

April 14, 2019 - IN PROCESSION WITH CHRIST!

In procession with Christ! On this great celebration **Palm Sunday**, we recall the **entrance of Christ the Lord into Jerusalem** to accomplish his Paschal Mystery: Passion, Death and Resurrection. To remember this triumphant entrance, we have a **procession with palms**. We sing: **"Hosannah to the son of David; blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, the King of Israel. Hosannah in the highest."** As we process into the church, holding our palms high, we remember Jesus' entry into Jerusalem **for our salvation**. We are entering the eternal Jerusalem! We are entering together with the first followers of Christ who "began to praise God aloud with joy for all the mighty deeds they had seen and proclaimed: **Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord. Peace in heaven and glory in the highest**" (Luke 19:37-39). We too on Palm Sunday are filled with joy as **in procession with Christ**, we are entering the summit of the entire Liturgical Year: **The Holy Week!**

Since my childhood in Southern France, I have loved processions. In particular, I loved the long processions in Lourdes (for 10 years of my childhood, my father was assigned as Judge at the District Court of Tarbes (just 10 miles away from Lourdes): afternoon processions with the Blessed Sacrament and the thousands of sick pilgrims (on wheel chairs or rolling beds being pushed by nurses or volunteers) or candle-lit processions at night. The first two sessions of **The Gift of the Mass** (sixth and last session taking place this Saturday April 13) reminded us of the importance of the **procession at the beginning of each Mass**. In the video "**The Greatest Gift**", Fr. Mike Schmitz highlighted the importance of the entrance procession, by answering two questions: 1. **Why do we all stand when the procession begins?** Because the priest is **In Persona Christi** - Latin for "person of Christ"- and therefore represents Christ, our standing shows a sign of deep respect 2. **During the procession where are we going?** Together with the priest, we are all going to the **Altar of God**. Though we remain standing in our pews, together with the priest and Christ, we are on a pilgrimage, we are on a journey. Together we are moving from earth toward heaven, we are moving from our daily down-to-earth reality toward heaven, we are on a pilgrimage toward the **Altar of God**; this is our procession with Christ. We, the Kingdom priests (since our baptism, we are all called to be priests, prophets and kings), are walking with the Ministerial Priest representing Christ. At the end of the Procession, the priest venerates the Altar, kisses it: the Altar is the source of all Grace, this is the Altar of the bloodless sacrifice of the Mass.

Every Mass is an Easter Mass since we celebrate the entirety of the Paschal Mystery: the Passion, Death and Resurrection of Our Lord Jesus Christ! In the same way, one can say that

the entrance Procession at every Mass is a Palm Sunday Procession. We may not hold palms in our hands, but every Sunday we remember the entrance of Jesus into Jerusalem to "complete his work as our Messiah: to suffer, to die, and to rise again". This is the entrance of Jesus in the Paschal Mystery. At every Mass we stand when the entrance procession of the priest begins. We stay in our pews but our hearts are joining in this **procession with Christ** toward the Altar of Sacrifice. **Every Mass is a Palm Sunday Mass**. The full name of Palm Sunday is "Palm Sunday of the Passion of the Lord" (used to be called Passion Sunday). At every Mass, we celebrate the Passion of our Lord as we unite ourselves with Him in his suffering on the cross in the hope that we may share his resurrection and be with him forever in eternal life.

At every Mass, before the Consecration, we sing the Sanctus with all the angels and saints in heaven: **"Holy, holy, holy Lord God of hosts. Heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosannah in the highest. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord."** In his book [A Biblical Walk through the Mass](#), Edward Sri comments that "It is fitting that we repeat these words before Consecration. Just as the crowds in Jerusalem welcomed Jesus into the holy city with these words from Psalm 118, so do we welcome Jesus into our churches, for he is about to become present in the Eucharist on our altars". Besides the entrance procession, the **Sanctus** (Holy, Holy, Holy) reminds us that every Mass is Palm Sunday Mass.

As we began last Sunday, we will continue to pray at every Mass for the intentions of our Archbishop-Elect Wilton Gregory. We will do so until his official installation as Archbishop of Washington on Tuesday May 21st. As we enter into the Holy Week and the Sacred Paschal Triduum (Holy Thursday, Good Friday and Easter Vigil), I invite everyone to pray for our Archbishop-Elect and for the healing and spiritual renewal of our entire Archdiocese, including our own parish. In union with our Archbishop-Elect Wilton Gregory, Father Santiago and I invite all of you to join us at the 7 pm Mass **Holy Thursday: The Mass of the Last Supper** in which Jesus gives us His Body and His Blood, thereby instituting the Eucharist and the Priesthood.

May we all have a most blessed **Holy Week filled with the Holy Spirit!**

One in Christ,

Fr. Alain

