

Entry of Our Lord into Jerusalem (Palm Sunday)

Commemorated on [April 12](#)

Palm Sunday is the celebration of the triumphant entrance of Christ into the royal city of Jerusalem. He rode on a colt for which He Himself had sent, and He permitted the people to hail Him publicly as a king. A large crowd met Him in a manner befitting royalty, waving palm branches and placing their garments in His path. They greeted Him with these words: "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel! (John 12:13).

This day together with the raising of Lazarus are signs pointing beyond themselves to the mighty deeds and events which consummate Christ's earthly ministry. The time of fulfillment was at hand. Christ's raising of Lazarus points to the destruction of death and the joy of resurrection which will be accessible to all through His own death and resurrection. His entrance into Jerusalem is a fulfillment of the messianic prophecies about the king who will enter his holy city to establish a final kingdom. "Behold, your king is coming to you, humble, and mounted on an ass, and on a colt, the foal of an ass" (Zech 9:9).

Finally, the events of these triumphant two days are but the passage to Holy Week: the "hour" of suffering and death for which Christ came. Thus the triumph in an earthly sense is extremely short-lived. Jesus enters openly into the midst of His enemies, publicly saying and doing those things which mostly enrage them. The people themselves will soon reject Him. They misread His brief earthly triumph as a sign of something else: His emergence as a political messiah who will lead them to the glories of an earthly kingdom.

Our Pledge

The liturgy of the Church is more than meditation or praise concerning past events. It communicates to us the eternal presence and power of the events being celebrated and makes us participants in those events. Thus the services of Lazarus Saturday and Palm Sunday bring us to our own moment of life and death and entrance into the Kingdom of God: a Kingdom not of this world, a Kingdom accessible in the Church through repentance and baptism.

On Palm Sunday palm and willow branches are blessed in the Church. We take them in order to

raise them up and greet the King and Ruler of our life: Jesus Christ. We take them in order to reaffirm our baptismal pledges. As the One who raised Lazarus and entered Jerusalem to go to His voluntary Passion stands in our midst, we are faced with the same question addressed to us at baptism: "Do you accept Christ?" We give our answer by daring to take the branch and raise it up: "I accept Him as King and God!"

Thus, on the eve of Christ's Passion, in the celebration of the joyful cycle of the triumphant days of Lazarus Saturday and Palm Sunday, we reunite ourselves to Christ, affirm His Lordship over the totality of our life, and express our readiness to follow Him to His Kingdom:

... that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, that if possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead (Philippians 3:10-11).

Very Rev. Paul Lazor

As They Approached Jerusalem They Were Afraid

*Now they were on the road, going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was going before them; and they were amazed. **And as they followed they were afraid.** Then He took the twelve aside again and began to tell them the things that would happen to Him: "Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and to the scribes; and they will condemn Him to death and deliver Him to the Gentiles; and they will mock Him, and scourge Him, and spit on Him, and kill Him. And the third day He will rise again." (Mark 10:32-34)*

This is from the gospel reading for the Sunday of Mary of Egypt. How can we not identify with these verses? Just as the apostles approached Jerusalem with fear, so we are approaching Holy Week with fear and anxiety concerning the changes this virus has brought to our lives. We don't know how this is going to play out, and with this uncertainty, being anxious and afraid is surely understandable.

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Joint Message from Holy Synod Con't

we should take into account that insurance is not a single commodity, that carriers have different coverages, forms and endorsements and that individual parishes, with their insurance professional, may tailor coverage to their particular risk and desires. There is at the present time no way of knowing with any legal certainty the existence and extent how each individual parish is protected under their existing insurance policies.

Therefore, given these critical issues, ambiguities and uncertainties regarding the potential of insurance coverage, we all need to be thoroughly compliant with all civil authority directives by adopting practices that go above and beyond the norm in hygiene and the cleaning of our Churches, and doing what is reasonable and prudent to protect our Churches in the current circumstances.

In this respect the Holy Synod of Bishops and the Metropolitan Council can only reiterate and forcefully emphasize the absolute necessity that each and every one of our parishes, monasteries, seminaries, and all other ecclesiastical entities affiliated with the Orthodox Church in America comply with excruciating and painstaking detail all governmental requirements and directives, whether promulgated by the national, state, or local civil authorities, relating to measures issued in connection with the current pandemic. There can be no exceptions to this mandate.

It is with a heavy heart that your Bishops and the members of the Metropolitan Council issue this communique, knowing full well the heavy burden which it may impose on the Clergy, Monastics, and the Faithful of our Orthodox Church in America.

As they Approached Jerusalem Con't

We also heard the gospel reading at Matins from John where Jesus announces numerous times as he greets his disciples "Peace be to you." We also remembered Mary of Egypt on this Sunday. In her life story she is told by the Holy Theotokos in a vision, "If you cross the Jordan you will find peace (or rest)." To acquire the peace of the Lord is not something that you gain instantly. Another way to deal with our anxieties is we can eat them away. We get the instant gratification of being satisfied but it doesn't last long and nothing changes for the better. We only become more enslaved to the passion for food.

With Mary of Egypt, after crossing the Jordan, she did battle in the desert with the consequences of her previous life as a prostitute for 17 years. It took close to 17 years for her acquire peace in the desert. It was this very peace that drove her finally to face the demons that kept her away from God. She became free!

We are now in a similar position. We face Holy Week with many freedoms and other things taken away from us; things we have taken for granted. We can't see each other, can't go shopping like we used to, can't assemble at school or at church like we used to. We are basically cooped up in our homes with much time on our hands that was once filled with busy activity. Now that we don't have that activity, what do we do with our time? Many of us are aware of these wonderful verses from Paul's letter to the Philippians.

"Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice! Let your gentleness be known to all men. The Lord is at hand. Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." (Philippians 4:4-7)

Again we hear of the peace of God. (By the way this is from the Epistle reading for Palm Sunday.) I shared this reading last Thursday at our Web meeting with our youth. I am sharing it again as it provides the basic theme for how we address our current anxieties and fear: we take them to the Lord in prayer. But there is battle going on. Will we turn to the Lord in prayer and persevere, or will we yearn like the Israelites who complained to Moses with their newfound freedom to return to where they came from?

There will be another Zoom meeting with our kids on Tuesday April 7th at 4 pm central time to address this issue of how we manage our time. Resources will be made available to help families keep Holy Week during this very abnormal time we find ourselves living in. May the Lord bless you and keep you.

With love in Christ,
the unworthy +Paul