

8.4.1968

Baed: Organ Church
"Hertford Hall..."

V.O. Prague of Palm Sunday.

A lot of Catholics look to Palm Sunday Mass with some trepidation, realising they'll have to stand through the long recitation of the story of Christ's suffering & death from St. Matthew's gospel. And this long gospel is what primarily marks Palm Sunday for them — and, of course, collecting a piece of palm or whatever similar greenery has been used for the earlier blessing ceremony. But the point I want to make is that it's not the long gospel that keynotes the liturgical celebration of Palm Sunday, but rather the procession with palm-branches. Unfortunately, in many churches, for good reasons, it's just not possible to hold this procession with all the congregation taking part as they should do — but it's reciting is an important part of our annual celebration of Easter.

We begin this week, dedicated to recalling and meditating on Christ's suffering, death & resurrection, with hymns of praise, welcome and joy with Christ as he's about to give us the supreme sign of his love for us by giving up his own human life for our sakes. We recognize who he is, and what he has done and shown us during his life on earth — his teaching, his miracles showing the power of God at work in our world and overcoming the power

of evil we were necessarily subject to. So we acclaim him now, put ourselves definitely with him, publicly display in the community of his followers our loyalty and devotion to him.

→ When Jesus entered Jerusalem that final time of his life, he was a very popular figure — the news of his deeds, especially his recent raising of Lazarus from death after he'd been 4 days buried, had spread quickly and fired enthusiasm among the people — so much so that the leaders plotting to do away with him found they couldn't touch him just then.

By Good Friday, the popular enthusiasm had vanished entirely, and He died almost alone — even of his closest friends and companions, the apostles he'd trained and told of his mission, only one stood by him at the end; and another had been instrumental in his arrest. How many among the jeering crowd of Good Friday on Calvary had been among the cheering crowd who greeted his entry into the city so shortly before that? Thomas A' Kempis shrewdly remarked in his well-known book on the imitation of Christ that there are many followers of Christ in his glory, but few who will follow him on his way of the cross. It's always so much easier to go with the crowd, wherever it's going — even when it goes in contradictory directions. Following Christ, being

loyal to Him, doing what is God's will for us, obeying His directions for human living (the Commandments) isn't always easy, and may sometimes make us downright unpopular. That is understandable — it happened with Christ himself; and because of his acceptance of this, even to suffering and dying as He did, we can have the strength and the inspiration to follow His example. So the palms we held in church yesterday and brought to our homes with us, aren't an empty symbol — they should be constant reminders of human fickleness: reminders of what we pledged to Christ when we first followed him: reminders of who he is and of what he became through his death & resurrection — our brother, our Lord, our pattern for a new risen, free life we'll finally fully share with him after our own suffering and death. They should remind us too of his death, and how he was and felt deserted by almost ~~all~~ everyone. How will we, you and I, stand up when the difficulty and suffering and unpopularity of loyalty to what God wants of us comes? Will Christ, we can — as Mary did.

Laudario 91:

"The Anxious mother was standing, weeping by the cross where her son was nailed..."

PRAYERS.