

## **Palm Sunday resources** by Rosalie Sugrue

### **Call to worship:**

The festival of Palm Sunday is a Christian custom,  
a custom that extends back almost to the year dot.

**Each succeeding year the faithful give voice to hope,  
not just in devout song, but in cheers of acclamation.**

Waving greenery wafts whispers of liberation,  
- whispers that rise to crescendos of joy,

On reflection the commemoration is peculiar...

**Because we know what that first crowd didn't know,  
We know how the journey ended...**

So why add our hosannas to theirs?

Is it because a divine spark resides in all humans

**A spark that calls us to rejoice in the journey**

**A spark that says no matter how it ends**

Life is more about the journey than the destination.

**What can be celebrated should be celebrated, for**

**Hope springs eternal and death does not defeat Joy.**

### **Benediction/Commission**

We go from this service  
mindful of calendar-changing  
events of 2,000 years ago.

**We go into a world of problems,  
Problems so vast we feel helpless;**

Yet as individuals we make choices -  
small choices;

**But even small choices  
make a small difference;**

Collectively the difference could be great.

**Help us make the right choices,**

**So we may live as you**

**would have us live.**

## **Palm Sunday - Customs and Traditions** (compiled by RMS)



### **Palm crosses**

**In England** there is a Church of England tradition of giving the children crosses made from single palm leaves. Many churches have a procession in or around the church while people sing songs of praise and wave palm leaves in memory of Christ's triumphal entry into Jerusalem. The left over Palm Crosses are kept and burned to make ashes for next year's Ash Wednesday services.



## Figs and Cakes

In some English churches small buns called **pax cakes** (symbolic of peace and goodwill) are given to the congregation as they leave after a Palm Sunday service. Palm Sunday also has the nick name '**Fig Sunday**' because Christ had wanted to eat some when travelling to Jerusalem (Mark 11: 12-14). Figs were once traditionally eaten on this day.



**Visiting Wells** In some parts of England Palm Sunday was a traditional day for visiting wells and leaving an offering for the spirit of the well. In some places pins were dropped in the wells whilst in other places rags were hung around the wells. It was thought by doing this the spirit of the well would keep the water fresh and clean.

Sallow, or pussy willow, was used in many places as a palm substitute, and was commonly known as English Palm amongst country folk. Box, yew, hazel, common willow and daffodils (Lent Lilies) were other alternatives in the days before palm was easily available as an import from Spain.



## Well Dressing

The origins of the tradition are alternatively said to lie in pagan tradition, or in giving thanks for the purity of the water drawn from certain wells during the period of the Black Death. It has been said to have originated in Tissington, Derbyshire in 1349. Became associated with Holy Week as a Holy Thursday ritual. But revived in recent times as part of the *Celebration of Britain Festival* Peak District Wells are now dressed in May and June when summer flowers are more abundant.

According to William Hone, in his book *Peak Scenery* he records the words of a traveller named Rhodes written in 1835: "An ancient custom still prevails in the village of Tissington, to which indeed it appears to be confined, for I have not met with any thing of a similar description in any other part of Derbyshire. It is denominated well-flowering, and Holy Thursday is devoted to the rites and ceremonies of this elegant custom. The day is regarded as a festival; and all the wells in the place, five in number, are decorated with wreaths and garlands of newly-gathered flowers, disposed in various devices. Sometimes boards are used, which are cut to the figure intended to be represented, and covered with moist clay into which the stems of the flowers are inserted to preserve their freshness; and they are so arranged to form a beautiful mosaic work, often tasteful in design, and vivid in colouring; the boards thus adorned are placed in the spring, that the water appears to issue from among the beds of flowers. On this occasion the villagers put on their best attire and open their houses to their friends. There is a service at the church, where a sermon is preached: afterwards a procession takes place, and the wells are visited in succession: the psalms for the day, the epistle and gospel are read, one at each well, and the whole concludes with a hymn which is sung by the church singers, and accompanied by a band of music. This done they separate, and the remainder of the day is spent in rural sports and pastimes.

Method: Wooden frames are constructed and covered with clay, mixed with water and salt. A design is sketched on paper, often of a religious theme, and this is traced onto

the clay. The picture is then filled in with natural materials, predominantly flower petals and mosses, but also beans, seeds and small cones.



### **Bula Vinaka (Hello) from Fiji**

Palm Sunday is an exciting occasion for the children – children all across the country wear white, which we believe represents, purity, innocence. On this Sunday, it's mostly the children that conduct the whole service for 10.00am and 4.00pm. They recite their memory verses, present a scene about the 'Triumphal Entrance of Jesus', and do group singing etc.

*Regards. Wilisoni Foiakau, (Methodist congregation) Suva*



### **Fern Waving and Flax Crosses**

In New Zealand many congregations wave fern fronds often from ponga (tree fern) while they sing Palm Sunday Hymns – such as: Children of Jerusalem (MHB 837); *Come into the streets with me* (AA 22); *The journey of life* (WOV 670)

Some congregations are given small crosses made from flax (that may have been made by the children as a Sunday School or Messy Church activity).