

PALM SUNDAY OF THE PASSION OF THE LORD

Today, Palm Sunday of the Passion of the Lord, inaugurates Holy Week because today we celebrate the entrance of Our Lord into Jerusalem, where He will face His passion and death. The re-enactment of His entry is marked by the sacramental of the blessed palms or olive branches, carried by us, the “children of the Hebrews.”

This procession of Christ the King is the first of a series of processions of Holy Week and the Triduum by which we are carried to Easter. Today the procession of palms, on Holy Wednesday the procession of the sacred oils used for the year to come in the sacraments of baptism, confirmation, ordination, and the anointing of the sick, on Holy Thursday, the procession of the Blessed Sacrament to the Altar of Repose at which we watch and wait with the Lord in the Garden of Gethsemane during his agony, on Good Friday the procession and adoration of the Holy Cross “on which hung the salvation of the world” (as well as the procession of the Blessed Sacrament for the reception of Holy Communion as no Mass is ever celebrated on that day), and at the vigil of Easter the procession of the paschal candle imaging the breaking into our darkness of the light of Christ.

Our birth into this world inaugurates the great procession of our life by which we move through this world, seeking out our salvation, until we reach the gates of heaven.

Throughout our life we are lifted by joy and marred by tragedy, and often the two seem to come as one. The palms and olive branches of Christ’s triumphant entry into Jerusalem gives way to the palms and olive trees of the Garden of Gethsemane in which He endures His agony. The tribulation of the

crowds hailing Christ as the King becomes the tirade of the crowds demanding His death. He who gave sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, life the dead, and freed so many possessed by demons now suffers His own death.

Holy Week closes Lent and opens up to the Triduum, the three days of Holy Thursday, Good Friday, and Easter Sunday. But, in fact, these are not three separate occasions but form a unity, single celebration of God, who so loved the world that He gave His only son, so that we might not die but have life, and have it to the full. There is no choice to be made as to which of the three days we pray. We pray them all because to miss even one of those days would be like walking out in the middle of a movie: we will never really know what's going on or what's happened.

The mystery, this singular mystery of these three days, must be engaged. It must be confronted so that it may overwhelm us, so that we might be carried along in prayer and lowered to the grinding pains of hell and raised high to the glories of paradise. These are not days which we just sit and watch the ceremonies, but moments of grace in which we immerse ourselves in, are consumed by, the passion, death and resurrection of Christ. We must stand present, attentive, conscious to the working out by the Father, Son and Holy Spirit of our redemption and fall on our knees in wonder and awe, so that we might stand forever with all the angels and saints, with God our Father, with Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit, in the kingdom of heaven forever.