



### **Vox Populi**

21 March 2024

This Sunday is the final Sunday of Lent – Passion Sunday or Palm Sunday – and the beginning of Holy Week.

Palm Sunday comes from the triumphant arrival of Christ in Jerusalem when the crowds, according to the Gospel of John, scattered palm branches before him. Matthew mentions “branches from trees” while Mark describes them as “leafy branches”.

*“The next day the great crowd that had come for the festival heard that Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem. They took palm branches and went out to meet him, shouting, “Hosanna! ” “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!” Blessed is the king of Israel!” – John 12 12-19.*

Passion Sunday is from the narrative which is read on this Sunday - otherwise, it wouldn't be read on a Sunday since the next Sunday is about the Resurrection when Christ would rise from the dead on the first Easter.

We will celebrate the blessing and distribution of palm branches on Sunday, or perhaps olive branches or native branches, which are sometimes woven into crosses. They will be carried in procession into the church.

Palm branches are widely recognized as a symbol of peace and victory, hence their preferred use on Palm Sunday.

In Jewish tradition, they were also considered a symbol of triumph and of victory.

In the Gospels, Jesus entered Jerusalem riding a young donkey, and to the lavish praise of the townspeople who threw clothes, palms, or small branches, in front of him as a sign of homage. This was a customary practice for people of great respect.

It is also a reminder for Christians to welcome Jesus into their hearts and to be willing to follow Him.

The use of a donkey instead of a horse is also highly symbolic. It represents the humble arrival of someone in peace, as opposed to arriving on a horse in war.

Because the palms are blessed, they may not be discarded as rubbish. Instead, they are appropriately gathered at the church and incinerated to create the ashes that will be used in the following year's Ash Wednesday observance.

The Passion reading this Sunday also captures the speed at which things changed in the few days between the entry into Jerusalem and the subsequent arrest, passion, and death by crucifixion.

By our participation in Palm/Passion Sunday, we symbolise our commitment to complete the initial victory that Christ has won. We joyfully join ourselves to Christ, making his passion our own. We share in his suffering so that we may share in his glory.