



## **Palm Sunday of the Lord's Passion**

**April 9, 2006**

Is today “Palm Sunday” or “Passion Sunday?” Though now known officially as Palm Sunday of the Lord’s Passion, confusion is understandable, since before the 1969 reform of the calendar two separate Sundays bore these titles. Passion Sunday was a week before Palm Sunday. To add to the confusion, the Gospel accounts of the Passion of the Lord were not read on Passion Sunday!

On Passion Sunday, the cross and statues were veiled in full purple drapes. The organ had fallen silent at the beginning of Lent, and now the sanctuary bells were replaced by wooden clappers. The introit (opening chant) for the old Mass of Passion Sunday hints at a reason for reform: “Do me justice, O God, and fight my fight against a faithless people” (Psalm 42). This liturgy was laden with references to the “infidelity” of the Jews, a theme that gave rise to inflammatory preaching and, in some places, attacks against the persons and property of the Jewish people. This does not stand as a “treasure” of any sort in our tradition. Our authentic tradition, rather, is the ability to reflect and repent and to seek reconciliation with the Jews, our brothers and sisters in the love and service of God.

The solemnity of today’s readings invites us into silent contemplation of the mystery of our redemption. There are so many levels on which to understand the events of the Passion. The woman who anoints Jesus acts prophetically in a way that other disciples do not yet grasp. Anointing is for priests, prophets, and kings, and also for holiness. Her action acknowledges the imminent events of the passion and death of the Lord, and points toward his resurrection and triumph over evil and death. He is priest and victim, prophet and God, King and Lord. All these things are acknowledged in her prophetic anointing.

Paul Claudel, a famous French Catholic author, reminds us: “Jesus did not come to do away with suffering or remove it. He came to fill it with his presence.”

