On Palm Sunday this year we will hear the entire Passion Narrative from the Gospel according to Mark, and selections from Mark’s Gospel are read on most other Sundays throughout 2009 (Lectionary Year B). Since Mark’s presentation of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus is significantly different from that of Matthew, Luke, or John, it is important for us to hear and understand the distinctive themes and emphases of this oldest and shortest of the four Gospels.

Mark not only presents Jesus as the Messiah and the Son of God, who proclaims the Kingdom of God with urgency, power, and authority, but he also emphasizes that Jesus is the suffering Son of Man, who was crucified and died, and who calls each of us to a discipleship that also the cross. As we journey with Jesus through Lent and beyond, Mark’s Gospel can help us be more faithful in our response to Jesus, who—despite the hardships of our own lives—invites us: “Come and follow me.”