

# HOLY TRINITY

## ROMANIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH



723 N BODINE ST PHILADELPHIA, PA 19123

# CHURCH BULLETIN

Vol. 13 No. 16 \* Sunday April 12, 2020 \* Editor: V. Rev. Fr. Nicolai Buga

## Palm Sunday

### Gospel Reading John 10: 32 – 45

**HOLY TRINITY**  
ROMANIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH

723 N Bodine St.

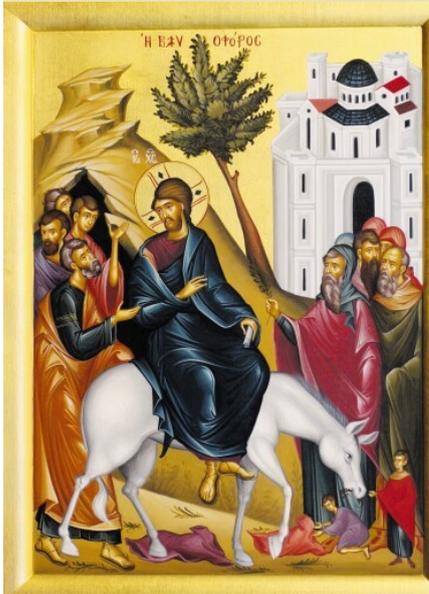
PHILADELPHIA, PA 19123

Tel./Fax: 215-922-7060

[www.holytrinityphiladelphia.com](http://www.holytrinityphiladelphia.com)

V. Rev. Fr. Nicolai BUGA, Rector  
[fr.n.buga@gmail.com](mailto:fr.n.buga@gmail.com)

Rev. Fr. Timotei Avram, Assistant priest  
[fr.timavram@gmail.com](mailto:fr.timavram@gmail.com)



*At that time*, six days before the Passover Jesus came to Bethany, the home of Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. There they gave a dinner for him. Martha served, and Lazarus was one of those at the table with him. Mary took a pound of costly perfume made of pure nard, anointed Jesus' feet, and wiped them with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples (the one who was about to betray him), said, 'Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii and the money given to the poor?' (He said this not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief; he kept the common purse and used to steal what was put into it.) Jesus said, 'Leave her alone. She bought it so that she might keep it for the day of my burial. You always have the poor with you, but you do not always have me.' When the great crowd of the Jews learned that he was there, they came not only because of Jesus but also to see Lazarus, whom he had raised from

the dead. So the chief priests planned to put Lazarus to death as well, since it was on account of him that many of the Jews were deserting and were believing in Jesus. The next day the great crowd that had come to the festival heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem. So they took branches of palm trees and went out to meet him, shouting, 'Hosanna! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord - the King of Israel!' Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it; as it is written: 'Do not be afraid, daughter of Zion. Look, your king is coming, sitting on a donkey's colt!' His disciples did not understand these things at first; but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things had been written of him and had been done to him. So the crowd that had been with him when he called Lazarus out of the tomb and raised him from the dead continued to testify. It was also because they heard that he had performed this sign that the crowd went to meet him.

### Apostle Reading Philipians 4: 11 – 14

*Brethren*, rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. Do not worry about anything, 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 your minds in

Christ had raised from Jesus. Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. Keep on doing the things that you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you.

#### INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Gospel & Apostle Readings	1
HE Metropolitan Nicolae: Meditation for the Feast of the Lord's Entrance into Jerusalem	2
St Gregory Palamas: Homily on Palm Sunday	3-6
Liturgical Schedule for the Holy Week, Easter and Bright Week (from April 11 to April 24, 2020)	6
Father Luke Veronis: Rejoice Always!	7-8

