

27.3.69  
175 19.3.70 (in part)  
12.4.73 ✓

Sa. Jakob Pinski (Tallis: RHK) PREFACE of CROSS

Laudans 91 ANGELUS. Almighty and everlasting God, you willed that our Saviour shd.  
2<sup>d</sup> (R 269)

take upon himself our flesh and suffer death on the cross so that all mankind shd. follow the example of his humility. Mercifully grant that we may both learn the lesson of his patience and be made sharers of his resurrection: thro' St. O. Lovel.

Sunday next, for which the prayer I've just recited is the Assembly Prayer, is Palm Sunday; and I think it worth remarking that the blessing and procession with palms is an important part of the liturgy of the Church on that day. It's part of the celebration of Easter as a whole, and has a present-day meaning in expressing our faith in Christ as our Lord and God - the same Christ with whom we will travel the way of His suffering and cross in Holy Week. But unfortunately, for reasons only sometimes good and understandable, this blessing and solemn procession are often hurried through without much ceremony or participation by the ordinary faithful, who content themselves with collecting at the church door a little piece of greenery to bring home and put behind a picture, or otherwise keep until next year. Yet, if you've ever taken part in this ceremony where it's been done well, with dignity and in full, you'll know how moving and instructive it can be for you as a preparation for Holy Week and Easter. It's part of the function of liturgy to move and instruct; it would be a pity to skip this Palm Sunday ceremony entirely - even if you can only manage to get hold of a piece of blessed palm afterwards, it's worth doing so and reflecting on what it symbolises. It isn't merely a question of imitating what the gospel story tells about the last entry of Christ into Jerusalem before his death.

RHK  
DER-E-10

Russian-Gothic  
Lit. Music 1<sup>2</sup>  
(R 264)

That's one aspect of it; another is that we're making, today, a public demonstration of our commitment to Christ, our faith in him - and like any demonstration (they're very popular <sup>things</sup> these days, though our often-ratified liturgy had them long ago), there are banners and placards: not demanding, as most placards seem to do, but thanking, showing gratitude and praise to God for who He is and for what He has done for us. The palm, in Biblical - Roman times, was used as a symbol of victory, well-being, a sign of homage; in the early Church it became associated with martyrdom, witnessing to Christ, a sign of the triumphal death of a martyr: it was used in art as a symbol of paradise - and modern English still has these connotations for the word 'palm'. This 'demonstration', then, is in honour of the triumph of Christ the risen King of glory, his victory over sin, evil and death. Listen now to a Song for Passiontide, by Gelibeev adapted by Fr Gasford "Rescue me my God" Russian hymn for Palm Sunday which invites us to gather and celebrate, rejoicing, praising Christ and extolling His name in song. MUSIC

PRAYERS

The victory of Christ was achieved by the cross - so the cross <sup>an instrument of execution</sup> became a symbol of triumph, whose praises are sung repeatedly in the Office of Passiontide especially, and also in the liturgy of Palm Sunday. That's why an unveiled cross precedes the Procession on that day - unveiled, because the reason for veiling the cross during passiontide was originally because the figure on the cross was the risen Christ of glory, an idea which modern artists are taking up again more frequently. The annual procession of the palms originated in Jerusalem as a commemoration of the entry of Christ to the Holy City before His passion. In



the 4<sup>th</sup> century this was re-created in a scripture service on the Mt. of Olives, after which, at 5 o'clock the people made their way, with the bishop, to the church of the Resurrection, singing psalms & hymns. This custom ~~found~~ <sup>followed</sup> its way to the Gallican rite churches of north-west Europe, and from there eventually reached Rome, only about the 10<sup>th</sup> century. In the middle ages, this blessing and procession of palms had become quite dramatic: the procession ~~would go~~ <sup>would go</sup> from one church to another, usually one outside the town walls. The presence of Christ was symbolized in various ways, in different countries — in England & Normandy by the Blessed Sacrament itself, in Germany by a picture of Christ borne on the back of a wooden donkey. Returning to the city gate, or the doors of the principal church, the people would throw their garments and their palm or olive branches before the symbol of Christ, repeating the acclamations as Massamus the gospels recount. But in time the emphasis shifted to the blessing ceremony, and the original purpose of the whole rite became obscured. In the early 1950s, the rite was restored — at least in the liturgical books: its significance doesn't yet seem to have penetrated to the ordinary Sunday congregation. But people still take evergreen palms, a custom that in Europe goes back to the 11<sup>th</sup> century: a sign and reminder of the constant presence of Christ with us all through the year. So, on Sunday, if you can't make it to the blessing and procession of palms, do join the meaning of this celebration in honour of Christ who has won the victory for us and lives among us. [PRAYER — end of procession].