

Palm Sunday: (reflections)

We repeat the cry *Hosanna*, meaning “Save us Lord”. We sing hymns, pray and read the story of Jesus’ suffering and death. Words central to our faith. Consider that more than 60 percent of what we communicate is non verbal. What do we communicate when we wave palms, when we march, and we sing?

We create symbols that communicate the things we value, what we love and what we yearn for:

the red poppy, the maple leaf, the smiley face, the heart, the peace sign—and perhaps the palm leaf

Sometimes we create and subvert existing symbols to signal resistance and opposition we’re opposed to something.

In Berlin a Russian emigre named Kai Katonina has designed a peace flag. She says many in her country associate the red flag of Russia with violence and bloodshed. With found and scrounged fabric Kai hand sews a blue and white flag much like the flag of Ukraine...Kai encourages kids to use whatever coloured paper they have in whatever shades of blue they have in hopes the flag will communicate opposition to brutality and a yearning for peace.

Some intentionally intimidate us into silence and docility.

The stars and bars confederate flag, the swastika, the large Z(ed) painted on Russian tanks and aircraft churn up revulsion. In Jesus’ day, the cross was Rome’s symbol that a brutal death awaits anyone resisting.

Sometimes a symbol is transformed for good.

This holy week, some of us might make crosses out of palms. It might be a good time to think about what we’re saying. I like to think a palm cross teaches us that God transforms violence, ugliness, brutality and death into to life and one day the healing of all of creation.