your faith, by failing to pray, by hesitating to confess Him to others, by turning to fleshly and worldly things instead of turning to Him, by withholding your offerings from Him and yet paying taxes to a worldly king, you too have betrayed Him. By your sins, with Pilate, you have judged it expedient to distance yourself from this strange King.

But in His great love for you, in mercy, He did not distance Himself from you. That you be His own, that you be torn from the secular and temporal allegiances of this perverse world, He interceded for you with the God from whose presence your first father was banished. He drew nigh unto you by taking on your flesh, by becoming Man, to pay the great debt of your transgressions, to settle your account with God.

The cost was great. St. Matthew recounts the spitting and slapping, the tearing of the scourge and the buffeting, the bearing of the heavy weight of His own cross. He stumbled for the many times you have stumbled, He fell for the fall of the first man, and from every man thereafter. But still He suffered His sinless hands to be pierced, the beautiful feet that bring the Gospel of Peace He suffered to be violently marred.

As He sent His disciples to retrieve the colt and the donkey, He said "...the Lord has need of them." He who spoke the beasts of the earth into being had need. But truth be told, it is you who have need of Him. And He filled that need, He answered your prayers, by His Holy Passion and His Precious Death. For in Him, you are spared. In Him, your death is taken away. In Him, your sins are buried, removed for all eternity. In the Lord who died for you, you have life. For as the donkey and colt were loosed to serve Him, so on them He served you by going to the cross, that your sins be loosed from you.

Behold, O True Israel; Behold, O Church of Christ, your King comes to you. He is borne in on Word preached and read. He is borne in on watery font, where the Spirit that proceeds from the Father and the Son brings you the new life that He won for you. Your King comes to you as you are given new birth, as the first creation gives way to the new creation. And He whose way was strewn with vestments, He who was stripped of His tunic, vests you with His righteousness, and places you on the Way of Salvation.

And behold, Daughter of Zion, your King comes to you, lowly, upon lowly bread and in lowly wine. His Holy Body is placed into your mouth, and you receive your King. His precious Blood, shed for you, is streamed into you, filling your soul with the forgiveness and life He won. The cry of the Israelites, "Hosanna", is your cry, as you pray "Save now!", and He answers your prayer with the Holy Eucharist. For He who entered Jerusalem on that palm-strewn road has opened the road to the Tree of Life, Whose leaves are for the healing of the nations.

Behold, Daughter of Zion, your King has come. He went silently, uncomplaining, and redeemed you. He has finished His work. He has brought you into His Kingdom. All glory, laud and honor, to Thee Redeemer King! "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is He who comes in the Name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!"

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