

## HOMILY FOR PALM SUNDAY

*“Much people that were come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, took branches of palm trees, and went forth to meet Him, and cried: Hosanna! blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord! And Jesus, when He had found a young ass, sat thereon, as it is written: fear not, daughter of Sion! behold, thy King cometh, sitting on an ass’s colt” (John 12:12-15).*

We celebrate, dear brethren, the triumphant entry of the Lord Jesus Christ into Jerusalem. His procession was quite extraordinary: He entered on a young ass who had never worn a yoke, attended by a great multitude of people, who walked in front and behind and cried: Hosanna! blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord! The people greeted the Lord triumphantly and joyously for His having resurrected His friend Lazarus – already a decomposing dead man – from the dead with solely His word. This great and fearful miracle was performed by the Lord as an example and portent of the universal resurrection of the dead that is to take place in its own time, also by the mighty word of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is for this reason that He came to Jerusalem, in order to suffer and die, and – as Life-giver and God – to vanquish by His death and overcome the universal death of mankind, to arise from the dead by His own power, and to grant universal resurrection. Thus, remember that Jesus Christ entered into Jerusalem in order to suffer for the sins of all mankind, including mine and yours, in order to vanquish our death, and turn it into a mirage, and resurrect all humanity from the dead, and after the universal judgment grant all believers and all genuinely repenting sinners an eternal life of rapture.

Do not forget at what terrible and immensely great cost did the Lord gain victory over this horror of mankind – death, and with what suffering was lifted from us God’s just condemnation for man’s damning, incongruous, and pernicious sin, and was granted blissful immortality and a rapturous life in the celestial dwelling, in the incorruptible homeland. This victory was gained through the Son of God’s unimaginable anguish, terrible suffering, and tormenting death on the cross in His human nature.

Many of those who do not believe in this righteous, wise, and loving design of God for salvation express the following query: why and for what reason was needed such a terrible sacrifice of His Son on the part of God the Father? Why this voluntary, horrific passion of the Son of God, His humbleness, descent, humiliation, His surrender into the hands of His enemies, and the allowance of such horrible accountability on the part of His disciple Judas and all Jesus’ enemies: the high priests, the Jewish elders, the people, the scribes and the Pharisees, Pilate, the Roman soldiers, and all the participants in the Son of God’s unjust condemnation and suffering? One must be quite nearsighted and dim-witted to ask such questions and not see the connection between mankind’s infinite guilt before God because of its innumerable and heavy sins, its boundless accountability and liability for punishment on the part of God’s truth, and sinful mankind’s inaccessibility to the wrathful God without the intercession of the Mediator between God and men, Who, solely out of love and compassion for perishing souls, took upon Himself, as the sole and greatest Righteous One, this endlessly great responsibility before God’s judgment, and through His absolute truth, His suffering for the sake of atonement, and His death redeemed guilty mankind from righteous wrath, damnation, and eternal condemnation for its sins.

God, being all-just, could not absolve sinful mankind without the offering of a sacrifice of truth for it, otherwise He would not have been God, for what communion is there between truth and iniquity? What

commonality between light and darkness? (2 Cor.6:14). It was impossible not to justly punish the sins of mankind in the person of the greatest Righteous One, Jesus Christ, Who voluntarily took upon Himself the sins of the entire world, so that He could justly acquire power from the Father to forgive the sins of all those who believe in Him, have been illuminated by His light of grace, have become cognizant of their sins and repent of them; He had to taste our death, combat it, and vanquish it, in order to deliver all of us from our many centuries' of enslavement to it and, finally, to conclude His glorious work of atonement by His resurrection from the dead, in order to have the power to resurrect all mankind, for whose sins He had offered His Father full ransom with His own self; *for the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord* (Rom. 6:23).

This is the reason why the Son of God's sufferings and His death for mankind were necessary. Without them humanity would have perished forever, completely, irreversibly, as have perished all the demons.

As regards the terrible accountability that exists for Judas' betrayal, for the demonic schemes against the Saviour on the part of the high priests and Jewish elders, the scribes and the Pharisees, – they sinned against the promised Messiah of their own free will, through their willful blindness, through their avarice and envy; and seeing the Saviour's charity and miracles, and His righteous life, – it was as though they did not see; and hearing His holy words, – it was as though they did not hear; and finally, they could have repented and could have been pardoned, to which they were invited by the Apostles, – but they did not repent. For this reason they will answer for all their evil deeds at the Last Judgment: *they shall look upon Him Whom they have pierced* (Zach. 12:10).

In conclusion I would like to say to both you and myself: let us make an all-out effort to guard ourselves from sin, which had engendered mankind's disaffection from God and His life, from His holiness and truth, which brought upon us a just condemnation, which prepared for us the fiery, insatiable abyss of hell and all its fathomless depths. Only by means of a sincere belief in Christ and His redemptive suffering, death, and resurrection, and through constant repentance and a virtuous life may we be delivered from hell. God forbid that any of us be thrown into it amid the general bundle of tares mentioned by the Saviour to His angels: *gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into My barn* (Matt. 13:30). Whosoever has ears to hear, may he hear. Amen.

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