

My Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

This week that we call holy is truly overwhelming. Our worship will burst with symbols to lead us ever deeper into the mystery of our faith. So let us begin by taking our time to carefully reflect on the meaning of some of those symbols. For instance, the word “Hosanna” shouted by the crowds, and now sung by us—what does it mean? Found only in the Old Testament in Psalm 118, it means “Please God—help me or deliver me or save me or take pity on me. Eventually, as used in the time of Jesus, it came to mean “Thank God—for helping me or delivering me or saving me or having pity on me. Shouted by the crowds on that first Palm Sunday, “Hosanna” to the Son of David, all four of the Evangelists would have us hear it as a shout of praise, with Luke making it synonymous with the word “Glory”. As you sing the word today how does your heart render it? Are you praying, “Please God, help me, deliver me, save me, take pity on me!” Or are you praying, “Thank you, God, for helping me or delivering me or saving me or pitying me! Or, perhaps, are you simply singing out your praise to the God of our salvation.

Another very visible symbol is the palm frond each is holding. What does it mean? You notice, I didn’t refer to what you are holding as a “branch” or a “leaf”, because palm trees have neither. The trunk of the palm tree is bare. Rather at the top is what is called “the crown”, from which the fronds spread out. Thus, when the crowds wave the palms, they are acknowledging royalty or a hero of the people. As we wave our palm fronds at the beginning of our celebration might our prayer be, “Jesus, I acknowledge you as my King. Be Lord of my life.”

Let our celebration begin!