18/04/2022

Homily of Metropolitan Cleopas of Sweden for Palm Sunday



Reverend Fathers,
Honorable Civic and Community Leaders,

Dearly Beloved Stewards, Friends and Benefactors
of the Holy Metropolis of Sweden,

“Christ’s Kingdom is not of this world.” Unfortunately, this fact is precisely what was overlooked by the adoring crowds who welcomed Christ into Jerusalem in a never-before-seen enthusiasm. They thought that the time had arrived when Christ would overthrow the Roman rulers, replace Caesar and assume control of the

empire.

Their understanding of the Kingdom of God was so misguided that they came to the point of crucifying Jesus just a few days later – the same person whom all of Jerusalem turned out to welcome with cries of Hosanna!

His earthly throne was set up by His countrymen at his sight of martyrdom, Golgotha. Earlier today, we heard a hymn saying that “those who previously praised you with palms, came afterwards to apprehend you with clubs.”

Christ’s arrival signals the freedom of people from the bonds of death. He relied on humility, self-sacrifice, and love, as His sole “weapons” in this “struggle for freedom.”
Sadly, even today, many continue to remain oblivious to this call to liberty and the “good news” of the Gospel that proclaim the establishment of this kingdom all across the world for all those desiring to become “citizens of heaven.” Like Dostoevsky says in the Brothers Karamazov, if the Lord were to appear today on earth in His former form, the rulers of this age would crucify Him once again!

Many people put forth the outdated argument that if God existed, there would not be any wars in the world, or so much injustice, sickness, and misfortune. But the real question is whether it is really God’s fault that people have strayed from His teachings? If only earthly leaders could accept Christ with love and simplicity, there would be no need for wars or domination. But whether these wars are fought with guns, bombs, or through the latest type of warfare – economic warfare – the absence of Christ guarantees misery for the victors and vanquished alike.
Do we really want Christ to act as a punisher? Do we envision Him to be a warlord with smart bombs? Certainly not. And more importantly – neither does He. God does not operate by imposing His will. God respects freedom and operates based strictly on love, not personal interest.
During this year’s Easter, the entire world is confronted by a spiritual challenge; the outbreak of war in Ukraine. It is painful, because it entails bloodshed between brothers. We pray for peace and reconciliation to prevail.
Because of the war, millions of people have been displaced in Ukraine and many refugees are fleeing to the nations of Europe, including the Northern Lands of Scandinavia.
During this tremendous humanitarian crisis, we will do our utmost as Orthodox Christians, to make them feel welcome and safe. All our parishes, throughout Scandinavia, will be available to them, to celebrate services in their own native language, following their church order and keeping up with their own traditions and

customs. I believe that we all share the same sentiments of solidarity and we will respond in like manner.
Philoxenia, the Greek word for hospitality, is a virtue, and we intend to exercise it with all our means. We are waiting our Ukrainian brethren with open arms. It is our duty to do so, just as we were once welcome in the hospitable Northern Lands of Scandinavia and established ourselves here.
In closing, I would like to share with you a beautiful hymn that will be sung during tonight's Nymphios/Bridegroom Service, written by Cosmas the hymnographer: "All will know you to be my disciples if you keep my commandments, the Lord told his friends, as He headed towards His Passion. Be at peace with one another and be humble, and by coming to know me, praise the Lord unto the ages." Amen!

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