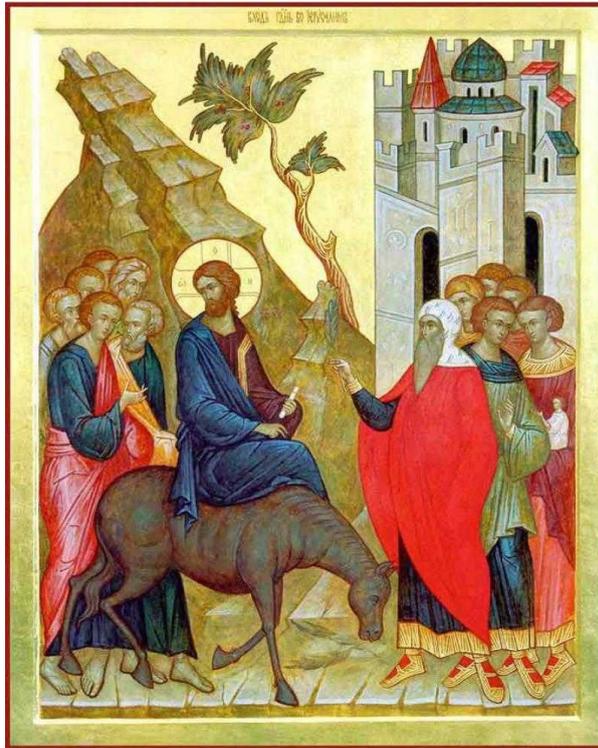
## Synaxarion. Sunday April 12, 2020 - Entry of Christ into Jerusalem (Palm Sunday). Fish, oil and wine allowed.

## Meditation for the Feast of the Lord's Entrance into Jerusalem

In conditions completely different from other years, we have journeyed spiritually through the 40 days of Great Lent. The signs of fear of the new disease were evident already at the beginning of Lent. But we journeyed *together in the Church* on the Sunday of Orthodoxy and that of St. Gregory Palamas. Already on the Sunday of the Holy Cross we discovered *together in prayer* the profound meaning of taking up the Cross and following Christ: taking up our calling as Christians in responsibility for our families, friends, and neighbors with patience, hope, and faith in

God's help. On the Feast of the *Annunciation* we understood that we are being tested like the Theotokos, whose soul was *pierced by a sword*, unto our "becoming" as prayerful Christians, trusting in the intercessions of the Holy Virgin. And we continued Great Lent with the examples of humility and repentance of St. John of the Ladder and St. Mary of Egypt. We have been encouraged to pray more in our own cells, in this isolation similar to their life in the wilderness, that we might gain spiritual understanding of the meaning of our earthly life.

And now we find ourselves at the Feast of *the Lord's Entrance into Jerusalem*, of our meeting of the King of Peace who waits to be received into our souls. The Savior enters Jerusalem riding on a donkey in order to proclaim peace to all: *the peace of God*, which means *reconciliation* with God, with ourselves, and with our neighbors. It is fitting that we too now follow the words of St. John Chrysostom, "*bearing and waving not leafy branches, but bringing as gifts to Christ kindness, virtue, fasting, tears, prayers, vigil.*" Had the Antiochian Father gone through the isolation and desperation of an epidemic? More likely the great preacher had experienced in a profoundly



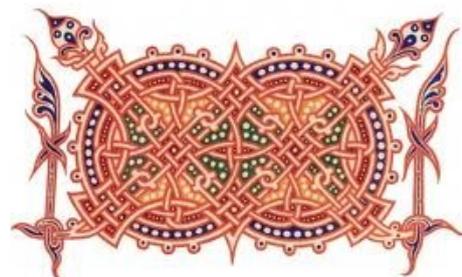
spiritual way this feast which introduces the Week of the Lord's Passion.

For we will see Him who came to bring man's reconciliation with God accused of blasphemy against God, Him who came to bring peace and healing to our souls, spat upon and slapped like one unworthy to be called a Man. Him who came to bring us the true reconciliation born of love, crucified like a thief and enemy of His neighbors.

