

On Celebrating This Feast

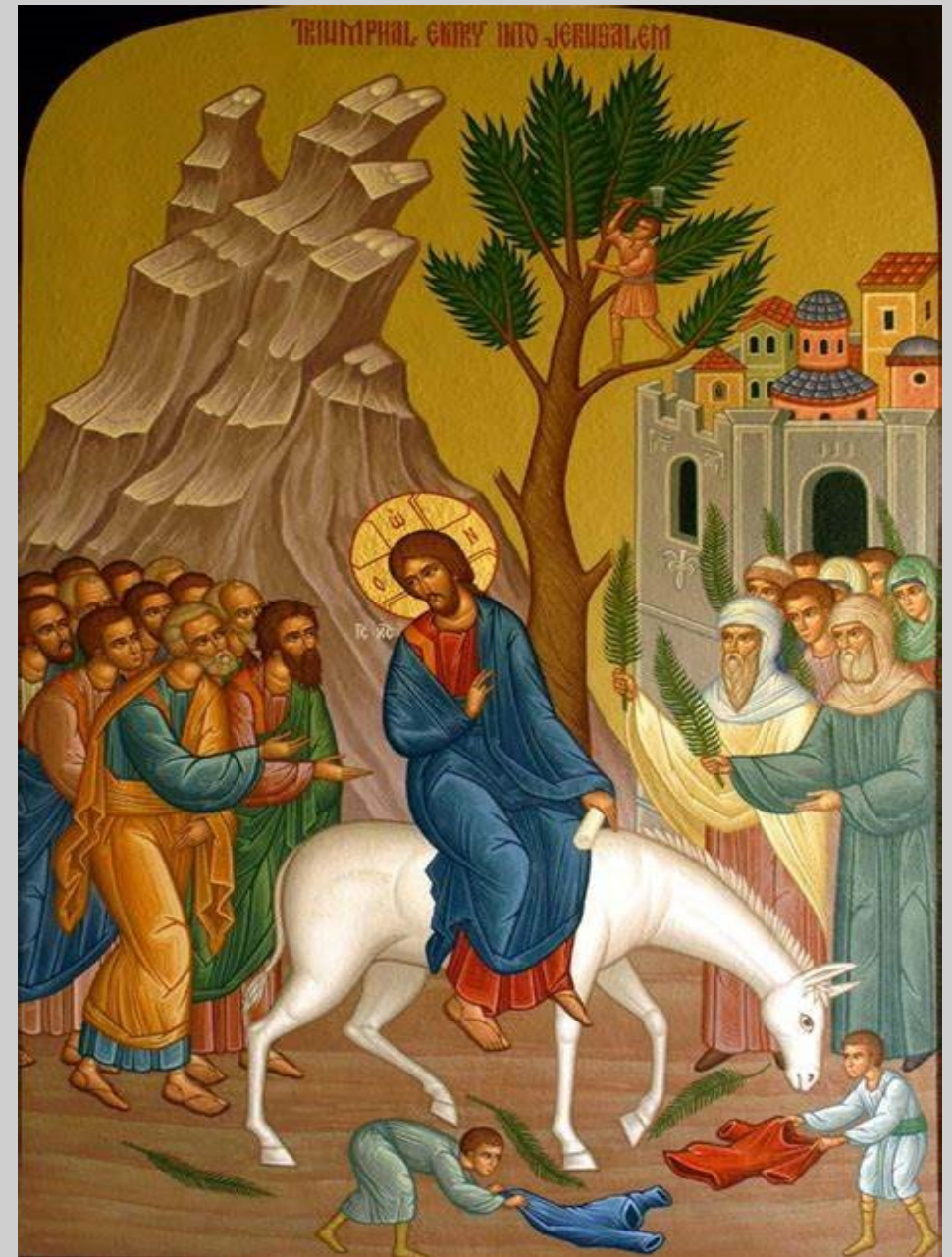
“In His humility, Christ entered the dark regions of our fallen world and He is glad that He became so humble for our sake: glad that He came and lived among us and shared in our nature in order to raise us up again to Himself. And even though we are told that He has now ascended above the highest heaven – the proof, surely of His power and godhead – His love for mankind will never rest until He has raised our earthbound nature to glory, and made it one with His own in heaven.

