



# THE VOICE OF SAINT MARK

*Podcast of the Coptic Orthodox Tradition*

Parish of Saint John the Theologian – Dijon

Episode:

## **Palm Sunday**

*Gospel of John 12:12–19 | Palm Sunday*

*Coptic Orthodox Tradition*

### **Episode Presentation**

**Dear listeners,**

Welcome to The Voice of Saint Mark, the podcast of the Coptic Orthodox parish of Saint John the Theologian in Dijon.

We have now reached Palm Sunday — the solemn threshold of Holy Week, the gateway to the Paschal mystery. Today, the Coptic Orthodox Church enters Jerusalem with Christ, bearing palms and lights, acclaiming the King who comes.

The Gospel proposed to us today is from Saint John, chapter 12, verses 12 to 19.

**Let us now listen to the Word of the Lord.**

### **Gospel of John 12:12–19**

*At that time,*

The great crowd that had come to the feast heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem.

So they took branches of palm trees and went out to meet him, crying out,

**“Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel!”**

And Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it, just as it is written:

**“Fear not, daughter of Zion; behold, your king is coming, sitting on a donkey’s colt!”**

His disciples did not understand these things at first, but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things had been written about him and had been done to him.

The crowd that had been with him when he called Lazarus out of the tomb and raised him from the dead continued to bear witness.

The reason why the crowd went to meet him was that they heard he had done this sign.

So the Pharisees said to one another, “You see that you are gaining nothing. Look, the world has gone after him.”

Let us now listen to the homily of Father Roland.

### **Homily**

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✠ *In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, one God, Amen.*



*The crowd acclaim Christ as King today.*

“Hosanna to the Son of David” — this is the royal cry, the acclamation proper to a King. The crowd recognises him as the legitimate King, and his entry into Jerusalem appears as a triumphal procession. Everything, on this feast of Palm Sunday, seems to announce victory.

At last, the crowd thinks, someone will conquer our adversary — the Roman Empire. And yes, Christ is King, yes he is victorious — but his battle is not the one they imagine.

This peaceful King — Son of David, Son of Man, Son of God — will indeed wage war. But he will raise no army, he will call no angels to arms, he will make no generals of his apostles and no soldiers of the crowd. It is alone that he will go into battle, alone. And his combat will not be against Rome, but against death, against sin, against hell.

Today Christ enters Jerusalem solemnly and also humbly — as though to prepare his true triumph. And his true triumph is victory over death. The light we carry on this day of Palms will soon illuminate the abyss — the abyss of the darkness of the Passion and the Cross. And from that darkness will burst forth the unspeakable dawn of the Resurrection.

Throughout this Holy Week, darkness and light will succeed one another, intermingle, interweave, answer one another. Such is the deep meaning of these singular days.

After Lent, the Church invites us to follow Christ step by step, hour by hour. As our patriarch has reminded us: Holy Week is not a remembrance — it is a participation. It cannot be merely understood intellectually; it must be lived. To live the offices of Holy Week is to enter truly into the mystery of Christ, to become one with him.

The soul that participates in the sufferings of Christ participates also in his glory, says Saint Macarius the Great, whom we celebrate today. It is to offer him our sufferings, yes — but it is to receive in fullness the grace of the new birth that springs from his death and his Resurrection.

For Christ, who is without sin, bore the sin of the entire world. But he did not bear it in our place, as though man were excluded from salvation — no. He bore it in us, with us, for us. By his Incarnation he assumed our whole nature, body and soul. Having assumed our flesh, it is in that flesh that he presented himself before the Father. He bore in himself — he, the God-Man — the entire human condition, not instead of man, but in man. For as the Fathers teach us, following Saint Gregory of Nazianzus: what is not assumed is not saved.

Thus, in himself and through himself, he restores humanity. He gives us back a nature recreated, renewed, sanctified — a nature henceforth capable of eternal life.

This is why the Cross unites within itself two realities that seem so utterly opposed: death and victory. For death dies in Christ, and in him, for us, death is conquered. As we shall chant at the Paschal Vigil: by death he has trampled upon death.

And Saint John Chrysostom proclaims in his famous Paschal homily: “Hell was filled with bitterness, for it was destroyed.” Such is the great mystery of the Cross.

And this mystery extends into our own lives, today. For in each one of us there is a battle. Often, when we pass through trial, suffering, illness or anguish, an invisible battle is

being waged within us — a battle between Christ and the enemy. Saint Macarius says further: “The heart becomes a battlefield where light and darkness contend.”

You may feel crushed, chained, plunged in darkness. You may have the impression that you can no longer fight, that you have no strength left. But it is precisely at that moment that the battle is taking place — not by you, but for you. For on another plane, an invisible plane, Christ always fights, alone. He fights death, he fights sin, he fights the darkness within us.

Therefore, never despair. God fights for you when you can fight no more, Pope Shenouda III tells us still. And let us recall that famous Paschal word: Christ will be in agony until the end of the world.

Such is the mystery we are preparing to contemplate. Such is the path we enter today. Let us walk with Christ, let us go with him to Jerusalem. And above all, let us go with him all the way — to the Cross — so that with him we may receive the light of the Resurrection.

*Lent does not begin on the plate — it begins in the heart.*

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**✠ To him be glory for ever and ever. Amen. ✠**

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