

## Palm Friday

Sister Dolores Ann Vanischak

*"Having completed the forty days that bring profit to our soul, we beseech You in Your love for man, grant us also to behold the great week of Your passion so that during it, we may glorify Your mighty acts and Your ineffable dispensation for our sakes as we sing with one mind: 'O Lord, glory be to You.' "*

Vespers on Palm Friday

The forty-day preparation period for the events of Passion Week is now over. Forty days of prayer and fasting have honed my soul to a new awareness of what this most solemn week of the church year will mean to me. Oddly enough, this week is introduced with a celebration—a celebration for an unheard-of miracle. Lazarus, a dear and personal friend of Jesus, has sickened and died. In fact, it will be four days tomorrow that he was buried. And to make sure I really get the point that he is dead, Jesus dawdles getting there. Finally, He does come to Bethany, and with Lazarus' relatives and friends goes to the tomb. There He too weeps and laments, and then amazingly stands before the tomb entrance and calls: "Come forth!" The crowd is astounded by the absurdity of the command. Even Lazarus' sister Martha loudly objects saying, "There will be a bad smell; he is already four days buried." But death immediately released its captive!

The word of this miracle spread, and on the morrow when He resumes His journey to Jerusalem, thousands will line the road and triumphantly wave palm branches, willows, olive branches, and flowers shouting: "Hosanna!" The apostles are delighted by this and bask in the reflected glory. Jesus is being recognized as God's Anointed, and the Pharisees comment: "You see, we are not succeeding at all, the whole world is following Him."

These are the events that close a lengthy period of self-abnegation and prayer. We stand once again on the threshold of the greatest drama in salvation history. At the close of this day, we begin the transition from the Holy Forty-Days Fast into the mystery and majesty of Passion Week. During this time, the Church wishes to raise our eyes and spirits so that we may rejoice with the Lord and sing: "O Christ our God, You confirmed the resurrection of all before the time of Your passion by raising Lazarus from the dead. Therefore, we as children of Israel, carry the symbols of victory and cry out to You the Conqueror of Death: 'Hosanna in the highest! Blessed is He Who comes in the name of the Lord!' "*(Troparion of Lazarus Saturday).*

**SCRIPTURE READINGS:** **Isaiah 66:20-24**  
**Genesis 49:33 - 50:26**  
**Proverbs 31:8-31**