

## HOMILY FOR PALM SUNDAY OF THE LORD'S PASSION

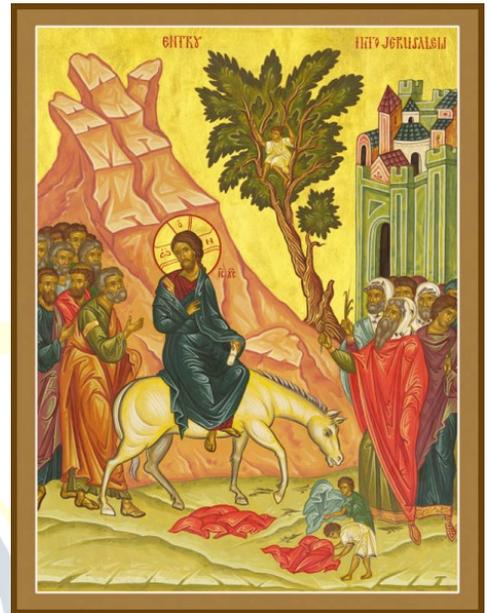
This week Christ marries his bride. That may seem like a strange statement, however, it is an apt description of the coming together and joining which takes place through the events of Holy Week. The reading we heard as we blessed the palms tells of the groom's arrival at the wedding when Christ rode into his city to the acclamations of the crowd. He received the guests as he moved about Jerusalem. To some he gave gifts such as cures and healing, to others he gave wisdom and insight, to others still understanding, love and forgiveness. And some of the guests were angry and offended that he had not paid them enough attention or that he had chided them for their poor behavior.

The wedding ceremony and the wedding banquet are held together on Thursday evening. But this is a one-sided ceremony and only the groom speaks vows and makes ritual gestures to seal the covenant. Taking the bread He said, "this is my body given for you" now and always. Taking the cup He said, "this is my blood" poured out so that you may become spotless. As with many cultures, this wedding contains ritual gestures and customs signifying that something new has begun. For the Christ, he chooses to wash his bride's feet, demonstrating that the Master has become the servant and even the most base and menial task performed for His beloved is embraced as an act of love and devotion. The vows spoken become a promise fulfilled, as Jesus is lead away and nailed to the cross. His promise to the church that nothing he has will be withheld comes to life as His body is broken and his life given for us. His blood, shed by our sinfulness, becomes the cleansing bath that removes from us the stain of sin.

What have we done? His is a love greater than any we had ever known, but our selfishness and suspicion would not throw open the doors of our hearts to receive it. Instead, we either joined the crowd in shouting for his crucifixion or we joined the disciples and ran away and cowered, too afraid for ourselves to speak or act in defense of Him who is Love incarnate, our lover, the one who wishes to espouse us to Himself for all eternity.

He is the groom, the Head of the church, wise, strong, courageous and faithful who loves us beyond our wildest imagining. We, his bride, speak our vows at our baptism, and will most likely betray them. We do not deserve Him and His love. But that does not diminish His love for us in the least. He did not see His life, not only His earthly life, but His eternal life in the Trinity, too great a gift to give to us. This is the week of the Lord's Passion and it seems that His greatest passion is His love for us, His Church, His Bride.

Our passion should be to ponder that love; to wonder and marvel at such an undeserved and boundless a gift. Our greatest joy should be to give ourselves in return to whatever He should ask of us, great or small, to learn of Him or to give of ourselves or to love another as he loves us. Let us turn His passion into our passion and give fitting honor to His love, which causes Christ to give everything he has for us.



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