Homily for Palm Sunday.

We begin now with the solemn liturgies of Holy Week. We are invited to participate in these Liturgies and to re-live in a way the events of our Blessed Lord’s sorrowful betrayal, His tremendous sufferings from the torture He endured and His most painful crucifixion. It will lead us then to the Glorious Day of His resurrection. And today on Palm Sunday we begin that journey of faith accompanying the whole Church in every part of the world. It will be especially difficult this year of course because our churches will be basically empty except for the priest and perhaps a small group of the Faithful who have been selected to offer the responses during the celebration of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. Keeping with the directives of our Bishop that number is not to exceed ten people.

When we reflect on today’s Liturgy we consider how our Lord fulfilled the various prophecies of the Old Testament concerning the Messiah. Those prophecies foretold that the Messiah would suffer on behalf of His people. They even foretold that He would one day enter Jerusalem riding a donkey. Jesus knew, of course that He was indeed fulfilling the prophecies and that His triumphal entry would soon be forgotten in the course of His scandalous trial and condemnation. He wanted, though for the sake of revealing Who He was to live out those prophecies in all their details. And so He enters Jerusalem amidst the shouts of acclamation from the crowd who were accompanying Him. He knew that He was indeed a King but certainly not what the people were expecting. His Kingdom was not to be of this world. And during the course of His trial He admitted as much. He told Pontius Pilate that if His kingdom were of this world His subjects would be fighting to save Him. He knew that He would be misunderstood by many, rejected by the religious authorities and considered a blasphemer. But, He set His face like flint and continued on like a sheep before the shearers. He hardly spoke during the trial but was meek and for the most part did not try to defend Himself, knowing as He did that His tormentors would not listen to Him anyway.

Christ Jesus left us an example in suffering. He could have, as the Son of God brought an end to His illegal trial. He could have with one word brought down a whole army of powerful angels to defend Him from the soldiers no matter how many might have been arranged against Him. But, He wanted to offer Himself as a Victim for our deliverance. He wanted to suffer for man’s redemption. He had come into the world and taken a human body precisely so that He would have it to offer up to God as a sacrifice for our sins. All His life He had been preparing for this hour, the hour of His suffering and life-giving death. He loved us so much that He braved all the tortures and derogatory statements and continued the whole time to pray and intercede for the world and even for those who were intent on making Him suffer the extreme torments that He suffered. From the cross He forgave them all. This is the example in suffering that Our Blessed Savior left us. And when we are united with Jesus and are suffering we can offer those sufferings as His Mystical Body on earth for the redemption of the world. The saints all realized how precious suffering in union with Christ is. In fact many of them would pray to be a Victim Soul along with Jesus and thus save as many sinners as possible from the eternal punishment of Hell. And so if indeed we are given a share in life’s sufferings as indeed we will be let us not forget to look to Jesus as our model in suffering and let us offer those sufferings in union with Him for the salvation of the world. In this Holy Sacrifice of the Mass may He accept us as co-workers with Him in the great Harvest of souls. To Him be glory and power and might now and always and forever.