Let us Pray:

*O Christ our God, when we were buried with Thee in Baptism, we became deserving of Thy Resurrection to immortal life. Wherefore, we praise Thee, crying: Hosanna in the highest! Blessed is He that cometh in the Name of the Lord.*

*Upborne upon the heavenly throne, and seated upon the earthly foal, O Christ our God, receive the praises of angels and the hymns of men, exclaiming before Thee: Blessed is He that cometh to restore Adam.*

*In the name of God; Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.*

*Amen.*

I think Palm Sunday, and really all of Holy Week to come, shows us the genius of the Church's ancient liturgical practice. Think about it. Instead of just listening to me or the readers recite or talk about the story of Christ's journey into Jerusalem on the way to his passion on Calvary, we actually take some time to experience a piece of it. We grab our palms, we sing hosanna, and we mean to imagine ourselves, if just for a moment, standing in the place of the crowds as they welcomed Jesus into the Holy City. We process with our hearts set on Jesus as the Messiah who has come into the world, not unlike the people of Jerusalem did all those years ago.

But as the morning continues, we experience in short order the shift of public sentiment among the people. We’ll be confronting that today in another very ancient practice of God's people, with the singing of our Holy Writ, in the case the Gospel according to Luke. Hearing the text sung can have the effect of allowing the story to pass further into our hearts than recitation. The tune, the text, they are working together to deepen our shock at the injustice swirling around Jesus at his betrayal, trial, and execution as a criminal.

Processions, ceremony, music, and text...these are among the most important tools we have as the church to move *our* humanity, our hearts, minds, souls, and strength, closer to the story of how the humanity around Jesus turned away from the mighty works of God, turned away from the message of God's love and forgiveness. The authorities around Jesus all had their own agendas. Some were deluded by the self-centered desire for a false peace like the Romans or perhaps even the religious leaders around Jesus. The Roman authorities with their heavy, oppressive, taxation and the Cult of Emperor worship were never going to get along with the leaders of Israelite religion and its extreme allergy to the worship of anyone but the Lord. Yet, the corrupt leaders of both groups would try to make it work. Jesus' messianic ministry was a direct critique to all parties concerned, which is among the reasons why he was executed. Jesus' own theological opponents, the Pharisees and especially the Sadducees were ready to see him off for his challenging their interpretation of the Scriptures, for their broken holiness, for their burdening of the people. The people of Jerusalem, though they looked forward to the idea of the Galilean rabbi, healer, and wonder worker but their enthusiasm just couldn't survive the influence of literally every important voice besides Jesus. The shouts of "crucify him," remember, emanated from the same people who not too long before, sang "hosanna" and "blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord."

Perhaps the crowd, so easily distracted, so easily moved away from the voice of the Son of God really is where we most readily find ourselves if we're really honest. Perhaps the experiential genius of working our way through Palm Sunday (and therefore Holy Week) is to move us to greater self-awareness of how far away we are from Christ. Of course, to close the distance, Jesus would not stay dead after Good Friday. That's what we celebrate next week. And insomuch as we can identify with the fickle crowd of ancient Jerusalem, next week we will once again marvel that in his resurrection, Jesus has indeed closed the gap between him and ourselves; and even him and each other if we would but love him, listen to him, and take on his new life for ourselves.

Thus, I encourage you to be with us as much as you can this Holy Week for that very reason: to participate in the spirituality of Holy Week which invites us into a greater understanding of Christ’s story and ministry as well as a deeper introspection into his continued working in our hearts. God means to draw us together in the ministry of Holy Week so that we can live lives renewed by the power of the resurrection, a day that will seem all the brighter if we walk through what comes before together. I pray that all of you would be richly blessed during this Holiest of Weeks, and I look forward to seeing you during the Paschal Triduum.

To God, who sent his Son for us that we might be saved, to Him be all glory. Forever and for all ages. Amen.