“So let us spread before His feet – not garments or soulless olive branches, which delight the eye for a few hours and then wither – but ourselves, clothed in His grace, or rather, clothed completely in Him. We who have been baptized into Christ must ourselves be the garments that are spread before Him. Now that the crimson stains of our sins have been washed away in the saving waters of baptism and we have become white as pure wool, let us present the Conqueror of death, not with mere branches of palms, but with the real rewards of His victory. Let our souls take the place of the welcoming branches as we join today in the children’s holy song: *Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Blessed is the king of Israel!*

St Andrew of Crete



SIXTH SUNDAY OF GREAT LENT PALM SUNDAY



TRIUMPHAL ENTRY INTO JERUSALEM

Our Lady of Perpetual Help Melkite Catholic Church
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Worcester, MA 01604
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Rev. Bryan McNeil, Pastor
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Divine Liturgy: Sunday 10:00 AM
April 5, 2020

Antiphon (Feast)

1: I believed even when I said, "I am greatly afflicted."

O Son of God, who rode upon a donkey's foal, save us who sing to You: Alleluia!

2: How shall I make a return to the Lord for all the good He has done to me?

O Son of God, who rode upon a donkey's foal, save us who sing to You: Alleluia!

3: My vows to the Lord I will pay in the presence of all His people.

O Son of God, who rode upon a donkey's foal, save us who sing to You: Alleluia!

Entrance Hymn

Priest: Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord; the Lord is God and has appeared to us.

People: O Son of God, who rode upon a donkey's foal, save us who sing to You: Alleluia!

Troparion (Tone 1) [twice]

O Christ God, when You raised Lazarus from the dead before the time of Your Passion, You confirmed the future resurrection of all. We too, like the children of old, carry before You the symbols of victory and cry out to You, O Conqueror of Death: "Hosanna in the highest! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!"

Troparion (Tone 4)

We have been buried with You in Baptism, O Christ our God, and we merited eternal life through Your Resurrection. Wherefore, we cry out to You, singing a hymn of praise: "Hosanna in the highest! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!"

Kondakion (Tone 6)

O Christ God, enthroned in Heaven and on earth riding upon a colt, You have accepted the praise of the Angels and the hymns of the children who were crying out to You: "Blessed are You who come to restore Adam!"

"How can it happen that children do not notice God, despite all the most sincere efforts of adults to instill faith in them? How can it turn out that children still do not find within themselves the strength to discern Christ the Savior in their childhood lives and in the Gospel?"

"When responding to this question, we raise yet another adult problem, one that is reflected in our children as in a mirror. This is when parents and priests teach one thing, but live in another way. This is a most frightful blow to the tender strength of childhood faith, an unbearable drama for their sensitive minds."

"If children only come to church on Palm Sunday, is it because their elders – parents, relatives, adults around them – have not reflected to them their own encounter with the Lord themselves?"

Our Holy Week and Jerusalem

In 326-28 the Empress Helena, mother of the Roman Emperor Constantine the Great, traveled to Palestine at the behest of her son to mark the places where Christ lived and died by constructing shrines and churches. According to Eusebius of Caesarea, she was chiefly responsible for two great churches, the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem (still in existence), and a church on the Mount of Olives, the site of Christ's ascension. She also took part in the excavations at the site of the Lord's death and burial outside Jerusalem, where the Church of the Resurrection stands today. It soon became the practice for great celebrations to take place at these sites, particularly when the events which took place there were being observed. It was at these shrines that historical commemorations of the events of the Lord's passion were first conducted.

In time, local Churches throughout the Mediterranean world began to imitate the appealing Jerusalem practices, developing the historical observances of Holy Week as we know them today.

