



ABOUT THE PROPER

An Explanation of the Variable Parts of the Divine Service



Sixth Sunday in Lent

Palm Sunday

April 13, 2025



Holy Week

Blessed Is He Who Comes in the Name of the Lord!

Palm Sunday is named for that day two thousand years ago when Jesus entered the city of Jerusalem to the sounds of praise and adoration. For 1,700 years the Church has celebrated this festival that begins Holy Week. The hour for Christ's glory had come. He would not, however, gain glory in the manner of other kings. Instead, he would humble himself in great acts of love for us, even to the point of death. And then the Heavenly Father would exalt him to the highest place, because he had fulfilled God's mission to serve and save us as the sacrificial Lamb of God. With repentant hearts we celebrate our Lord's triumphant entry into Jerusalem, hailing him as our Eternal King. "Hosanna in the highest! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!"

First Reading³ Isaiah 42:1-4

This Servant Song foretells the Messiah's work: he will be God's own servant sent to accomplish God's mission. God will choose him, uphold him and delight in him. God will also put his Spirit on him that he might bring justice to the nations.

Second Reading³ Philippians 2:5-11

The homage due a king belongs to the Christ. At the name of Jesus – "human name for God above" (CW76 st.5) – every knee shall bow. For he has come to serve his people, not with armies and war machines, but with the obedient sacrifice of his own life. Therefore he is exalted by saints on earth and hosts of heaven.

Gospel³ Luke 19:28-40

Our humble King comes in majesty to do the will of the Father. He comes to bring salvation, righteousness, and peace: peace in heaven and glory in the highest! He came as the fulfillment of scripture, as the answer to mankind's problem, as the Hope for all the true Israel of God. On this day, the king would have his praise, from the stones if necessary. Behold the King had returned to his city to win peace and salvation for all.

Psalm of the Day⁴ Psalm 24 C "Lift Up Your Heads"

The Church sings Psalm 24 in services on the First Sunday in Advent and Palm Sunday, both anticipating the arrival of Christ the Lord. The psalm is a processional liturgy for the entrance of the King of glory into Zion. Martin Luther said, "Psalm 24 is a prophecy of the kingdom of Christ in all the world. It calls on the 'doors' of the word, that is, kings and princes, to make room for the kingdom of Christ; for they are the usual ones who rage against him (Psalms 1 and 2), and say, 'Who is this King of glory?'"

Gospel Acclamation Luke 19:38

"Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!"

Prayer of the Day

We praise you, O God, for the great acts of love by which you have redeemed us through your Son, Jesus Christ. As he was acclaimed by those who scattered their garments and branches of palms in his path, so may we always hail him as our King and follow him with perfect confidence; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Hymn of the Day

411 "Ride On, Ride On in Majesty" (Henry H. Milman, 1791-1868)

The hymn's themes of victory ("majesty") and tragedy are juxtaposed to illustrate Jesus' entry into Jerusalem. Christ is hailed with "Hosanna" as he rides forth to die (vv1-2). The angels look with sadness at Jesus' sacrifice (v3); the Father eagerly awaits his Son (v4). Jesus bows in meekness to pain, but will ascend to power and reign in glory once again (v5).

Church Year Season²

Lent

The season of Lent leads the Church on a forty-day journey of repentance and prayer, of remembrance and renewal of our baptism. God calls to mankind: Return to the Lord! The journey begins with Ash Wednesday's warning of mortality and culminates at the Service of Holy Baptism in the Easter Vigil on Holy Saturday.

The Church's Lenten worship is muted and quiet. For centuries, the Church has omitted her most jubilant songs of praise during this season of repentance (e.g. the "Gloria in Excelsis," and the use of the word "Alleluia") to reflect the somber nature of the season. Note, however, that the Sundays are designated as Sunday in Lent, not Sundays of Lent. The Sundays themselves are not considered part of the forty days, but are islands of refreshment in our Lenten walk.

Traditions & Customs

Palm Sunday

Certain days of Holy Week have been given special significance. The first is Palm Sunday which takes its name from Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem. This sixth Sunday in Lent has been called "Palm Sunday" since the fourth century, when churches in Jerusalem began the custom of blessing palm branches. The blessing and use of palm branches is still observed in many churches today. Some congregations keep the palm branches until the next year's Lenten season where the dried up branches are burned, and the ashes are used to place crosses on the foreheads of parishioners on Ash Wednesday. For many congregations, Palm Sunday is the day of confirmation. Congregations or individuals may renew their confirmation vows through the questions and answers of the confirmation service.

Colors & Symbolism

Purple or Violet

These colors are a sign of royalty, self-discipline, sorrow and repentance. Purple also reminds us of sacrifice, not only because that colored clothing was very expensive (sacrifice of money), but also because in order to make purple clothing in ancient times, one had to dye the cloth in the blood of snails (sacrifice of life). Thus purple is a fitting color for the penitential season of Lent, during which we focus more intentionally on our sinfulness, and how our King and Savior, Jesus Christ suffered in our place and sacrificed himself on the cross to take away our sins.

Nain Paraments

Lent

Superfrontal: The lamb at the center of the parament represents Jesus, the Lamb of God who was sacrificed to take away the sin of the world (John 1:29; 3:16-17). The nimbus (halo) around its head reminds us that Jesus was a perfect sacrifice, even greater than the unblemished lambs required of the Passover meal (Exodus 12:5).

The palm branches remind us of Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem on the Sunday before he died (John 12:13). Palm branches were used in celebration of victory. Jesus entered Jerusalem to conquer sin, death, and the devil. Our crucified and risen Lord assures us in his Word that his victory is ours by faith (1 Corinthians 15:57).

[The significance of the crosses on the far left and right of the superfrontal are explained below]

Lectern & Pulpit antependia: The cross formed by four nails represents Jesus' death by which he was nailed to the cross (Luke 23:33; John 20:25,27). The white sash around the arms of the cross symbolizes Jesus' righteousness and his perfect victory over our enemies through his resurrection (Romans 4:25; 1 Corinthians 15:20-23;54-57).

¹ Courtesy of "Planning Christian Worship: Year A". Jonathan E. Schroeder, Author.

² Courtesy of "Planning Christian Worship: Year B". Daniel M. Deutschlander, Author.

³ Courtesy of "Planning Christian Worship: Year C". Joel J. Gawrisch, Author.

⁴ From *Christian Worship: Psalter* © 2021 Northwestern Publishing House. Reprinted by permission.

. Clipart courtesy of "Ecclesiastical Art by Ed Riojas"