During this week it is fitting that we spiritually follow the Lord's steps toward crucifixion, that we desire to defend Him before His judges, that we demonstrate our steadfastness in faith, and that we

do not deny Him now, when we are being tested. That we discover in loneliness and understand His crying out to the Heavenly Father! And that we too suffer with the Man Jesus, who suffered His passion for us and offered His life on the Cross as redemption for us! With confidence that He has passed through death, conquering it as God, with joy that the powers of hell have been shattered, with faith that in every Divine Liturgy we too partake of the light of the Resurrection, and with the hope that if *Christ is risen we too will rise!*

† Metropolitan NICOLAE



## Homily on Palm Sunday

“In an acceptable time have I heard thee, and in a day of salvation have I helped thee,” said God through Isaiah (Isaiah 49.8). It is good today to speak these words of the apostle to your charity: “Behold, now is the accepted time; behold now is the day of salvation” (2 Corinthians 6.2). “Let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us work the works of light. Let us walk honestly as in the da” (Romans 13.12-13). The commemoration of Christ’s saving passion is at hand, and the new, great spiritual Passover, which is the reward for dispassion and the prelude of the world to come.



Lazarus proclaims it in advance by coming back from the depths of Hades and rising from the dead on the fourth day just by the voice and command of God, who has power over life and death (John 11.1-45). By the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, children and simple people sing praises in advance to the Redeemer from death, who brings souls up from Hades and gives souls and bodies eternal life.

“What man is he that desireth life and to see good days? Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips that they speak no guile: depart from evil and do good” (Psalm 34.12-14; compare 1 Peter 3.10-11). Evil means gluttony, drunkenness and dissolute living. Evil means love of money, being greedy for gain, and injustice. Evil means vainglory, arrogance and pride. Let everyone turn aside from such vices and do those things which are good. What are they? Self-control, fasting, chastity, righteousness, almsgiving, forbearance, love, humility. That by so doing we may worthily partake of the Lam of God who was sacrificed for our sake, and so receive the earnest of incorruption, and keep it as an assurance of the inheritance promised to us in heaven. Is it hard to do what is good, and are the virtues more difficult than the vices? That is certainly not how I see it. The drunken, self-indulgent person subjects himself because of this to more sufferings than someone who restrains himself; the licentious person suffers more than someone chaste; someone striving to become rich more than someone who lives in contentment with what he has; the person seeking to surround himself with glory than someone who passes life in obscurity. Since, however, the virtues seem more difficult to us because of our love of comfort,

let us force ourselves. “The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence,” it says, “and the violent take it by force” (Matthew 11.12).

All of us, eminent and lowly, governors and governed, rich and poor, need diligence and attention to drive these evil passions away from our souls, and introduce the whole range of virtues in their stead. Farmers, shoemakers, builders, tailors, weavers, and in general all those who earn their living by their own effort and the work of their hands, provided they throw out of their souls the desire for riches, glory

and pleasure, are truly blessed. These are the poor to whom the kingdom of heaven belongs. It was on their account that the Lord said, “Blessed are the poor in spirit” (Matthew 5.3). The poor in spirit are those whose spirits, or souls, are free from boasting, love of glory and fondness for pleasure, and therefore either choose to be poor in external things as well or else courageously bear involuntary poverty. Those who are rich and comfortable, and enjoy fleeting glory, and in general all who long to be like them, will yield to more harmful passions and fall into other worse traps of the devil, which are more difficult to deal with. When someone becomes rich, he does not lay aside his desire for riches, but increases it, grasping at more than he did before. In the same way, pleasure lovers, power seekers, the dissolute and the debauched increase their desires rather than renouncing them. Rulers and eminent men increase their power so as to commit greater injustices and sin.

That is why it is difficult for a ruler to be saved or for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. “How can ye believe,” it says, “which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only?” (John 5.44). But if any of you are well off, or eminent or rulers, do not be dismayed. You can, if you wish, seek the glory of God and exert force on yourselves to stop the impetus towards becoming worse, to practise great virtues and to drive away great evils, not just from yourselves, but from many other people, even against their will. Not only can you act honestly and chastely yourselves, but there are many ways in which you can prevent those who want to be unjust and licentious from doing so. Not only can you show yourselves obedient to

Christ's Gospel and His teachings, but you can also bring those who are minded to disobey into subjection to Christ's Church and its leaders according to Christ. This you are able to do, not just by means of the power and authority allotted to you by God, but by becoming an example of all that is good to those below you. For subjects become like their rulers.

