



# Burning of Palm Crosses

*on the Last Sunday before Lent*

*After Mass we gather outside the church to burn last year's Palm Crosses (and olive branches) to make the ash for Ash Wednesday.*

*The Priest welcomes people and says,*

The Lord be with you.

**All: And also with you.**

Brothers and sisters,

in their life these palms drew life from the earth and gave it back to our air and the animals they hosted and sheltered. In the worship of our community, they helped us offer festive joy. Now, as these palms are reduced to ashes for us to use at the beginning of our Lenten pilgrimage, we pray they will serve as sign of our mortality and of God's power to save.

May we recognize God's love at work in us throughout the holy season opening before us, replanting our lives in the sure and humble soil of God's truth and grace, so we may once again greet the Easter feast with true joy and gladness.

*During the following reading the fire is lit.*

A reading from the book of the prophet Isaiah.

*(Isaiah 58)*

Look, you fast only to quarrel and to fight and to strike with a wicked fist. Such fasting as you do today will not make your voice heard on high. Is such the fast that I choose, a day to humble oneself? Is it to bow down the head like a bulrush, and to lie in sackcloth and ashes? Will you call this a fast, a day acceptable to the Lord? Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover them, and not to hide yourself from your own kin?

Then your light shall break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up quickly; your vindicator shall go before you, the glory of the Lord shall be your rearguard. Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer; you shall cry for help, and he will say, Here I am.

The Word of the Lord.

**All: Thanks be to God.**

*After this, we are invited to carefully place our palm crosses in the fire.*

*Then the Priest says,*

Merciful God, you called us from the dust of the earth, and claimed us for your own in the waters of Baptism. Look upon us as we prepare for the forty days of Lent by burning these palms to create the ashes that will mark us as penitents. Bless us through our Lenten journey to the waters of new birth at Easter. May our fasting be a hunger for justice; our alms, a way of making peace; our prayer, the song of humble and thankful hearts. This we ask in the name of Jesus Christ the Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

**All: Amen.**

Let us bless the Lord.

**All: Thanks be to God.**