

ECHO



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THE NEWSLETTER OF THE
ECUMENICAL CHURCH OF OCCITANIE
www.ourchurch.fr

WELCOME TO PALMLESS SUNDAY ?

*Ian Paul, theologian, Assistant Minister, Professor and blogger
Considers an absence of Palms on Palm Sunday*



If you read the story of Jesus' entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday in the Gospel of St. Luke (Luke 19), there is no mention whatsoever of people spreading palm branches across the road ahead of him.

Instead, Luke tells us how people spread their cloaks and outer garments across the road as Jesus approached. So maybe this Sunday is Cloak Sunday or Palmless Sunday...

This section of St Luke's Gospel is focussed on the question: "Who is Jesus ?" and "What kind of King do we want to rule over us ?"

The whole of Luke's Gospel since the beginning of Luke 9 has been leading up the moment when Jesus will arrive in Jerusalem. Jerusalem - the centre of spiritual, religious and political power. The Jews believed that God would be revealed again in Jerusalem. Jerusalem was the city whence all the great Jewish religious leaders had come. Scholars believe that because Luke's Gospel was written to be read (or listened to) by Gentiles, and not by Jews, it was important to emphasise that while Jesus and his Good News had come for everyone, it had originated from the Jews and Jerusalem.

The Apostles believed that Jesus would restore the Kingdom of Israel on Earth (Acts 1:6 "So when they had come together, they asked him, "Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?")

It appears however that Jesus made two entries into Jerusalem, one the great public one, and then later another more modest one to celebrate the Feast of the Passover. Between these two entries, where was he staying ? With Mary, Martha and Lazarus in Bethany, only a few kilometres outside the walls of Jerusalem ? Was he staying in the nearby village of Bethphage (which translates as "The house of unripe figs") which links to the parable from a couple of week ago about the fig tree that bore no fruit ?

All pilgrims approached Jerusalem on foot. To ride in was a mark of Kingship and great wealth. A King rode on a mount which had never been ridden before (like Jesus' donkey) and

to enter in this way was not a coronation parade but the recognition of a King who had already been victorious.

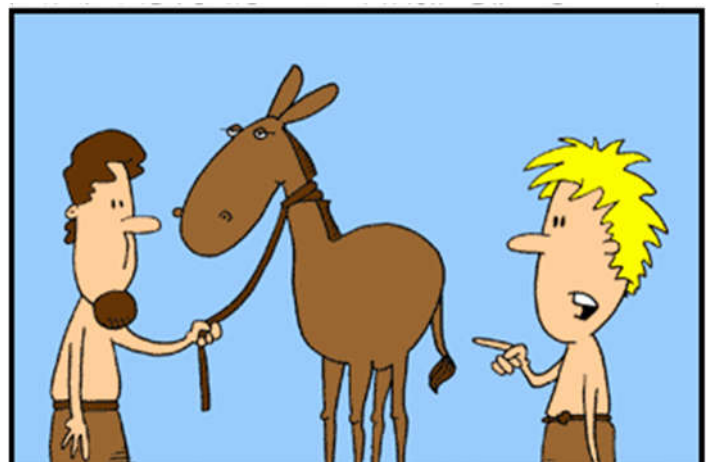
So Jesus arrives, a King who brings peace—the crowds cry "Peace in heaven". He is a King worthy of praise and brings joy. He brings power. In Luke, the disciples proclaim the mighty works he has seen.

But Jesus comes not to claim power and glory but in obedience to God and to meet his own death. His victory will be to re-unite God and His people.

The challenge to each of us is: Will we stand with the Disciples and welcome the King of Peace and Power or stand with the Pharisees to reject him, to deny his power and oppose our loving and forgiving God ?

Each of us must decide for ourselves

We hope you will join ECO Online on Palm Sunday for our special service as we commemorate Palm Sunday.



I DO UNDERSTAND THAT JESUS HAS NEED OF MY COLT, BUT PLEASE REMIND HIM THAT OUR POLICY IS THAT HE MUST BE RETURNED WITH A FULL STOMACH AND UNLESS HE BUYS A PALM BRANCH DAMAGE WAIVER POLICY, HE WILL HAVE TO PAY THE FIRST 20 SHEKELS OF ANY DAMAGE INCURRED



(ANOTHER) HAPPY BIRTHDAY

As the ECO Group in the North of the Occitanie gathered for their 5th and final Lent Discussion on the topic of Lament (a study course published by Embrace the Middle East), they took time out to celebrate Nils Ankarcrona's birthday.

ECHO do not report people's ages (all these devilish hackers like to gather information like that) but we can share with you that Nils was old enough to go to the Wine Merchant to buy the bubbles himself !

We wish Nils a very happy birthday and would like to thank everyone who helped to organise or who attended the physical Lent Group and also ECO's Zoom Lent Group which has been meeting every Wednesday.

ECHO Is Changing

When ECHO was created in June 2021 to provide news about our new online worship initiative, we intended to produce it on a monthly basis. We found however that there was a lot to report as we evolved and grew so we retained a weekly format.

In March 2022, however, for the first time, we had more than **6,000** hits on our website and visitors are finding their way to ECHO without any help from us.

Therefore, from the 28th April edition, ECHO will switch to a much larger, monthly format, with shorter weekly notices to supplement it. More details soon.

WE HOPE THAT YOU WILL JOIN US DURING HOLY WEEK

Please don't forget that we are broadcasting on Tuesday, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and Holy Saturday next week. Full details are in the online diary on the front page of our website.

Our Maundy Thursday service will be special service in which we break bread and share wine as we remember the Last Supper, **but this is not a service of Communion**. We will also be taking a moment during the service to pray, as we normally do on a Thursday, for all those in need of God's Healing Touch. Please have bread and wine to hand if you wish to join in with us.

On Good Friday, we will twice be sharing a special drama performed by the Riding Lights Theatre Company set in Pontius Pilate's home on Good Friday. We are not allowed under copyright rules to leave this online, so although you can join us via our website at 14:00 or 19:00, the performances will disappear approximately 30 minutes after they have been broadcast.

On Holy Saturday evening, we will be sharing a short evening service which will include the singing of the Exsultet by Rev Canon Susan Wallace, recorded especially for ECO in Romsey Abbey.

And then please join us on Easter Sunday morning, as usual, when we celebrate the Resurrection of our Lord.

Church Mice

Karl Zorowski

