

BLESSINGS ALWAYS  
March 24, 2021  
Association Minister Message  
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*CONTRAST. "Hosanna! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!" Mark 11:9. "Crucify him!" Mark 15:14.* Holy Week recognizes Jesus' final days on earth. It is a journey of *CONTRAST*. It begins with a parade with Jesus being hailed as a ruler of peace, not as one who would wage war as their Roman captors did. The Jews wanted peace with their Roman captors so that they could become an independent nation again. *"Hosanna!"* is the liturgical praise or adoration to God from the Jewish tradition. The people shouted this to Jesus as a messiah to accomplish political freedom. Messiah on Sunday but by Friday the people were ready to crucify Him. What a *CONTRAST!*

Holy Week concludes the Lenten Season. Lent is a journey of *CONTRAST*, the giving up and the receiving. It is a time of self-reflection to understand how our personal lives are in covenant with God and others. It is more than finding sins or defects or what's wrong; it is a time to realize the gifts and graces we have been given by a gracious and caring God. It is about relationship building with others. It is about making "firmer" who we are as children of God in all the humanness as created in the image of God. We are not only life-long learners but also life-long faith learners. It soon becomes evident that we live lives of *CONTRAST*, contradictions and convictions firmly grounded in our faith.

In the Book of Ecclesiastes, the Preacher in chapter 3 reminds us that we encounter so many *CONTRASTS* in life and that there is a time for everything. There are *"Hosannas"* as well as being denied respect or betrayal by those close to us. During this pandemic time, fear and worry have curtailed relationship connections and relationship building. Mental, physical and spiritual well-being have been compromised. Living in the midst of *CONTRAST* can be both exciting or detrimental. It is up to us, with God's help, to know the difference.

Holy Week is a *CONTRAST* of joy and sorrow, loyalty and desertion, living and dying. But it does not end there. We know the conclusion to this chapter in Jesus' life and it becomes the beginning of Easter joy. We ARE resurrection/resurrected people. Nothing and no thing, as Paul writes to the Romans, can separate us from the love of God through Christ Jesus our Savior. The tombs of despair and death are soon empty and *CONTRASTS* cannot overwhelm us. The crucifixion does not end it all. We are able to proclaim, *"Hosanna! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!"* The end becomes the beginning. *BLESSINGS ALWAYS.*