

The Ceremonies of Holy Week.

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THE liturgical year of the Church is, like a rich tapestry, decorated with the most beautiful flowers. The lives of Our Lord and of the Blessed Virgin are represented in a series of Feasts, and between them the space is filled in by those of the Saints.

Comparing Our Lord as the sun of the economy of salvation, from whom all souls draw their light and heat, Mary is the moon to lighten the night. She receives her light from the sun, but reflects it upon the earth and thus helps materially to dispel darkness and be a guide to travellers. The other saints are the stars, scattered over the firmament of our faith.

The Feasts of Our Lord are grouped into three cycles--Christmas, Easter and Pentecost. The first is as it were the cycle of the Father, the second of the Son, the Redeemer of the world, the third of the Holy Ghost abiding with and working in the Kingdom of God on earth--the Catholic Church.

The most important of these cycles is the second. On Easter the Church sings emphatically: "This is the day which the Lord has made." And this is natural, because the Resurrection of Our Lord is the keystone of our religion.

The Easter cycle commences with Septuagesima Sunday. Coming events cast their shadows before them. The Alleluja disappears in Mass and Office, and the color of penance--purple--takes the place of the joyous white. On Ash Wednesday the faithful are signed with ashes, made from the palms of the preceding year--an earnest memento of the sudden change from the "Hosannah" to the "Crucify

Him," and of the inevitable change from life to death. During Lent all public amusements, balls, dances, theatres, even solemn marriage, are forbidden, and fasting is commanded. For how could we prove ourselves members of the body of Christ if we would not suffer and merit with Him?

After the raising from death of Lazarus, Our Lord with his disciples hid to escape the fury and persecution of the enemies, who had planned His death, in remembrance whereof the crosses on the altar are veiled on Passion Sunday. The statues of saints ought to be veiled or removed, as the Church, the spouse of Christ, wishes to remove all traces of consolation and joy and concentrate our attention upon the passion of Our Lord.

One week passes and we enter upon Holy Week. The Doxology, "Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost," was already dropped on Passion Sunday, now all the Feasts of whatever character are likewise excluded, and the shadows of Golgatha envelope us in their sombre folds. The first day of this week is Palm Sunday, so-called because palms are blessed and distributed on this day. This, as well as the other ceremonies of Holy Week, are both historical and symbolical.

In blessing the palms the priest prays that as the appearance in the ark of the dove carrying an olive branch was a sign of peace and the subsidence of the flood, so these branches of olives, palms or other trees, are to all a token of peace, the peace of the soul gained by reconciliation with God.

The procession moves out of the church and then returns, to remind us