

FROM FR. JASON



Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Palm Sunday marks the beginning of Holy Week which finishes with the celebration of the victory over sin and death: Christ's Resurrection on Easter Sunday. I discovered a saying about Holy Week that helps me a lot: Holy Week, it has a power to make us wholly holy. In fact, every Sunday Mass is a 'little Easter,' which is one of the reasons why it is so important to go to mass every weekend.

Why should I want to be wholly holy? I think the following from Julia Navarrete Guerrero, a professed religious who was declared a Venerable, a confirmation that she maintained heroic virtue in her life and might one day be named a Saint, says it all: "I used to approach Jesus frequently saying, 'What do you wish from me?' He would reply, *'that you die to yourself, that you rise above your worldly interests; die to everything, even to those affections that seem to be holy, live at a level where life's contradictions don't disturb you, where attentions don't flatter you. Seek only God and His interests.'*" The more we cooperate with God and allow Him to accomplish this in us, the more we will experience a joy and freedom that nothing and no one can steal!

Most Christians today receive a bunch of palm fronds to carry in procession and to bring home in blessing. Accepting the palm is a token of our willingness to journey with the Church through a grateful remembrance of Christ's Passion, Death, and life-giving Resurrection. Traditionally, the plants associated with today's feast are planted in cemeteries as a sign of Christ's victory over death and the promise of new life. The joy of this day's opening procession soon gives way to a solemn reading of the Passion, this year according to Luke. The procession is meant not only to strengthen us to hear this account, but to stir us up to accompany the Church on this journey through Holy Week. It also prepares us for Easter Sunday's joyful renewal of our baptismal vows.

The Easter Vigil is the most important Mass of the year. In the ranking of all Catholic Church celebrations, the Triduum occupies the top spot. The Triduum, which begins with Holy Thursday's Mass of the Lord's Supper, concludes on Easter, reaching its climax with the Easter Vigil. If you attend Mass on Easter Sunday morning, but miss the Easter Vigil, you have missed the most important celebration of the year. The Easter Vigil has four parts. It first begins with a Service of Light. The community of believers gathers in darkness to hear that Christ is our light, shattering the darkness of sin. The second part of the Vigil is the Liturgy of the Word. We hear nine scripture passages that retell the story of salvation, ending with the Gospel of the Resurrection. The third part is the Liturgy of Baptism. Some catechumens have already been listed among the elect, those chosen for baptism this year. They now come forward to be plunged into the waters of new birth. Anointed with Sacred Chrism, they celebrate Confirmation, receiving the strength of God's Spirit for the Christian life. (We do not have any catechumens or candidates this year, but we can certainly begin a formation program for anyone interested!) Then all those present in the Church renew their Baptismal promises. Together we *ask* for an experience of the Resurrection in our lives and to follow Christ more closely. The Vigil culminates in the fourth part, the Liturgy of the Eucharist. Together, we will feast on the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ risen from the dead for us!

May we become wholly holy!

Peace,