

Day 40

PILGRIMAGE OF GRACE

PALM SUNDAY



PASSION SUNDAY (PALM SUNDAY)

The sanctuary of Bethphage is located on the eastern part of the Mount of Olives. This is the site of the celebration of the beginning of Jesus' messianic entrance into the Holy City while the disciples and the crowd enthusiastically sang "Hosanna".

The memory of Jesus' triumphal entrance into Jerusalem was celebrated in very ancient days in much the same way that we celebrate it today: "The Sunday that opens the paschal week [...] all the people climb up the Mount of Olives [...] When the eleventh hour arrives (that is, five o'clock in the afternoon), the Gospel passage that talks about the children who went before the Lord carrying branches and palms is read [...] The bishop rises to his feet, and all the people with him.

From there, that is, from the top of the Mountain, we continue on foot; the bishop constantly sings hymns and antiphons; 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord'. All the children, even those who cannot walk because they are too small and are carried on their parents' shoulders, have branches in their hands, either palm or olive. In the same way that the Lord was escorted, the bishop is escorted.

From the top of the mountain we continue to the city and then, after crossing the city, to the Anastasis." (Etheria, end of 4th century).

Beginning in the 9th century the procession began even farther away: "About a mile away (from the site of the Ascension) is the place where Jesus sat upon the foal of an ass. There is an olive tree there from which every year, after paying the price, one cuts a branch; in this way, one enters Jerusalem in procession on the Day of Palms" (the monk Ehiphanus). Mention has been made of the existence of a 4th century church in memory of Jesus' meeting with the sisters of Lazarus, Martha and Mary on the Bethany road. (Etheria).

1870, a villager found a dressed stone bearing Crusader-epic paintings that represented the two events of the resurrection of Lazarus and Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem. After the land was purchased, a little sanctuary was built there, which was named Bethphage. It was restored to its present form in 1954. The procession that commemorates the event had ceased to exist by the end of the Crusader reign. It was taken up again in the 16th to 17th century by the Franciscans, with the Father Custos seated on the foal of an ass, representing Christ. Since 1933, the procession has been able to reclaim its very solemn nature, and is presided over by the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem.

