

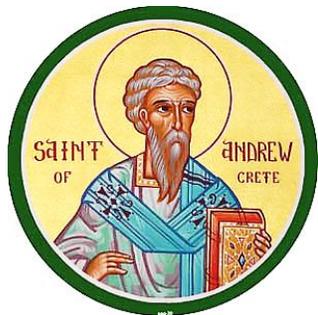


A RETURN THAT COMES FROM THE HEART AND NOT JUST THE LIPS (PALM SUNDAY TO GOOD FRIDAY)

One week from today, Catholics everywhere will enter into the most Sacred week of the year: Holy Week. Offered for us on the front Page of today's *V Sunday of Lent* Bulletin, are opportunities for every man, woman, and child – created according to the image and likeness of God – to remember with gratitude the events that restored dignity to that image and likeness.

All of these offerings (*Confessions* on Monday, the Sacred Music of *Rossini*, *Verdi*, and *Bizet* on Tuesday, *Haydn's Seven Last Words of Christ* on Wednesday, the *Mass of the Lord's Supper* on Holy Thursday, the *Stations of the Cross* and *Passion of the Christ* on Good Friday, and the *Easter Vigil* on Holy Saturday) speak of the life-lived that demands a return from the living! A return that can lead a person to become a *fisher of men* as a Priest, *choose the better part* in Religious Life as a Nun, *lay down one's life for another* in Marriage, or to remain in the Single State and (in the words of Our Holy Redeemer) "go home to your family and announce to them all that the Lord in His pity has done for you" (Saint Mark V:19). And while it is true that *Palm Sunday* offers Mass-goers the opportunity to remember the events that demand a return all in one day, anyone who truly wants to make a return of gratitude to Our Holy Redeemer that comes from the heart and not just from the lips, would do well to return to Our Holy Redeemer each day of Holy Week.

If the demands on your time prevent you from coming to church daily during Holy Week, then at least consider how you will return to Our Holy Redeemer on *Palm Sunday* by reading this excerpt of a sermon by Saint Andrew of Crete, Bishop.



"Let us go together to meet Christ on the Mount of Olives. Today He returns from Bethany and proceeds of His own free will toward His Holy and Blessed Passion, to consummate the mystery of our salvation. He who came down from Heaven to raise us from the depths of sin, to raise us with Himself, we are told in Scripture, *above every sovereignty, authority and power, and every other name that can be named*, now comes of His own free will to make His journey to Jerusalem. He comes without pomp or ostentation. As the Psalmist says: *He will not dispute or raise His voice to make it heard in the streets*. He will be meek and humble, and He will make His entry in simplicity.

Let us run to accompany Him as He hastens toward His Passion, and imitate those who met Him then, not by covering His path with garments, olive branches or palms, but by doing all we can to prostrate ourselves before Him by being humble and trying to live as He would wish. Then we shall be able to receive the Word at His coming, and God, Whom no limits can contain, will be within us.

In his humility Christ entered the dark regions of our fallen world and He is glad that He became so humble for our sake, glad that He came and lived among us and shared in our nature in order to raise us up again to Himself. And even though we are told that He has now ascended above the highest heavens - the proof, surely, of His power and Godhead - His love for man will never rest until He has raised our earthbound nature from glory to glory, and made it one with His own in Heaven.

So let us spread before His feet, not garments or soulless olive branches, which delight the eye for a few hours and then wither, but ourselves, clothed in His grace, or rather, clothed completely in Him. We who have been Baptized into Christ must ourselves be the garments that we spread before Him. Now that the crimson stains of our sins have been washed away in the saving waters of Baptism and we have become white as pure wool, let us present the conqueror of death, not with mere branches of palms but with the real rewards of His victory. Let our souls take the place of the welcoming branches as we join today in the children's holy song: *Blessed is He who comes in the Name of the Lord. Blessed is the king of Israel.*"