

“Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Sion; proclaim it aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem; behold the King is coming to thee, just and a savior” (Zach 9:9). Today, my brethren, we celebrate the prophecy of Zacharias. Today we celebrate Christ’s triumphant entry into Jerusalem. Some thirty-three years before, He came into the world as a babe born in a cave, lying in a manger wrapped in swaddling clothes. The shepherds were in the fields and they witnessed the multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, and goodwill among men”.

Today, He enters into Jerusalem, on a foal of an ass. His disciples are entering the city with Him, and they together with the children cry out, “Hosanna! Hosanna! Blessed is the King who cometh in the name of the Lord; peace in heaven, and glory in the highest!” (Lk 19:38).

Christ, our Lord and King, who is our perfect example of humility, entered into the world and entered into Jerusalem in a humble manner, but the world and the heavens could not remain silent. The angels glorified Him, and Christ’s followers and the innocent children proclaimed Him as king, as the Creator of all.

From the beginning there have been people in the world who have strived for their own power and glory, opposed to God’s glory and teachings. King Herod, afraid of losing his kingdom, killed thousands of young male children in Bethlehem, trying to preserve his rule. And in Jerusalem, when the Pharisees saw the crowds of people calling Jesus their King, they asked Him to rebuke His disciples and followers. And Christ answered them saying, “I say to you that if these should keep silent, the stones will cry out” (Lk 19:40).

When has creation ever kept silent? Angels sang in the Heavens at His Incarnation. Shepherds told others of the Savior’s birth. Magi from the east came to worship the King. Those who were healed went and told everyone of what had happened to them. Many witnesses to Lazarus’s raising from the dead went and followed Jesus into Jerusalem chanting, “Hosanna, Hosanna, which means ‘Lord save us’”. And when our Savior died on the cross, all of creation wailed—the sun was darkened, the world was shaken, the rocks were rent, and the veil of the temple was torn into two. All who experience Christ’s love, mercy, power and glory can never remain silent.

It is now our turn my brethren. The Church has guided us through these past forty days and has brought us to the gates of Jerusalem. Yes, we are there with the children crying out “Hosanna, Lord save us”. We are there when Christ is born. And we will be with Him when He is crucified. But in what manner? Will we cry out and glorify Him or will we remain silent?

It is imperative, it is of the utmost importance, that these next seven days we live our lives like those who yearned to be with the Lord. As the years go by, the world becomes more secular. There are less and less people who fear, respect, and love the Lord. The world and their well-being has become their God and it is they who try to influence our lives.

This is an important week. We remember the passion, crucifixion, and resurrection of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. This week encapsulates the pinnacle of our faith. God became man, took upon Himself all of our sins, and died so we may live. Do we understand what this means? Do believe it? Do we live it?

Many from the crowds, who first cried hosanna, hosanna, were the ones who later cried, “Crucify Him. Crucify Him”. How easily were they influenced. In just a matter of a few days, they completely changed. Even St. Peter, who earlier proclaimed Jesus as the Christ, denied that he knew the man.

The world will try to influence us and our children. Its goal is to make us deny Christ and to silence us. This is why this week is so important. Holy Week is not just the last week before we can eat meat. Holy Week is not just a week with more church services. Holy Week is the remembrance of our Lord’s Passion

and the celebration of His Resurrection. It is the essence of our faith and the meaning of our life-not our life here on earth but our eternal relationship with the God of all. Today our world and our life is dominated by things that try to pull us away from Him. The Church on the other hand, tries to hold on to us and tries to guide us back to Him. But this week, this week is special. The more we put into it, the more we will get out of it.

Whether we have fasted or not, whether we have prayed or not, now is the time my brethren to make a sincere effort to experience Holy Week. Now is the time to make an extra effort to come to all of the church's services. Now is the time to read and pay attention to the Church's hymns. Now is the time to read the Gospel. Now is the time to be meek and humble. Now is the time to reflect. Now is the time to chant. Now is the time to take our palms home for a blessing. Now is the time to venerate the Cross. Now is the time to venerate our Lord's tomb. And now is the time to celebrate our Lord's Resurrection. It is time for us to ignore the world and listen to the Church. It is time to be fearless. It is time to show our children and our youth the importance of this week.

There are no crimes this week, no protests. There are no wars. There are no illnesses. Yes, they might occur, but this week, we are lifted up to another place. We are attentive. Our intellect is somewhere else because, "now is the acceptable time; behold now is the day of salvation" (2 Cor 6:2).

Let us not be silenced by the world and let us not allow those who hate the Church to make us change who we are. We are Orthodox Christians, and this is the most important week of the year. Today we chant Hosanna, Hosanna and in a week will chant Christ is Risen. No matter what may happen, we will glorify our God and Savior this week and every week.

I will end the sermon with the epistle we read earlier today. I will allow St Paul to instruct us as we enter Holy Week: "Brethren, rejoice in the Lord always; again, I say rejoice. Let your reasonableness be known to all men. The Lord is near. Cease being anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with giving thanks, let your requests be known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, shall guide your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus, AMEN".

Father George Kamberidis

Palm Sunday, 2021