Everyone needs diligence, force and attention, but not to the same extent. Those exalted in honour, wealth and power, and those who concern themselves with words and the acquisition of wisdom by means of them, even if they wish to be saved, are in need of greater force and diligence, since they are less obedient by nature. Exactly this can be clearly seen in the reading from Christ's Gospel yesterday and today. The miracle performed on Lazarus openly proved the one who did it to be God. But whereas the people were convinced and believed, the rulers at that time, that is to say, the scribes and Pharisees, were so far from being persuaded that they raged against Him even more, and resolved in their madness to hand Him over to death, although everything He had said and done plainly declared Him to be the Lord of life and death. No one can say that the fact that the Lord lifted up His eyes at that time and said, "Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me," was an obstacle to their regarding Him as equal to the Father, since He went on to say, "I knew that thou hearest me always: but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they might believe that thou hast sent me" (John 11.41-42). So that they might know He was God and came from the Father, and also that He did not work miracles in opposition to God, but in accordance with God's purpose, He lifted up His eyes to God in front of everybody and spoke to Him in words which make it clear that He who was speaking on earth was equal to the heavenly Father on high. In the beginning when man was to be formed, there was a Counsel beforehand. So now also, in the case of Lazarus, when a man was to be formed anew, there was a Counsel first. When man was to be created the Father said to the Son, "Let us make man" (Genesis 1.26), the Son listened to the Father, and man was brought into being. Now, by contrast, the Father listened to the Son speaking, and Lazarus was brought to life.

Notice that the Father and the Son are of equal honour and have the same will. The words are in the form of a prayer for the sake of the crowd standing by, but they are not the words of prayer but of lordship and absolute authority. "Lazarus come forth" (John 11.43). And at one the man who had been dead four days stood before Him alive. Did this come about by the command of the life-giver or His prayer? He cried with a loud voice, again on

account of the bystanders, since He could have raised him not only by using His normal voice, but just by His will alone. In the same way, He could have done it from afar and with the stone in place. But instead He came to the grave and spoke to those present, who took away the stone and smelt the stench. Then He cried with a loud voice. He raised him in this manner so that by means of their sight (for they saw Him standing at the grave), their sense of smell (for they were aware of the stench of the man four days dead), their sense of touch (for they used their own hands to take away the stone beforehand from the grave, and afterwards to loose the grave-clothes from his body and the napkin from his face), and their hearing (for the Lord's voice reached the ears of all), they all might understand and believe that it was He who called everything from non-being into being, who upheld all things by the word of His power, and who in the beginning by His word alone made everything that exists out of nothing.

The simple people believed Him in every respect, and did not keep their faith quiet, but began to preach His divinity by deeds and words. After the raising of Lazarus on the fourth day, the Lord found an ass, and, when His disciples had made it ready, as the evangelist Matthew tells us (Matthew 21.1-11), He sat upon it and entered Jerusalem, as had been foretold in Zechariah's prophecy: "Do not fear, O daughter of Zion: behold thy king cometh unto thee: he is just and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass" (Zechariah 9.9; Matthew 21.5). The prophet shows by these words that this king in the prophecy is the only true king of Zion. "Your king," he says, "does not arouse fear in those who see him. Nor is he an oppressor or an evildoer accompanied by shield-bearers and spearmen, trailing behind him a host of foot-soldiers and cavalry, passing his life in greed for gain, demanding taxes and tributes, and unpleasant and harmful labours and services. By contrast, His banner is humility, poverty and lowliness, and He enters mounted upon an ass, without any human pretensions at all. He is the only righteous King who righteously saves. He is meek, and meekness is His distinctive work." The Lord said of Himself, "Learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart" (Matthew 11.29).

