

The Entrance into Jerusalem

Pussy Willow Sunday

This Sunday may be called “Flower or Blossom Sunday,” or “Flower- or Blossom bearing Sunday. Our people may call this Sunday “Pussy-willow” Sunday, “Willow Sunday” or “Sunday of the Willow”. As there are no palms or olive trees growing in



this country, we have a custom of using willow branches, a tree that is the first to blossom in the spring.

In the prayer for blessings of palms (from our Trebnyk (Euchologion), the willow branch is referred to as the symbol of the resurrection.

Other customs were practiced, for example, in Eastern Ukraine people along with the willow branch, received a small candle as a symbol of the resurrection.

Also, as people were leaving the church they would lightly strike one another on the shoulder with the willow branch, saying “It is not I who strike you, but it is the willow branch,

within a week we shall celebrate Easter.” This became a reminder that Easter was drawing near.

Lazarus Saturday and the Entry into Jerusalem are the opening to Holy Week. The same troparion unites both feasts. The mystical link to the resurrection of Christ himself, it is like prophecy in action.

This feast has neither a pre-feast nor a post-feast because it occurs during the period of fast

THE ICON

- Our focus is on Christ, seated sideways on the donkey. The icon portrays His voluntary passion and death. It is an image of the installation of the King of Glory in His Kingdom.
- The disciples follow Him and the crowd meets Jesus at the Jerusalem gate.
- Traditionally, children play a prominent role in the representation of the Entry into Jerusalem. Though the Gospels do not specify the children's presence, the Church sees in them the very embodiment of the Biblical reference: "Out of the mouths of babes thou hast brought perfect praise." (Psalm 8: 3)
- The Mount of Olives reminds us of other "mountain top" experiences of divine revelations at Sinai, Horeb or Tabor. The tree with children gathering palms reminds us about the oak of Mamre and the tree of Life. The city is reminiscent of the house of Abraham.
- Palms are the symbol of joy and feasting. The Jews used them to greet important people.

Come then; let us run with him as he presses on to his passion. Let us imitate those who have gone out to meet him, not scattering olive branches or palms in his path, but spreading ourselves before him as best we can, with humility of soul and upright purpose. So may we welcome the Word as he comes, so may God who cannot be contained within any bounds, be contained within us.

(Address of St. Andrew of Crete (c. 660 – 740))