**Palm Sunday – Philippians 2:5-11 & Matthew 21:1-11**

*‘Hosanna now to David’s Son! God’s blessing on the coming one! Hosanna in the highest! (Matthew 21:9b)*

What challenges we are facing today! I got an email saying that the flight that I had booked for later this month was cancelled. No surprise under the present circumstances, but who would have thought, when I booked a few months ago – is it only a few months? – that such plans were to be thwarted in just a matter of weeks. Most of the entries in my diary, which was getting quite full up to and including summer already, can now be crossed out; and what’s the point of a diary when you can’t go anywhere anyway? But a cancelled flight is a small price to pay compared to the plight of many others, who have seen their routine or even some possibly life-saving operations cancelled or postponed, or whose homes were recently flooded. Although I cannot now see my family, I know that there is the possibility of my seeing them at a later date which is a blessing. Hope keeps me going. And the fact that I still have a few toilet rolls left. As long as the basics are covered, why should I complain?

Palm Sunday is when Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey. No royal aeroplane got him there; he hadn’t arrived by a special train or a coach, not even, more in line with the times, on horseback – after all, a king or a triumphant warrior would arrive with a certain pomp. Jesus, though, was carried on a donkey, an animal of humility and service. The crowds were ecstatic: finally, finally, the good times were coming; to replace the bad times under Roman oppression. An old prophesy was being fulfilled and the people were responding with shouts of acclamation, cutting branches from the trees and waving and spreading them on the road. Hosanna! God saves! This is a king in line with the famous King David! He will return the nation to the days of old; he will make us great again! In other words, the crowds were celebrating the arrival of a new king, but only one who would be king on their terms; who would do what they wanted. Even more so at a time when they felt they had no control over their lives. Whenever we find ourselves in a pickle, we may well do the same. We want our problems to be solved, but we don’t always want to be part of the solution. We want to be saved, but we are not always prepared to pay the price in service and humility. We don’t really like to be changed ourselves in the process. Jesus intends to answer our cries for help and all other prayers and he doesn’t wait until our motives are pure, or when we have sorted ourselves out and we feel we can look him in the eye. After all, he has come to seek and save the lost; it’s not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick.

But as on the day when Jesus was cheered by the crowds when he came to them on a donkey, we need to understand our need at a deeper level; not expect Jesus to do a ‘quick fix’ (although he can and does in certain places). Our greatest calling is to ‘love the Lord our God, and our neighbour as ourselves’ (Matthew 22:37-39). That means going deeper in our care for one another, and accepting the lesson that we are all learning now: that the basic need of humanity is love and food. Queen Marie-Antoinette infamously said ‘if the people don’t have bread, let them eat cake!’ I wonder what she would have said today about toilet rolls…. So, what if we have to learn a new way of existing as human beings in – and after – the present crisis? What can we learn from Jesus’ humility and his offer of a new life, untainted by the selfish tendencies that human beings are prone to? How does our ‘Hosanna!’ ring?

*Astrid*