So the King who had raised Lazarus from the dead entered Jerusalem sitting upon an ass. Everyone, children, men, old people, immediately spread their garments in the way. They took palm-branches, which are symbols of victory, and went to meet Him as the life-giver and victor over death. They fell at His feet and escorted Him in procession, singing together, not just outside but also inside the precincts of the Temple,

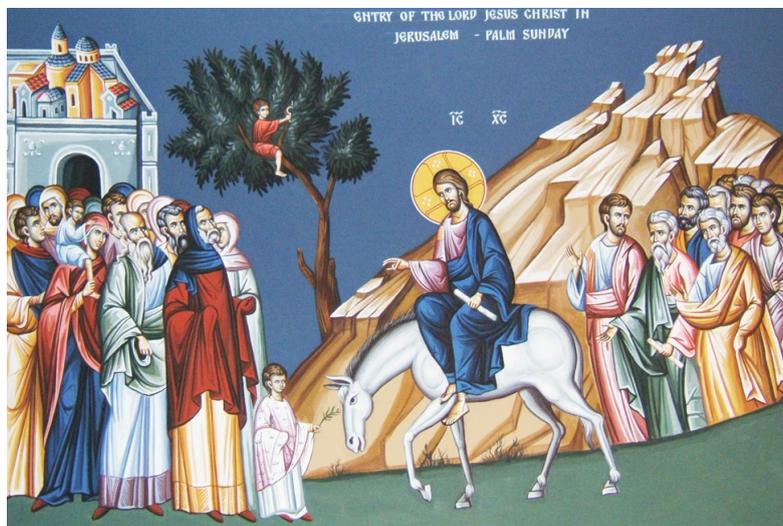
“Hosanna to the Son of David, Hosanna in the highest” (Matthew 21.9). “Hosanna” is a song of praise directed to God, which means, “Save us.” The additional words “in the highest” show that He is not only praised on earth, nor only by men, but also by the heavenly angels on high.

The people not only sang His praises and called Him God, but they subsequently opposed the scribes and Pharisees’ evil purpose against God and their murderous allegations. For the latter were mad enough to say of Him, “This man is not of God, and since he doeth many miracles, if we let him thus alone and do not put him to death, all men will believe on him: and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation” (compare John 9.16 and 11.47-48). But what did the people say? “Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord: Blessed be the kingdom of our father David that cometh” (Mark 11.9-10).

By saying, “Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord,” they showed that He was from God the Father and that He came in the name of the Father. As the Lord said of Himself, “I came in the name of my Father” (compare John 5.43) and I proceeded forth and came from God” (John 8.42). On the other hand, by saying, “Blessed be the kingdom of our father David that cometh,” they showed that this was the kingdom in which, according to prophecy, the Gentiles too, and indeed the Romans, were to believe. For this king was not just Israel’s hope, but also the expectation of the Gentiles, according to Jacob’s prophecy: “Binding his foal unto the vine,” where “foal” refers to the Jewish people who were subject to Him, “and his ass’s colt unto the branch of the vine” (Genesis 49.11). The branch of the vine is the Lord’s disciples, for the Lord said to them, “I am the vine, ye are the branches” (John 15.5). By this branch, the Lord binds to Himself His “ass’s colt,” namely the New Israel of the Gentiles, who become sons of Abraham by grace. If, asked the people, this kingdom in which we have put our faith is the hope of the Gentiles too, why should we fear the Romans?

Those who were childlike in innocence but not in intelligence were inspired by the Holy Spirit to offer up to

the Lord a faultlessly perfect hymn, and bore witness that, as God, He had brought Lazarus back to life after he had been dead for four days. When the scribes and Pharisees, on the other hand, “saw the wonderful things that he did, and the children crying in the Temple and saying, Hosanna to the Son of David, they were sore displeased and said unto the Lord, Hearest thou what they say?” (Matthew 21.15-16). In fact, it would have been more appropriate for the Lord to put the same question



to them, “Can you not see, or hear or understand?” To refute those who were complaining that He tolerated songs of praise that were fitting for God alone, He replied, “Yes, I hear those who, invisibly enlightened by Myself, declare such things about me. But these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out. Have you never read the prophecy that, ‘Out of the

mouths of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise?’” (Psalm 8.2; Matthew 21.16). This was another amazing fact, that simple, uneducated children should speak perfectly of the divinity of God made man for our sake, and that their voices should take up the angelic hymn. At the Lord’s birth the angels sang, “Glory to God in the highest and on earth” (Luke 21.4), and now at the time of His entry into Jerusalem the children offered up the same hymn, “Hosanna to the Son of David, Hosanna in the highest” (Matthew 21.29).