The Power of the Redemption

The first observances of Pascha in both East and West, however, were not attempts to recreate the *events* of the Lord's Passion. Rather they were focused on the *effects* of the Lord's death and resurrection in the lives of the faithful. Thus the highpoint of the Resurrection celebration was the bestowal of union with Christ and the forgiveness of sins through the *baptism of catechumens*, which took place before the Paschal Liturgy, and the *reconciliation of penitents* on Holy Thursday: those whose serious sins had excluded them from the community.

In the same spirit, Byzantine Churches today offer the Mystery of Holy Unction on the Wednesday before Pascha. People are anointed for the healing of their spiritual infirmities, uniting them with Christ, in the power of His death and resurrection.



52nd National Melkite Convention Re-Scheduled

The 52nd National Melkite Convention hosted by St. John Chrysostom Melkite Catholic Church on July 9 - 12, 2020 has been rescheduled for 2021 due to the coronavirus pandemic. Go to their website, 2020melkite.org for more information.

If you want me to remember someone at the Divine Liturgy, please send me an email at olphmelkite@gmail.com or call the rectory. This morning, we remember the repose of the soul of our sister **Aileen Abraham**, who passed away on April 2. Condolences to the family.

O Christ God, with the saints, grant rest to the soul of Your handmaid, Aileen, in a place where there is no pain, no grief, no sighing, but everlasting life!

SCHEDULE FOR HOLY WEEK & PASCHA (LIVE-STREAMED)

Mon. 4/6-Bridegroom Service-6:00PM

Tues. 4/7-Bridegroom Service-6:00PM

Wed. 4/8-Vesper Liturgy of St. Basil for Last Supper 6:00PM

Thu.4/9 - Crucifixion Service 6:00PM

Fri. 4/10-Vespers-Descent from the Cross-Noon

Fri.4/10-Lamentations-6:00PM

Sat. 4/11-Hajmeh, Orthros & Divine Liturgy of Pascha-9:00PM

There will be no Sunday morning Divine Liturgy



Weddings — One year notice. Contact Fr. Bryan for Sacramental Preparation.

Baptisms — One month notice. Contact Fr. Bryan for Sacramental Preparation.

Please let Fr. Bryan know about anyone who is sick, in the hospital, or homebound so that he can visit and bring them the Eucharist on a regular basis as soon as the coronavirus has passed.

Dear Parish Family:

Blessed Palm Sunday to All!

For the last forty days, we have been “going up to Jerusalem” with Jesus. This is the final destination of our Lenten journey. The events of Christ’s Passion, Death, and Resurrection form the foundation of our faith. Fr. Alexander Schmemman says that “the purpose of Lent is not to force on us a few formal obligations, but to ‘soften’ our heart so that it may open itself to the realities of the Spirit, to experience the hidden ‘Thirst and Hunger’ for communion with God.”

This year, Holy Week and Pascha will be much different from past years. We will not be physically together as a community. I will pray the services in a closed church with only Khourieh June to respond and run the livestream feed. The schedule of services is included in this bulletin. Many of you will watch from your living room or den. There will be no processions with palms or the Epitaphios. There will be no anointing in preparation for the Pascha, the Feast of Feasts. Others may not have the necessary technology to enable them to watch the services. Even though all of this is true, we are still together. Our connection as members of the Body of Christ is not severed because we cannot physically celebrate together. Even though we cannot shout, “Christ is Risen!”, “Al Maseeh Q’aam!” and “Christos Anesti” over and over together in church, we can shout it from wherever we are! Our voices will still join together as we sing, “Christ is risen from the dead and by His death, He has trampled upon Death and given life to those who were in the tombs!”

During Holy Week, tune in to the livestreamed services, if you can. Open your bible and read the Gospel accounts of Christ’s Passion, Death, and Resurrection. Pray for your fellow members of the Body of Christ at both OLPH and throughout the world. Take this time to contemplate what your faith means to you; what the Church means to you. Jesus tells us, “Behold, I am with you always, even to the end of the age. (Mt 28:20)”

You are all in my prayers. Please pray for me.

