



ABOUT THE PROPERs

An Explanation of the Variable Parts of the Divine Service



Sixth Sunday in Lent Palm Sunday

March 24, 2024



Rethinking Religion
Rethinking Real Strength

We have come to Holy Week. It begins with Jesus humbly riding a donkey colt straight into the hands of his enemies. As the week progresses, it will appear that Christ's adversaries are the ones in a position of power and Jesus is in a position of weakness. Yet what Christ does this holy week—setting his divine strength aside, being passive in the face of death—would change the world. To do what Christ did for us and our salvation took real strength.

The Propers

*The Proper*s are those portions of the service that change (i.e. are "proper" to) each Sunday or season of the church year. The Propers differ from the Ordinary (from the Latin *ordo*, which means "regular order") portions of the liturgy, which do not change (e.g. the Lord's Prayer). The Propers offer the variety to the worship service and emphasize particular worship themes throughout the liturgical calendar.

First Reading¹ Zechariah 9:9-12

Zechariah tells Jerusalem to rejoice when the messianic King comes to her, because he will have with him the righteousness she needs and the salvation she craves. This King would surpass the glory and power of all Israel's kings before him. King David's rule extended to the River Euphrates at its farthest—but this King's rule would extend from the Euphrates to the very ends of the earth, from sea to sea. His worldwide kingdom would mean the end of war and the advent of peace. All this he would do not with an army, but with his person—not with violence, but with gentleness. Rejoice, daughter of Zion! Your King comes to you. Hail him!

Second Reading³ Hebrews 12:1-3

Jesus demonstrated strength by enduring the cross. He did so for the joy set before him: redeeming us from our sin. This lesson particularly emphasizes continued preparation and encourages proper focus as we anticipate the celebration of the Three Holy Days (the *Triduum*). God wants us to cast off all that entangles and hinders in order to fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith.

Gospel¹ Hebrews 11:1-10

Who is he? He is the King of kings most lowly. Who is he? He is the King of kings who unlike any other king has come to save us. Bid him welcome and follow in his train. Throw the robes of your own righteousness under his feet, so that he may dress you with the robe of his righteousness. Wave the palm branches God made and gives – those symbols of eternal life, in salute. He delights in and receives your trust in him for eternal life, the trust that he himself has given you in his Word. Blessed is he, for he will finish what he has begun! For that reason and none other, blessed are we! Hosanna in the highest!

Psalm of the Day Psalm 24 H

"Let the LORD Enter; He Is the King of Glory" The Lord Almighty enters into Zion, and those whose sins have been washed away join together in celebration. We lift up our heads as we see our salvation approaching.

Gospel Acclamation John 12:23

"The hour has come, the hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified." Jesus spoke these words to the crowds who had gathered to see him after he had entered Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. The time had come for him to die for sinful mankind and to rise again in glory.

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 Season ¹

Lent

The season of Lent leads the Church on a forty-day journey of repentance and prayer and 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.

Colors & Symbolism

Lent: 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.

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.

Minor Festivals

Annunciation of Our Lord (March 25)

This festival commemorates the angel Gabriel’s announcement to the Virgin Mary that she would give birth to the incarnate Son of the Most High, Jesus (Luke 1:26-38). The festival originated in Constantinople and was accepted in Rome about 600 A.D. Marking the first moment of the Christ’s Incarnation, it was designated for March 25th, nine months before Christmas Day.

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.

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