

PALM SUNDAY

Picture your favorite professional athlete, actor, or singer cruising down the main street of your town in a stretch limousine. Can you see the adoring fans cheering, waving banners, jostling to get closer? This is what we hear as we enter the town of Jerusalem with Jesus on Palm Sunday. Think of the movie stars on the red carpet in Hollywood; the Jewish people of Jerusalem lay down palm branches as a carpet. They have high hopes for their “star,” wishing that Jesus would become a powerful king who would free them from their harsh suffering under the Romans. They hope that Jesus will be the promised king who will restore the nation of Israel to its former glory, as it was during the time of Kings David and Solomon.

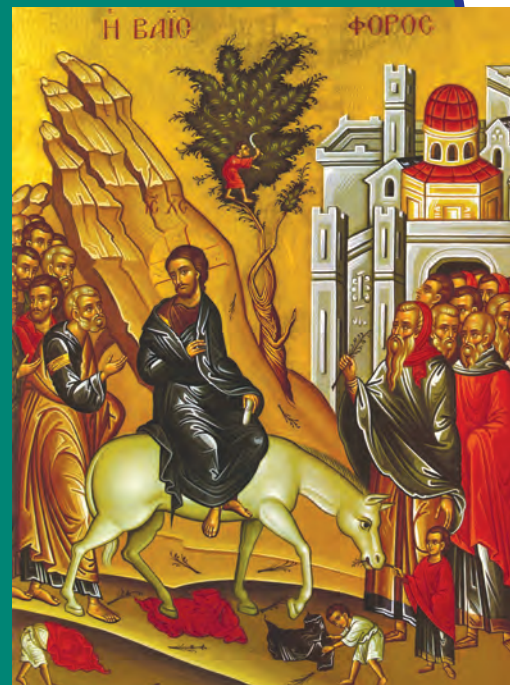
Now picture your celebrity driving an old, dented car instead of waving from a limo. Christ doesn’t have an old car, but He does ride into town the common person’s way: on a donkey. His fans in Jerusalem expected to see their king riding high on a proud stallion. But Jesus chooses to ride a donkey—a humble beast of burden, an animal of peace—to show that the people should not expect an earthly kingdom. His kingdom is, and will be, like nothing on earth.

When we enter

Jesus chooses to ride a humble animal

the church on Palm Sunday, we enter Jerusalem with Christ. And because we enter with Him, we also will “suffer” with Him, and this service begins His suffering and betrayal. To suffer with Him does not mean that we should feel pain. Instead of pain, we suffer with hope for and joy in the coming resurrection, which gives this suffering a purpose and meaning.

If you look around the church, you may notice that it is decorated with palm branches. Each person receives a palm cross at the end of the service. There are many customs, too: some churches will also distribute branches of bay leaves, flowers, or pussy willows. All of these remind us of the people who waved palm branches to welcome Jesus and laid them at His feet as He entered Jerusalem.



Entry into Jerusalem

- Icons frequently use “shorthand” to describe places, events, and ideas. The small group of buildings in background represents the whole city of Jerusalem.
- What are the children in the icon doing? How might they describe Jesus’s entry into the city to their friends?



A hymn we sing on both Saturday of Lazarus and Palm Sunday reminds us why we carry palm branches and what the raising of Lazarus means for all of us:

“To confirm the general resurrection before your passion, you resurrected Lazarus from the dead, O Christ our God. Therefore imitating the children, carrying the symbols of victory, we cry out to you the Victor over death: Hosanna in the highest; blessed are you, the one who comes in the name of the Lord.”

ENTRY INTO JERUSALEM

