

Dear friends in Christ, the past weeks have been a time of preparation for the celebration of this most Holy Week. Today, we come together to begin this solemn celebration in union with the whole Church throughout the world. In particular today the Church celebrates Christ's triumphal entry into his own city, Jerusalem, to complete his work as Saviour, to suffer, to die and to rise again.

We come into the week where Jesus resolutely advances towards the completion of the will of his Father. Jesus rides into Jerusalem on a colt, the foal of a donkey as a humble king. Jesus was fulfilling the Messianic prophecy in Zech 9:9: 'Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter Jerusalem! Lo, your King comes to you; triumphant and victorious is he, humble and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey'. However, the crowds had a completely different idea of the Messiah. They believed that the Messiah would be a strong and powerful ruler who would ride upon his horse and destroy all the Romans and grant them relief from Roman rule. They were looking for a political Messiah who would ride in pomp and splendor and overthrow the Romans.

Jesus' own understanding of the Messiah's role was completely different. Reading and meditating on Isaiah 53 would have defined and influenced his role as the Suffering Servant. He was to be a Messiah who was to suffer and die, and rise again on the third day. He knew he had come to serve and not to be served and that he was going into Jerusalem to offer his life as a ransom for many.

Let us remember with thanksgiving his entrance on the first Palm Sunday and let us follow Jesus with faith and devotion. United with him in his suffering on the cross and in the agonies of the world today, may we also share in his glorious resurrection and the new life that he offers to all.

Prayer for the Palm branches and crosses

Almighty God, we praise you for the acts of love by which you have redeemed us through your Son Jesus Christ our Lord; may these branches and crosses be for us signs of his victory, and grant that we who bear his name may ever hail him as our King, and follow him in the way that leads to eternal life; who lives and reigns in glory with you and the Holy Spirit, now and forever.

ALL: AMEN

O Lord God, we ask you to bless these branches of palm to those who carry them; that both now and in the days to come they may be a reminder of your dear Son's passion, and a pledge of your victory over sin and death, for the glory of your great name.

ALL: AMEN

ACCLAMATION

The presbyter and the people make this acclamation loudly and joyfully.

**All: Hosanna to the Son of David!
 Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord!
 Hosanna in the highest!**