Let us all, young and old, rulers and subjects, be childlike in innocence, that God may empower us to make a public show of the trophies, and carry aloft the symbols of victory, not just of victory over the evil passions, but over visible and invisible enemies, and may we find the grace of the word to help in time of need (compare Hebrews 4.16). The young colt which the Lord deigned to ride for our sake prefigured, although it was only one, the Gentiles’ obedience to Him and we, governors and governed alike, are all Gentiles come from them.

In Christ Jesus there is neither male nor female, nor Greek, nor Jew, but all, according to the holy apostle, are one (Galatians 3.28). In the same way, in Him there is neither ruler nor subject, but by His grace we are all one in faith in Him, and belong to one body, His Church,

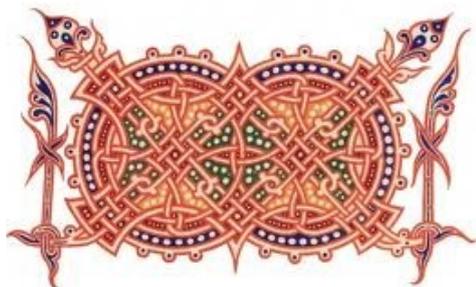
whose head He is. By the grace of the all-holy Spirit we have all drunk of the one Spirit, and have all received on e baptism. We all have one hope and one God, who is above all, and through all, and in us all (Ephesians 4.6). So let us love one another. Let us bear with one another, seeing that we are members one of another. As the Lord Himself said, the sign that we are His disciples is love. When He departed from this world, the fatherly inheritance He left us was love, and the last prayer He gave us when He ascended to His Father was about love for one another (John 13.33-35).

Let us strive to attain to this fatherly prayer and let us not lose the inheritance He left us nor the sign He gave us, lest we should also lose our sonship, our blessing and our discipleship. If that happens, we shall fall away from the promised hope and be shut out of the spiritual bridechamber. Before His saving passion, when the Lord entered the earthly Jerusalem, not just the people, but also the true rulers of the Gentiles, the Lord's apostles, spread their garments in His way. In the same manner, let us all, rulers as well as subjects, lay down our natural garments before Him, by making our flesh and its impulses subject to the spirit, that we may be made worthy not only to see and worship Christ's saving passion and holy resurrection, but to enjoy communion with Him. "For if," says the apostle, "we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection" (Romans 6.5).

To which may we all attain by the grace and love towards mankind of our Lord and God and Saviour Jesus Christ, to whom belong all glory, honour and worship, together with His Father without beginning and the life-giving Spirit, now and for ever and unto the ages of ages.

Amen.

**St Gregory Palamas**



## HOLY TRINITY'S Liturgical Schedule from April 11 to April 24, 2020

**Saturday April 11 -**

**Lazarus Saturday (Soul Saturday):**

9:00 am - Matins

10:00 am - Divine Liturgy

11:30 am - Memorial Service

12:00 pm - Sacrament of Confession

**Sunday April 12 (Palm Sunday):**

8:00 am - Sacrament of Confession

9:00 am - Matins

10:00 am - Divine Liturgy

**Monday April 13 – Holy Week begins**

**Wednesday April 15:**

5:00 pm - Evening service for the Passion Week

**Thursday April 16– Holy Thursday:**

9:00 am - Sacrament of Confession

10:00 am - Vespers & Divine Liturgy

of St. Basil the Great

11:30 - Memorial Service

5:00 pm - Confessions

6:00 pm - Service of the Holy Passion

(with 12 Gospel Readings)

