Catholicism is a “scriptural faith”. We love the Sacred Scriptures and we immerse ourselves in them, particularly in the Sacred Liturgy. This is most especially, I think, evident this week, Holy Week, which we begin today, this Palm Sunday.

In the book of Leviticus, God commands the Israelites: you shall take to you on the first day the fruits of the fairest tree, and branches of palm trees, and boughs of thick trees, and willows of the brook: And you shall rejoice before the Lord your God.

Again we read of palms in II Machabees chapter 10.

And in the 7th chapter of Revelation, we see that those who were "sealed" are seen by John carrying palms.

Today, we even had a separate ceremony before Mass even began, for the blessing of the palms which we now are holding. So today we have had two Gospel readings! One at its normal time during Mass, and one before Mass.

For the purpose of this homily, I want to focus on our Lord’s entry into Jerusalem. Today Our Lord fulfills another prophecy, the prophet Zechariah says: "BEHOLD THY KING will come to you, the just and saviour: he is poor, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass."

The event of our Lord’s entry into Jerusalem is rich in symbolism helps us understand our role in the work of the salvation of the world.

The donkey, upon which our Savior rides to the gates of the city, represents the Jewish people; who are bound under the yoke of the Old Law and Covenant; If you remember, our Lord sends two of them ahead to go and bring the donkey and the colt to Him. Sacred Tradition tells us that Sts. Peter and John were sent to do this, Peter: the Apostle of Faith and John the Apostle of Love.

Therefore from this we learn that it is by faith and love, we come through the Apostles, through the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church they helped to establish, to be brought to our Lord. We meet Jesus through His beloved Church.

The palms in our hands today represent our good works. They are, as Scripture tells us, signs of joy and victory. It is exactly by our good works that we share our joy of being a member of God’s chosen ones. These good works, our prayer, and our penances, also help prepare the way of the Lord, just as the Jews laid down their palms and garments on the road before Jesus today. The palms are also a sign of Christ's victory upon the Cross. (Aside about blessing of palms).

The cross is essentially linked to our good works. Our good works cannot be accomplished without the Cross!

When a prisoner escaped from Auschwitz in the summer of 1942, the Nazi soldiers imposed their penalty. They took all of the prisoners from the escapee’s barracks and lined them up, and then at random chose a man to be put to death in retaliation. When the man broke down in tears, protesting that he was the father of young children, a quiet bespectacled man stepped forward and said, "I am a Catholic priest; I have no family. I would like to die in this man's place."

Pope John Paul II later canonized that priest, Saint Maximilian Kolbe. With brutal clarity, Kolbe allows us to see the relationship between suffering willingly accepted and salvation. He was consciously participating in the Great Good Work of his Master, making up, in Paul's language, what is still lacking in the suffering of Christ.

We shouldn’t be surprised when we are called upon to suffer in this world. We have been given the privilege of carrying on Christ’s work in just this way.