

Christ Church, Georgetown

Palm Sunday, April 9, 2017

The Rev. Kristen L. Hawley

Caddy or Donkey?

I grew up in upstate New York, waving the perfect parade wave from the back of our mint green convertible Cadillac with white leathers seats, sitting atop the back seat side by side with my grandmother, always the rural conservative politico – behind the boy scouts and the marching bands but always in front of the national guard on horseback followed by the least fortunate of all parade participants doing clean up detail. In rural America, we were triumphant – the landed gentry among the common folk, although our farm just a few miles away from the parade route looked a lot like the farms of the “common folk.”

Raised, I was, for the political life. Ronnie and Nancy were those friends that we always talked about but who never stopped by for the nightly Rob Roy and Tom Collins, or the card game while watching The Lawrence Welk Show on the oh-so-hip kitchen TV set. Raised to believe in the power of the public office, the power of the civil servant – the power of the people to direct and decide upon the people and laws that govern. It was my grandmother’s dream, I think, that I would come to Washington, DC one day to govern, to speak for the people of New York state, to build upon her legacy and to lead the future parades of the Mohawk Valley in style.

Fast-forward thirty-five years or so and here I stand, in Washington, DC – preaching about a different parade. A different law and a different leader, entering not the Mohawk Valley, but the city of Jerusalem, upon the back of an ass rather than that shiny mint green Caddy that still cruises through my dreams. A different parade altogether. And still, if she could understand through her dementia – I think that she would be proud.

“Two processions entered Jerusalem on a spring day in the year 30,” wrote Marcus Borg and John Dominic Crossan in their much-lauded book *The Last Week*. *“It was the beginning of the week of Passover, the most sacred week of the Jewish year... One was a peasant procession, the other an imperial procession. From the east, Jesus rode a donkey down the Mount of Olives, cheered by his followers... On the opposite side of the city, from the west, Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor of Idumea, Judea, and Samaria, entered Jerusalem at the head of a column of imperial power.”* Jesus on a donkey, surrounded by the poor who laid down branches and the cloaks off their backs at one end of town. Pontius Pilate in a caddy tricked out with all of the latest weaponry and followed by royal pooper scoopers, a full garrison and *“golden eagles mounted on poles, sun glinting on metal and gold,”* surrounded by bent knees, of the awed and resentful taxpayers who gathered for the annual procession, at the other end of town. Two processions. Two parades.

Which parade would you pick if you had the choice? For friends, even those of us raised to be in one parade have the choice of choosing the other. Which parade, if happening today in North West and South East DC, would you choose to attend? To whom would *you* shout your Hosannas and Amens? To whom would you give up your coat or bend a knee? Pilate’s parade of imperial power? Or the parade of the carpenter called Jesus? Thanks be to God – every year on this day, Palm Sunday, we get the chance to choose again.

Amen.