**Friday April 17 - Holy Friday:**

4:00 pm - Vespers of the Veneration

of the Epitaphios

6:00 pm – The Lamentations Service &

Procession of the Epitaphios

**EASTER NIGHT**

**(Saturday night April 18-19):**

11:30 pm - Easter Matins (Orthros)

12:00 am - Service of the Resurrection

12:30 am - Holy & Divine Paschal Liturgy

**Sunday April 19 - Holy Pascha:**

4:00 pm - Easter Sunday Vespers (with Easter Gospel readings in several languages)

**Monday April 20 – Holy Pascha:**

9:00 am - Matins

10:00 am - Divine Liturgy

**Tuesday April 21 – Holy Pascha:**

9:00 am - Utrenie

10:00 am - Divine Liturgy

**Thursday April 23– Holy Great Martyr George:**

9:00 am - Utrenie

10:00 am - Divine Liturgy

**Friday April 24 – The Life Giving Fountain:**

9:00 am - Utrenie

10:00 am - Divine Liturgy



## Rejoice Always!

A number of years ago during the years of communism, a certain old Romanian priest would never greet anyone with the typical “Hello” or “Good Morning”. Instead, he greeted anyone he met with a radiant smile and the words “Rejoice always!” Now this may seem like an unusual way to greet someone, but it is even more incomprehensible when one learned that this priest was in terrible prison, while his son and daughter, along with two sons-in-law also suffered in prison. Even though his entire family endured horrible persecution, the priest still greeted everyone by saying, “Rejoice always!”

In today’s Palm Sunday epistle reading, we hear St. Paul offer similar words - “Rejoice in the Lord always” - to the persecuted believers in Philippi, while he himself languished in a prison cell.

How can anyone in prison, someone suffering, anyone facing difficult circumstances, exhort others to “rejoice?” What is this holy joy that such people as St. Paul, and that Romanian priest radiated.

*“Rejoice always! Rejoice in the Lord always.”* Such phrases obviously imply JOY, yet in our world today too many people don’t understand what brings joy. Many think joy comes with constant pleasure, and thus busy themselves with trivial and meaningless pursuits to occupy and fill their time. Others think that material success and excess will make their lives joyful, while still others say that popularity and fame are the only way for true happiness.

Think for a moment about those who you know who may reflect a deep inner, authentic joy, and tell me who they are. Over the years of my life I have been blessed to meet a few such people – people who exemplified and exuded holy joy. I knew three dear simple old women who endured the horrors and fears of communism in Albania, yet carried an inner joy during all their years of uncertainty and suffering. Archbishop Anastasios of Albania is another model for me. I stayed close to him



during numerous difficult times in Africa and in Albania, witnessed how he exuded an inner joy during the most challenging times. Then there was Bishop Gerasimos of blessed memory during my seminary years, a simple, gentle, humble soul who exuded joy. I developed a nice relationship with some nuns of Mother Teresa and they were another great example of people with joy. Most of these people were individuals

with very little material wealth, yet all possessed a great faith that acted as the source of their true joy!

Ultimately for us Christians, there is only one source of everlasting impenetrable joy – and that source is God Almighty. To know Jesus Christ in the depths of our souls, to allow Him to enter into our hearts and guide our lives, and to be filled with his Holy Spirit is the ultimate definition and experience of joy, because He is precisely the source.

When someone abides in God, he/she is connected to all that God has created, and thus, the entire world becomes a beautiful place. Even in the midst of chaos and darkness, sadness and evil, when logic tempts us to despair, our relationship with Christ gives us a different and refreshing perspective, filling us with hope and love. This is why the saints radiated joy in spite of their hardships and martyrdoms. This is St. Paul and that Romanian priest under communism could rejoice under any and every circumstance.

These saints discovered the secret of the Christian life – that God is always with us, and that faith in Him chases away all fear, despair and hopelessness. When we abide in His love, we discover the security and comfort to rejoice even in the midst of tragedy or uncertainty.

I don’t say we rejoice because of tragedy, but instead, we can rejoice in the midst of tragedy. In any and every situation, we will be able to see something positive and good. If God is with us, there is always hope and a glimmer of light.

