

## Palm Sunday - 2020

Some years ago, a book was written by a noted American historian entitled *When the Cheering Stopped*. It was the story of President Woodrow Wilson and the events leading up to and following World War I. When that war was over, Wilson, the 28<sup>th</sup> president of the United States was an international hero. There was a great spirit of optimism abroad, and people actually believed that the last war had been fought, and the world had been made safe for democracy.

On his first visit to Paris after the war, Wilson was greeted by cheering mobs. He was actually more popular than France's own heroes. The same thing was true in England and Italy. The cheering lasted about a year. Then it gradually began to stop.

At home, Woodrow Wilson ran into opposition in the United States Senate, and his League of Nations was not ratified. Under the strain of it all, the President's health began to break. In the next election his party was defeated. So it was that Woodrow Wilson, a man who barely a year or two earlier had been heralded as the new world Messiah, came to the end of his days a broken and defeated man.

It's a sad story, but one that is not altogether unfamiliar. The ultimate reward for someone who tries to translate ideals into reality is apt to be frustration and defeat. It happened that way to Jesus. When He emerged on the public scene, He was an overnight sensation. On Palm Sunday, leafy palm branches were spread before Him and there were shouts of "Hosanna." But before it was all over, a tidal wave of manipulated opposition had welled up that brought Jesus to the cross.

An interesting as well as challenging old fable tells of the colt that carried Jesus on Palm Sunday. The colt thought that the reception was organized to honor him. "I am a unique donkey!" this excited animal might have thought. When he asked his mother if he could walk down the same street alone the next day and be honored again, his mother said, "No, you are nothing without Him who was riding you."

Five days later, the colt saw a huge crowd of people in the street. It was Good Friday, and the soldiers were taking Jesus to Calvary. The colt could not resist the temptation of another royal reception. Ignoring the warning of his mother, he ran to the street, but he had to flee for his life as soldiers chased him and people stoned him.

Thus, the colt finally learned the lesson that he was only a poor donkey without Jesus.

As we enter Holy Week, today's readings challenge us to examine our lives to see whether we carry Jesus within us and bear witness to Him through our living or are Christians in name only.