

Next Sunday we celebrate Palm Sunday of the Lord's Passion (the full name), the first Sunday of Holy Week within the Lenten Season, commemorates Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem preceding his passion. As he entered, the people of Jerusalem recognized Jesus as their king, saying "Hosanna to the Son of David; Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!"

Traditionally in the Western Church the Palm Sunday service begins with the "blessing of the palms," where the palms used in the procession that follows are blessed. Then a procession into the church building follows. If there cannot be a procession from the outside of the church, a solemn entrance, taking place entirely within the church, may be done. The hymns and psalmody are related to Christ's office as King. Traditionally the *Gloria Laus* (All Glory Laud and Honor...), written by Theodulf of Orleans, is sung. Many times the worship service contains a "preaching of the passion," where different events in the last days of Christ are read publicly within the Eucharistic service. Palm Sunday is also called *Fig Sunday*, because figs were traditionally eaten that day, memorializing the fig tree cursed by Christ after his entry into Jerusalem. In England Palm Sunday was called Olive or Branch Sunday, Sallow or Willow, Yew or Blossom Sunday, or Sunday of the Willow Boughs, named for the local replacements for the traditional palm branches.

Various customs have developed to celebrate Palm Sunday. In the Slavic countries, the faithful walked through their buildings and fields with the blessed palms, praying and singing ancient hymns. They then laid palm pieces on each plot of ground, in every barn, building, and stable, as a petition was made for protection from weather and disease, and for a blessing upon the produce and property.

## History

The pilgrim Egeria attests to a Palm Sunday procession taking place in the Jerusalem Church at the end of the 4th century. In the Gallican Bobbio Missal of the 8th century we find a reference to blessing of the palms, which symbolize the victory of Christ. The more elaborate celebrations of the Middle Ages have been replaced by simpler services in the Western Church. Many denominations, including Lutherans, Methodists, and Presbyterians celebrate Palm Sunday, in addition to Catholics and Eastern Christians.

## **As we prepare for the holiest of weeks in the Catholic Church, I offer this Penitential Prayer of St. Augustine to help focus our last days of preparation.**

O Lord, The house of my soul is narrow;  
enlarge it that you may enter in.  
It is ruinous, O repair it!  
It displeases Your sight.  
I confess it, I know.

But who shall cleanse it,  
to whom shall I cry but to you?  
Cleanse me from my secret faults, O Lord,  
and spare Your servant from strange sins.  
*St. Augustine of Hippo (AD 354-430)*

Adapted from <http://www.churchyear.net/palmsunday.html>

Please make time in your busy schedule to celebrate Palm Sunday and all of the Holy Week Liturgies with us.

Peace,