

Those preceding him as well as those following kept crying out: "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!"

MARK 11:9



SUZANNE TUCKER / SHUTTERSTOCK

Empty Praise

How could anyone think that the joyous cry "Hosanna!" would be viewed as empty praise? Though the word has come down to us in the Greek Gospels, it probably has Hebrew roots as a form of the verb "to save" (see Psalm 118:25). Thus, it is more than an exuberant cry; it is a plea for salvation. How could this possibly be empty praise?

The answer to that question is found in human fickleness. So often we—not simply the people of Jerusalem, but we human beings—wholeheartedly offer someone our support, only to turn our backs on that person when the going gets tough. We know from experience how this works.

This is precisely what today's readings describe. The passage for the procession with palms describes an enthusiastic group of people showing Jesus great respect and crying out: "Hosanna!" Later, in the Gospel we hear, "Crucify him!" Were these the same people? Does it matter? Presumably these were people who were in Jerusalem to celebrate Passover, the feast of their deliverance from Egyptian bondage. Now they are caught in another oppressive political system—Roman occupation. Are these heartless people? Or are they like us: often afraid to take an unpopular stand lest we lose face or, even worse, suffer serious consequences? And so, Jesus stands alone before those who have planned to silence him. Might he have considered the earlier "Hosanna" empty praise? Probably not. Jesus does not hold our fickleness against us.

Sr. Dianne Bergant, CSA

For Reflection

- ★ *How steadfast have you been in your support of others?*
- ★ *Thank Jesus for his willingness to forgive your fickleness.*

