



PALM SUNDAY

Begin the Journey to Holy Week

April 17

THE HYMN

Vesperal Hymn for Palm Sunday

“Today the grace of the Holy Spirit has brought us together. And all of us take up Your Cross and say to You: “Blessed are You, the One, who is coming in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest!”

THE SERMON

The Ruler of our Hearts

The hymns of our Church strive to convey to us the theological meaning of each Feast. They invite us to experience every aspect of God’s plan for the salvation of the world, *in this moment* and in a personal manner. The hymns encourage us to fully cooperate *in the here and now* with God’s plan for our salvation, and our union with Him.

The aforementioned hymn is rooted in the ascetic tradition of the Church, and offers us a wonderful initiation to Holy Week. Every day, we exhaust ourselves in our endless efforts to meet the many difficult demands we have placed on ourselves in this age, in the spiritual battleground of this world. On Palm Sunday, the grace of the Holy Spirit, that is, God Himself, calls us to leave all worldly cares behind. And to focus our minds, gather as one body, one family, one Church, and begin our journey to Holy Week. This is the journey of encounter with Christ Who comes to Jerusalem as the King of Glory, not as a secular ruler of the world, but in order to guide and lead us spiritually, where it matters most. He

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comes to be crucified and to be resurrected. The Cross of Christ contains the entire world. It includes each one of us. The compassionate Lord, the God Who truly loves His creation, Who truly loves humanity, even though we betray Him daily, He redeems us from the death of sin, from our betrayal, from our apostasy. He resurrects us, He embraces us, He accepts us, He forgives us. He fills us with the eternal light and shows us the way to His Kingdom.

This hymn, therefore, encourages us to personally participate in this process, to support (in a manner of speaking) Christ in taking up His cross. But how can we, powerless men and women, imperfect and spiritually helpless as we are, bear the Cross of our Christ? How can we be crucified with Him?

Every time we offer Him *our* repentance for our mistakes and sins, we make *His* Cross lighter. Every time we fast, we show Him compassion and participate with Him in the hunger and suffering *He* underwent by His tormentors. Every time we remain awake in vigil, we participate in *His* agony. Every time we bear our own personal cross with patience and faith, we also bear a small portion of *His* Cross. Every time we demonstrate love, sympathy, and compassion to others, we are showing compassion to Christ *Himself*.

Come, then, let us all bear with joy the Cross of our Christ and cry out to Him in celebration: Blessed are You who is coming in the name of the Lord. You are our Messiah, You are our Redeemer, You are the Ruler of our hearts. Glory to the Lord of heaven and earth. Glory to the Lord of Glory. Let us fully open our hearts to Him and eternally unite with Him.