This upcoming Holy Week, which begins tonight and will take us through the darkest days of humanity, reminds us of this unquenchable joy in the midst of tragedy. On Holy Thursday we travel through the passion of Christ, when everything seems dark and hopeless. Jesus is betrayed by one of his dear friends, his followers abandon him, and his closest companion denies knowing him. Christ is put on trial, condemned, ridiculed, beaten, and crucified by his own people. Yet the story does not end with suffering and death. Although evil seems to prevail, God has the final say!

Our sadness and despair turn to inexpressible joy as we hear on Pascha night, "Come receive the light from the unwaning light, and let us glorify him who is risen from the dead!"

From a human perspective, the situation seems hopeless. From God's point of view, victory was certain. Here is the secret of how the saints could rejoice in even the worst of situations. If we know the Risen Lord, and have His Spirit abiding within us, than we automatically have His Joy shining from our lives!

So how can we make joy a central part of our lives? Let me offer three concrete suggestions:

**First, we need to allow Christ to ENTER INTO AND rule our lives.** Today on Palm Sunday, we celebrate the feast of Jesus entering into Jerusalem as a king. People lined up on the streets to greet and praise him. "Hosanna to God in the highest! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord." We are called to join with the crowd in praising Him, yet just like the crowd, we have a decision before us. Will our cry of "hosanna" be a sincere cry, where we ask Christ to come and dwell at the center of our lives, or will we cry out in a superficial manner like they did 2000 years ago, honoring him for a day, but rejecting, denying and even crucifying him later in our lives.

If Christ is truly our king, we need to find time not only during Lent but throughout the entire year to commune with Him through prayer and meditation, Bible study and frequent participation in the Holy Sacraments, no matter how busy our schedule is. Excuses of being too busy simply reflect our insincerity

**A second way of being filled with joy is to NEVER ALLOW THE ANXIETIES AND TROUBLES OF LIFE TO DROWN OUT OUR FAITH AND TRUST IN GOD.** In the same passage where St. Paul says to "Rejoice in the Lord always!" he also *counsels* "don't about anything, but in everything, through prayer and

*supplication, with thanksgiving, let your request be made known to God. And the peace of God that passes all understanding will abide richly in your heart."* In other words, holy joy comes when we learn to place all our concerns and troubles in God's hands, and then to believe that he is in control!

**A third way to discover joy is to be thankful for everything in our lives.** An incredible example of gratitude is the Romanian priest I mentioned at the beginning of the sermon. When a fellow prisoner asked this priest how he could rejoice when he and his family suffered so much, he replied, "Rejoicing is easy if we follow St. Paul's lesson to "Rejoice with those who rejoice." When we learn to rejoice with all those who rejoice, we have plenty of motivation for joy. For example, I sit in jail yet I rejoice with those who are free. I can't go to Church and am not able to receive Holy Communion, but I rejoice with the millions of people around the world who go to Church and receive Communion every week. I can't see my children and my grandchildren, but I rejoice with those surrounded by their loved ones . . . When we rejoice with those who rejoice, we can find many reasons to radiate joy."

Let us celebrate Palm Sunday today by praying that Christ may enter more fully into the depths of our hearts and lives as our Lord and King! If Jesus abides there, guiding us every moment of every day, then we will truly discover the source of ineffable joy! We will be able to "rejoice always" and give thanks in every circumstance.

A most blessed Palm Sunday to all of you, one filled with the joy of our Lord, and I pray that this Holy Week will be an inspiring journey of deeper discovery, helping each one of us grow in that holy joy promised by our Lord.

**Fr. Luke A. Veronis**  
(Source: [orthochristian.com](http://orthochristian.com) )

*Fr. Luke Veronis serves as the Director for the Missions Institute of Orthodox Christianity at Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology, and teaches as an Adjunct Instructor at both Holy Cross and Hellenic College. He also pastors Sis Constantine and Helen Greek Orthodox Church in Webster, MA.*

