

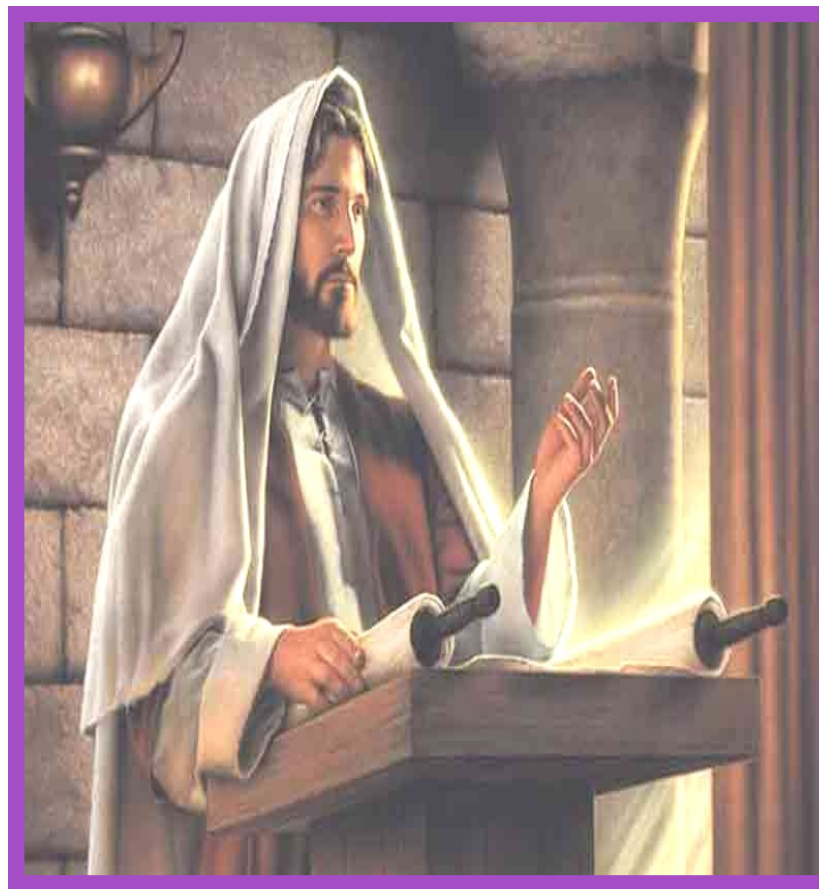


The general effect of the ceremony, with its Collect, Lesson, Gospel and Preface is not unlike that of the first part of a Mass. The blessing itself has a symbolic meaning which could not be better expressed than in the words of the *Preface* and prayers. The procession of Christians who, with palms in their hands,

yearly throughout the world acclaim Christ's royal state, is made up of all the catechumens, public penitents and faithful whom the sacraments of Baptism, Eucharist and Penance will, at Easter, unite to this glorious Victor: "And we also, with fullness of faith, retaining this as done and signified, humbly beseech Thee, O Lord, holy Father, almighty eternal God, through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord, that in Him and through Him, whose members Thou hast pleased to make us, we may become victorious over the empire of death, and deserve to share in His glorious resurrection" (*3rd Prayer after Preface*). It is this that is represented by the procession when it stops at the door of the Church, into which some members of the choir have already found their way. They chant alternately with the clergy the hymn *Gloria, laus*; on the one side "the angelic choir," and on the other Christ's soldiers, still plunged in the strife of battle, hailing the King of Glory each in his turn. Then the door opens after the sub deacon has knocked on it three times with the foot of the cross and the procession enters the church; so does the Cross of Christ open heaven to us and as will the elect one day enter with their Lord into eternal glory. We should keep a blessed palm carefully in our home. This palm is a sacramental, and, fastened to our crucifix, should serve to remind us of the victory gained for us by Christ on the Cross.



## **S E R M O N O N THE SIGNIFICANCE OF PALM SUNDAY FROM THE FATHER'S OF THE CHURCH # 148-1**



**JESUS, OUR FIRST PREACHER!**

**PALM SUNDAY**

## COMMENTARY ON PALM SUNDAY

### STATION AT SAINT JOHN LATERAN

In today's liturgy the twofold point of view from which the Church regards the Cross is expressed in two ceremonies, one marked by joy and the other by sadness. First comes the Blessing and Procession of Palms in which everything overflows with a holy joy, enabling us after nineteen centuries to revive the spirit of the magnificent scene of our Lord's entry into Jerusalem. Then follows the Mass with its chants and lessons relating exclusively to the sorrowful memory of our Redeemer's Passion.

### BLESSING AND PROCESSION OF PALMS

At Jerusalem, in the fourth century, on the very spot where the event took place, was read the Gospel narrative in which we see Christ, hailed as King of Israel and taking possession of His capital, Jerusalem. After this, a bishop, mounted on an ass, rode up to the Church of the Resurrection on the summit of the Mount of Olives, surrounded by a multitude carrying palms and singing anthems and hymns. This ceremony was preceded by the solemn reading of the passage from Exodus in Flight from Egypt is related. God's people, encamped under the shadow of the palm trees, near the twelve fountains where Moses promised them the manna, is a type of the Christian people, who, breaking off branches from the trees, bear witness that God's Son Jesus

comes to deliver souls from sin, leading them to the baptismal font and nourishing them with the Manna of the Eucharist. Formerly, these sacraments were administered on Easter night.

The Church of Rome adopted this practice about the ninth century and added to it the rite of blessing those palms. After the blessing of Palms, which took place at Rome at St. Mary Major's, the procession set out for the stational church of St. John Lateran. In this basilica, dedicated to St. Savior, was celebrated the Palm Sunday Mass in which the account of our Lord's Passion is the pre-dominating theme (*Gospel*). Christ's triumph was preceded by His humiliation "even to the death of the Cross" (*Epistle*). St. Paul lays particular emphasis on our Lord's voluntary humiliation which was the condition of His exaltation and our redemption. While His great reminder of what we owe to His sufferings, it should also teach us that only if we are "instructed by His patience" and the other lessons of the Passion may we "share in His resurrection" (*Collect*).

### SUNDAY COLLECT.

Almighty and everlasting God, who didst will that our Savior should take upon Him our flesh and suffer death upon the cross, that all mankind should follow the example of His great humility; mercifully grant that we may both follow the example of His patience and also be made partakers of His resurrection. Through the same our Lord. . .