

I SPY IN MY LITTLE ICON



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This month's icon depicts Christ's entrance into Jerusalem, also called Palm Sunday. It is an important Feast in our Church calendar as it marks the end of the Great Fast and the beginning of Holy Week. This story is remembered in all four Gospels- you can look it up in your Bible in Matthew 21:1-11, Mark 11:1-11, Luke 19:28-44 and John 12:12-19.

At the center of the icon, we see Jesus, sitting on a donkey. As always, he has a halo which has the Greek letters meaning the "beginning and the end" inscribed inside, as well as the letters IC XC above his head which stand for Jesus Christ. In Jesus' left

hand is a scroll symbolizing wisdom while his right hand points in blessing to the city ahead. Behind Him, the apostles stand in apparent discussion; they were confused as to why Jesus would return to Jerusalem when He knew that there were people of power plotting to kill Him. Instead of looking forward to the city, Jesus looks back at His apostles, as if to encourage them to continue on with Him to the path ahead.

In the background of the icon, we see the Mount of Olives, where we will find Jesus at the end of the week praying in the Garden of Gethsemane. We also see the domed temple inside the walls of Jerusalem. The citizens that have come out of the gates to greet Jesus are well dressed and wearing shoes, in contrast to the apostles who have unadorned sandals and stand behind Christ. We can imagine the townspeople have dressed up to see the king, high and mighty, not expecting humble Jesus riding on a donkey! A donkey was considered an animal of peace, but certainly not a majestic horse they would anticipate a king would want to ride. But if they simply remembered their scriptures, they would know that the donkey was a fulfillment of an Old Testament prophecy in Zechariah which speaks of God's king coming to Jerusalem riding on a colt.

As you can tell, there is so much meaning packed into this icon, but we're not done yet! I'm sure you noticed the little child laying down his coat right in front of Christ. Underneath, he is wearing white clothes as if he is in his baptismal garment which signifies his innocence and purity. Jesus tells us, *"Truly I say to you, unless you change and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven."* (Matthew 18:3) The icon is reminding us that it is children who model for all people how to come close to God! It shows us that we need to run to Jesus, lay down everything at Christ's feet and wear our baptismal robes so that we can enter the Heavenly City with Christ someday singing *"Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!"* (Matthew 21:9)