

Sunday of the Passion (Palm Sunday), Year C, 2010
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This is the Sunday of the Liturgy of the Palms, the Sunday we read the Passion of Jesus. There are two themes, one that tells of our Lord's triumphal entry into Jerusalem. This is the theme of the Liturgy of the Palms. But strangely, that which starts out as hope turns to fear – fear and anger. The messiah sought is not the messiah found. The story turns from praise and glory to torture and death, from palms laid as a carpet for royal feet to palms pierced, in a torturous death for a criminal. If we did not know that Easter followed Good Friday, this would be a story of brokenness and failure. In our tradition, this Sunday has two names. Usually, we call it Palm Sunday, but the preferred and correct name is the Sunday of the Passion.

What do the names tell us? What does the liturgy say? Simply, this: the human condition is such that we praise what pleases and delights us but we want to destroy that which holds us accountable to God. It should be no surprise to any of us to realize that when God's Son called humanity to holiness most refused to listen. Yet God the Father loved the world so much that he refused to take "No!" for an answer. God's answer to the cruelty, the meanness, the rejection of Good Friday was, and always will be, Easter Day and Easter is eternal.

When we leave the church today, let us be mindful that we have begun Holy Week. Were we to do things the way that we ought to do things, we would attend church each day this week, the lessons for each day leading us through the Passion to the Victory. Pragmatism, unfortunately, rules. We do what our busy lives allow. Therefore, pragmatically, we will observe the liturgy of Maundy, or Holy, Thursday which remembers our Lord's Last Supper and the institution of the Eucharist, we will observe Good Friday and we will celebrate the victory of Easter. Hopefully, even though truncated, these hours of worship will help to guide our lives.

Let us hear, in the foot-washing of Maundy Thursday, our Lord's New Commandment that we love one another as he loved us. Let us hear the humility and the dignity of that love, symbolized by our Lord washing his disciples' feet. "Love one another, as I love you," Jesus said. Love conquers all. Love cleanses sin. Love heals, love restores, love redeems. Perfect love is the love of the Cross.

Let us hear the triumph of his suffering. Let us experience Good Friday as transforming. Good Friday is not called "good" without reason. Love transcends the suffering. Love takes our sins and washes them in the Blood of the Lamb of God. That is a good thing. So, the Friday of suffering, the Friday of the Sacrificial Lamb's preparation is the Friday of our purification. The Blood of the Lamb removes the blemishes of sin. The Blood of the Lamb makes us new and holy, washing away our sins.

Then, we come to Easter, the day of the Resurrection. On Easter Day God the Father raised Jesus from the dead. But God, in Christ, does more than that. God, in Christ,

raises us from the dead. Easter raises us from spiritual death to eternal life. We hold as the ultimate given that God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him will have eternal life. Easter is the eternal spring. Easter is the perfect expression of God's love and Easter is God's will, completed.

Holy Week has begun. We carry the palms away as a token reminder that God's love does triumph, that life in Christ conquers death. Let us praise God for this victory.

Amen.