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Archbishop Elpidophoros Homily for Palm Sunday



His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros
Homily for Palm Sunday
April 28, 2024
Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church
Hicksville, New York

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Μετὰ κλάδων νοητῶς, κεκαθαρμένοι τὰς ψυχάς, ὡς οἱ Παῖδες τὸν Χριστόν, ἀνευφημήσωμεν πιστῶς….

With our souls cleansed and in spirit carrying branches, with faith let us sing Christ's praises like the children….[1]

Today, we gather together for this triumphant Feast of the Palms. How far we have come through the Holy Lent! And now, having fulfilled the Forty Days of the Fast, we arrive at Palm Sunday. What is it that we symbolize today with our palms? Is it only the past, when the children went forth into the streets to cry aloud "Hosanna?"

Or is there something more to these Palms, that portends the Great Acts of our Redemption of Holy Week, which find their fulfillment in the Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ? Indeed, there is! Our Palms this day are much more than about

the events of two thousand years ago. Through them, we are telescoping into the future, even to that moment in the Book of Revelation, where we read in the Vision of John:

And I looked and saw a huge mass of humanity, so many that no one could count them – of every nation, tribe, race, and language – all standing before the Throne and before the Lamb. They were arrayed in brilliant white and held palm branches in their hands. And their cry was a tremendous shout: “Salvation by our God enthroned and by the Lamb!” [2]

We are standing here today, like those masses revealed in the Apocalypse of Saint John, holding palms of victory. On this Palm Sunday, before the events of Holy Week, we know that our Lord Jesus Christ is the Conqueror of Death. Even though He will pass through the Betrayal, the Denial, the Passion, the Crucifixion, Death, and Burial, we know that He will rise again.

As you hold and cherish your palms today, understand that you are a vision of the future, and not only a memory of the past. We are called to carry these branches of palms at all times in our spirits – νοητῶς, with our souls cleansed from all manner of pride and selfishness.

In the Book of Revelation, when John wished to know who this numberless mass of humanity was, with the palms in their hands and clad in gleaming white, this is what he was told:

“These are the ones who have passed through the Great Tribulation. They have washed their robes clean in the Blood of the Lamb, making them shine glistening white. Therefore, they are now before the Throne of God. Day and night they offer their adoration to Him in His temple. The One seated on the throne will make His tabernacle among them. They will hunger and thirst no more, neither suffer the burning heat of the sun, for the Lamb in the midst of the Throne will shepherd them, and He will guide them to fountains flowing with the water of life. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.” [3]

My beloved Christians:

Have we not passed through trials and tribulations at various times in our lives?

Do we not wash the garments of our souls in the Blood of the Lamb, when we receive Holy Communion?

Will we not offer our worship during Holy Week in this temple, and in every church

across our Holy Archdiocese?

Will we not hear, in the Gospel of the Divine Liturgy of the Resurrection:

Καὶ ὁ Λόγος σὰρξ ἐγένετο καὶ ἐσκήνωσεν ἐν ἡμῖν.

And the Word became flesh, and made His tabernacle among us? [4]

Indeed, this is our hope this Holy Week, and every Holy Week. That we behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world, [5] and that He will guide us and shepherd our souls.

For, if we will allow Him, we shall neither hunger nor thirst in our souls anymore. We shall drink of the springs of eternal life. And if there is any sadness in our lives, God will wipe away every tear from our eyes.

Such is our faith. Such is our hope. And through love that conquers all, such shall our destiny be. Amen.

Καλή Δύναμη, καὶ Καλή Ἀνάσταση!

Photos: GOARCH/Dimitrios Panagos

[1] Kathisma of Palm Sunday Matins.

[2] Revelation 7:9-10.

[3] Revelation 7:14-17.

[4] John 1:14.

[5] Cf. John 1:29..

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