

## **PALM SUNDAY 2019 – St. John Marie Vianney**

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### **La Homilia Prima a fuori – The Tree of life and Availability |(Service of Palms)**

The donkey represents our availability to the Lord whereas the tree on which it was tied represents the tree that made us unavailable / unsuitable for the Lord. Jesus orders that this tree be chopped down so that in its place he can plant the liberating tree, the Cross. Originally, we were prohibited from eating from a particular tree, a tree of knowledge of good and bad. Eating from it would lead to disorder and arrogance – according to the snake we will become like God. None of us would survive this temptation, being a mini God. There is need of orderliness in every life situation – statutes amongst others help us achieve this orderliness. Seminary statutes establish a harmonious home for both formators and those being formed. At times life becomes sour for sowers of disorder, you get demoted, removed or transferred but above all, society loses faith in you because you are a cause of pain to it. The original tree that separated us from God, a tree on which the donkey's freedom of movement is deprived, a tree of sin that makes us cower into a cocoon and fear publicity. The tree that makes us feel naked is chopped down today. We will enter Jerusalem trampling on its leaves and branches.

God trusted mankind but our fathers in faith betrayed that trust – they failed to simply observe a single dietary command – do not eat of this tree or else you will exacerbate your High blood pressure, you diabetes, your TB etc., you will die. The Do Not phrase is important in every institution to sustain us – do not cheat or else you will contract STIs, loose trust of your partner, your authorities etc. Seemingly experience says it is hard to stay faithful and Jesus is here to restore this capacity to stay faithful to the Statutes. Untie your weaknesses and hand them over to the Lord.

Now doom came through the failure to Do Not eat of this tree. An Adamic tree brought condemnation, shame to mankind (all of a sudden they felt a need to cover themselves – they felt naked / exposed – you have a problem if sin does not make you feel naked, feel ashamed, uncomfortable. Look at its origins and attend to it. Jesus today tramples the palms and olives. Even though they are gestures of respect, the trees remind him that through the eating of the fruit from a tree humanity lost sanctity, lost its goodness and availability for God, attained original sin. Now Jesus introduces another tree, the tree of life. On it he forgives sins, feels vindicated: “None of those you have given to me have been lost except Judas”. Hopefully we belong to the saved not the lost. Hopefully we can be categorised as trees that give life and not trees that lead to temptation that leads to doom. The phrase Botle bona le dibelebejane should not apply to us, we are not good looking unproductive fig trees but we should be medicinal trees.

He looked for a virgin donkey. Let us be that donkey that facilitates Jesus to accomplish his mandate. Be a donkey through which life is attained, a donkey that calls prophet Balaam to order in Numbers 22:28. Be not a donkey or tree that leads to enmity with God. Today we carry Christ into our families through the palms to secure them; we carry him into society as a bearer of good tidings. Let us accompany him with encouraging hymns as he enters our Jerusalem to change our lives for the better. Let us become the obedient Apostles who untied the donkey, liberating both our academically and economically deprived brothers and sisters. Today Jesus Chooses to send you to facilitate his ministry. Are you willing?

## **Dentro La Chiesa (At mass)**

The Lord has need of our souls that were previously tied to the tree of sin. He ushers our souls from their prison of abandonment to the tree of sin into the Jerusalem of redemption. His triumphant entry into Jerusalem supersedes physical entrance. This triumph will culminate on the Cross. Please note that between the entry and the cross there was suffering. When souls are liberated from the tree of sin, the Adamic tree, they should not be afraid to go through the route of suffering as that route leads into victory. Seminarians in seeking priesthood should go through purification of fire, else easy come easy go. You are not going to have it easy here. Easy applies in the secular world. Jesus our master and role model gets tormented by Satan in Gethsemane. Satan was at hand to discourage him from carrying the load of our sins. We have so often had Satan tell us hore re senya bana ha re sa sotle – we often get beautiful alternative suggestions from the devil on our way to do the will of God. Gethsemane actually means “Oil Press”. It thus appears that the load of our sins was pressed upon Jesus that it seemed to be too much for him to bear. No wonder he asked if the cup could pass, but let the will of God be done. We too wish away suffering in our different vocations. We would rather insult formators than let the will of God be done through them. Having it easy is not our call brothers. Hlokoana la bophelo le tholwa seretseng.

At Gabbatha Jesus was betrayed, deserted, beaten, rejected, mocked, scourged, crowned with thorns and condemned to die by those he came to set free from the tree of sin. As we fail in our priesthood, as we betray our families, as we malfunction in our work stations, as we break seminary statutes, Jesus painfully turns to us and asks: “My friend, Is it through a kiss, a hug, that you betray the son of man, for which of my works do you repay me like this?”

At Golgotha our Lord feels abandoned not only by us but also by the one who send him, God the Father. Not only beneficiaries of his incarnation and passion betray him, but the one who send him seems distant. This happens to all of us. When my bishop sometimes behaves in a funny way I always like Jesus ask God where he is. My God my God why have you forsaken me? The same parish, parents and friends that encouraged you to get married, be a Seminarian, become a priest, will abandon you when the going gets tough. It's nothing new. Humanity of Christ, not his Divinity dies on the Cross. Your souls will never perish but your bodies. We are drinking a bitter medicine to regain health, our sanctity. Life is not a bed of roses my friends. At times it becomes the Hosanna in the highest of entering Jerusalem and at times it becomes the Crucify him shouted by the same friends we went out for fun with. One sure thing is, with the Lord looking at the Cross, at the bronze serpent we will rise from our suffering. Easter is a new dawn for us. Bear its challenges with patience and you will become victorious like our Lord.