

Episcopal Encyclical for Palm Sunday 2025



By His Eminence Metropolitan Cleopas of Sweden and All Scandinavia

Reverend Fathers, Your Excellencies Honorable Ambassadors of Greece and Cyprus,
Honorable Civic and Community Leaders,
Dearly Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,
Friends and Benefactors of the Holy Metropolis of Sweden and All Scandinavia,

Today, on Palm Sunday, Christ enters Jerusalem riding on a donkey, and the crowd welcomes Him with joy, holding palm branches and shouting, “Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!” (Matthew 21:9). The triumph of Palm Sunday marks the beginning of the path toward the Cross and the Resurrection— a precursor of His Kingdom.

Saint John Chrysostom reminds us that “the reception of Christ should not be limited to an external and superficial expression but should be a welcoming of Him into our daily life, through our actions and words. We must hold the palms of virtue, which are the fruits of the spiritual life.” (On the Gospel of John)

Saint Gregory the Theologian says that “Christ, although a King, did not come with pomp but with humility, to teach us the true kingdom.” (Oration 45)

Humility is not only a religious virtue but also an existential invitation—to reject pride and egocentrism and to embrace a life of genuine service to God and our

fellow human beings.

Today's Feast of the Lord reminds us that external worship and enthusiasm remain superficial unless they are accompanied by inner transformation and repentance. As Saint Basil the Great exhorts us: "Let our heart become the kingdom of Christ." (On the Gospel of Matthew)

Modern society, with its speed, technology, consumerism, and individualism, offers solutions geared toward temporary success and happiness. In contrast, Christ calls us to reevaluate the meaning of His "reception" into our lives and to realize that His humility is the antidote to the arrogance of the world. It is a form of resistance against a world dominated by "what look good" (the external appearance); it is the power of authenticity.

Saint Nicholas Velimirovich asks: "When will we turn our minds away from the proud and powerful mechanisms of this world and direct them toward the King Christ? ... Who is humble in His might and mighty in His humility?"

The words of Saint Epiphanius of Cyprus are striking: "The children, like theologians, proclaim Christ as God, while the priests insult Him. Infants who are still nursing venerate Him, while teachers show irreverence. The children sing 'Hosanna,' and the Jews shout for Him to be crucified. The children bring palms to Christ, while the others come to Him with knives. The children cut branches, and the others prepare the wood of the Cross. The children lift Christ onto a donkey, and the elders lift Christ onto the Cross. The children bow before Him and worship at His feet, and the others nail His feet to the wood."

The week that lies ahead —the Holy Week of the Divine Passion—is the culmination of Christ's earthly ministry and a summary of our own lives, filled with contrasts: joys and successes, betrayals and trials.

Let us learn from the profound messages of the sacred services: the humility of our Lord, the power of prayer, sacrificial love, patience, and forgiveness.

Let us offer the palms of our prayerful hearts—not as a mere outward gesture, but as a declaration of our true alignment with Him, as we are "crucified" and "rise" together with Him.

With love in the Lord and many paternal blessings,

† Metropolitan Cleopas of Sweden and All Scandinavia

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