In Christ,

Fr. Bryan

The Entry into Jerusalem “...in the same manner as the Lord”

FROM ARMENIA TO EVERY CORNER of the Middle East Palm Sunday is celebrated as a feast for children. Describing Christ’s entry into Jerusalem, St Matthew’s Gospel highlights the participation of children in the event. “*When the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that He did and the children crying out in the temple and saying, ‘Hosanna to the Son of David,’ they were indignant and said to Him, ‘Do you hear what these are saying?’ And Jesus said to them, Yes – have you never read, ‘Out of the mouths of babes and nursing infants You have perfected praise?’*” (Mt 21:15-16).

Children are singled out for mention in the first historical witness we have to this feast as well. Towards the end of the fourth century, the Spanish nun Egeria, on pilgrimage to the newly-adorned places of Palestine, described what she saw on that Palm Sunday: “As the eleventh hour draws near... all the children who are [gathered at the top of the Mount of Olives], including those who are not able to walk because they are too young and therefore are carried on their parents’ shoulders’ all of them bear branches, some carrying palms, others, olive branches. And the bishop is led in the same manner as the Lord once was led... From the top of the mountain as far as the city and from there though the entire city... everyone accompanies the bishop the whole way on foot, and this includes distinguished ladies and men of consequence.” The scene Egeria witnessed has been repeated ever since.

While today the procession is held at the end of Orthros or the Divine Liturgy, Egeria describes it as taking place “at the eleventh hour” (our five PM). This practice echoed the Gospel witness that “*Jesus went into Jerusalem and into the temple. So when He had looked around at everything, He went out to Bethany with the twelve*” (Mk 11:11). There they spent the night.

Children and the Church Today

Palm Sunday services attract large numbers of families who may never attend the Liturgy otherwise. Many clergy blame negligent parents; others feel that the Church has not tried hard enough to reach these parents.

Still others say that the Church spends too much effort educating children while ignoring adults. After all, they reason, the Lord blessed children but directed His teaching at adults.

Russian Orthodox Bishop Tikhon Shevkunov offers another insight. He suggests that, instead of debating about whether we should teach children, we should reexamine what we do with them.

Are we emphasizing secondary matters when we should be introducing them to Christ? He writes: “Children at the age of eight or nine go to church and sing on the kliros, amazing and delighting everyone around them. But by the age of fourteen to sixteen, many – if not the majority – stop going to church. “Children have not become acquainted with God. No, they are of course acquainted with the lives of saints, and with sacred history as arranged for children. But they are not acquainted with God Himself. No encounter has taken place. The result is that parents, Sunday Schools and – sad as it is – priests have built the house of childhood faith “*upon the sand*” (Mt 7:26), and not upon the rock of Christ.

Prokimenon

Reader: Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord. God is the Lord and He has appeared to us.

People: Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord. God is the Lord and He has appeared to us.

Reader: Sing the Lord, for He is good, for His mercy endures forever.

People: Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord. God is the Lord and He has appeared to us.

Reader: Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord.

People: God is the Lord and He has appeared to us.

Epistle: Philippians 4:4 -9

Alleluia Verses

Sing to the Lord a new song; for the Lord has done wonderful works.

Verse: All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God.

Gospel: John 12:1-18

Hirmos: The Lord is God and He has appeared to us! Let us celebrate and rejoice! Come, let us glorify Christ, and with palms and branches sing to Him canticles of praise: Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord, our Savior!

Kinonikon: Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord, Alleluia!

After Communion: O Christ God, when you raised...

Financial Information

March 2020

Revenue \$ 5,656

Expenses \$11,236

Net \$(5,580)

Year to Date

Revenue \$49,546

Expenses \$55,168

Net \$(5,622)

Please don’t forget to support the parish during this pandemic. Our bills have not ceased because we aren’t here. You can mail your contributions or send them through online banking. I am also looking at ways for you to make online contributions in other ways.

Thank you in advance for your generosity!