



Prophet Elias News

**News in the time of self – isolation for the Orthodox Church of
the Holy Prophet Elias in Devon
25thth April 2021**



Lazarus Saturday and Palm Sunday

Lazarus Saturday - The Beginning of The Cross

"Having fulfilled Forty Days... we ask to see the Holy Week of Thy Passion." With these words sung at Vespers of Friday, Lent comes to its end and we enter into the annual commemoration of Christ's suffering, death and Resurrection. It begins on the Saturday of Lazarus. The double feast of Lazarus' resurrection and the Entrance of the Lord to Jerusalem (Palm Sunday) is described in liturgical texts as the "beginning of the Cross" and is to be understood therefore, within the context of the Holy Week. The common Troparion of these days explicitly affirms that by raising Lazarus from the dead Christ confirmed the truth of general resurrection. It is highly significant that we are led into the darkness of the Cross by one of the twelve major feasts of the Church. Light and joy shine not only at the end of Holy Week but also at its beginning; they illumine darkness itself, reveal its ultimate meaning. All those familiar with Orthodox worship know the peculiar, almost paradoxical character of Lazarus Saturday services. It is a Sunday, i.e., a Resurrection, service on a Saturday, a day usually devoted to the liturgical commemoration of the dead. And the joy which permeates these services stresses one central theme: the forthcoming victory of Christ over Hades. Hades is the Biblical term for Death in its universal power, for that unescapable darkness and destruction that swallows all life and poisons with its shadow the whole world. But now -- with Lazarus' resurrection -- "death begins to tremble." For there the decisive duel between Life and Death begins and it gives us the key to the entire liturgical mystery of Pascha. In the early church Lazarus Saturday was called "announcement of Pascha", it announces and anticipates, indeed, the wonderful light and peace of the next Saturday - the Great and Holy Saturday, the day of the Lifegiving Tomb.

Let us first of all understand that Lazarus, the friend of Jesus, personifies the whole of mankind and also each man, and Bethany, the home of Lazarus the Man, is the symbol of the whole world as a home of man. For each man was created friend of God and called to this Divine friendship: the knowledge of God, the communion with Him, the sharing of life with Him. "In Him was life and the life was the light of men." (John 1:4) And yet this Friend whom God loves, whom in love He has created, i.e. called to life, is destroyed and annihilated by a power which God has not created: death. God encounters in His own world a power which destroys His work and annihilates His design. The world is but lamentation and sorrow, tears and death. How is this possible? How did this happen? These are the questions implied in John's slow and detailed narrative of Jesus' coming to the grave of His friend. And once there, "Jesus wept." (John 11:35) Why does He weep if He knows that in a moment He will call Lazarus back to life? Byzantine hymnographers fail to grasp the true meaning of these tears. They ascribe them to His human nature, whereas the power of resurrection belongs to God in Him. But the Orthodox Church teaches that all actions of Christ are "theandric," i.e., both Divine and human, are actions of the one and same God-Man. But then His very tears are Divine. Jesus weeps because He contemplates the triumph of death and destruction in the world created by God.

"It stinketh." say the Jews, trying to prevent Jesus from approaching the corpse, and this awful warning applies to the whole world, to all life. God is Life and the Giver of Life. He called man into the Divine reality of Life, and behold "it stinketh"... The world was created to reflect and proclaim the glory of God and "it stinketh." At the grave of Lazarus God encounters Death, the reality of anti-life, of destruction and despair. He meets His Enemy, who has taken away from Him His World and become its prince. And we who follow Jesus as He approaches the grave, enter with Him into that hour of His, which He announced so often as the climax and the fulfilment of his whole work. The Cross, its necessity and universal meaning are announced in the shortest verse of the Gospel: "Jesus wept"... We understand now that it is because He wept, i.e., loved His friend Lazarus, that Jesus had the power of calling him back to life. The power of Resurrection is not a divine "power in itself," but the power of love, or rather love as power. God is Love and Love is life, Love creates Life... It is Love that weeps at the grave and it is Love that restores life. This is the meaning of the Divine tears of Jesus. In them love is at work again – recreating, redeeming, restoring the darkened life of man:

“Lazarus, come forth!...” And this is why Lazarus Saturday is the beginning of both: the Cross, as the Supreme sacrifice of love, the Resurrection, as the ultimate triumph of love.

From The Very Rev. Alexander Schmemmann - *A Liturgical Explanation Of Holy Week*

Full text available at orthodoxinfo.com/general/a-liturgical-explanation-of-holy-week.pdf (And well worth reading *Ed.*)

Expect to be Surprised

Here are two themes for contemplation that always resonate on Palm Sunday.

One: Praise is fragile and fleeting, unreliable and misleading. Today Jesus is revered, tomorrow he is crucified. There is no security in this life. Trying to hold on to any experience is like trying to hold water in your hand. Today we will be praised, tomorrow we will suffer. That is the truth of life. A truth of Palm Sunday. Everything changes.

Another is this. The Messiah has come and he is not the one that was expected. The crowd that greeted him in Jerusalem was terribly disappointed. His teaching in the temple made them angry. They deemed his message inappropriate. His Gospel of Peace and self-sacrifice was unwelcome. The crowd was looking for a fix and Jesus refused to give it to them. So they betrayed him.

We must not think that the living Christ will always comfort us and say what we want him to say or do what we think he should do or be what we want him to be. He is Truth and we are not. The discrepancy may be uncomfortable, but seeing it is the first step toward salvation.

The prayer of the faithful man is, “Lord, show me my delusion.” The prayer of the faithless man is, “Lord, give me what I want.” Faithless men become extremists, not faithful ones. The crowd on Palm Sunday got excited and then got angry. They wanted satisfaction, not truth. God is always surprising because he is God. Expect to be surprised. Fr. Schmemmann once said if we are always happy with sermons, then the Gospel has not been preached.

Each Holy Week is different. Each present moment is different. Jesus appears different to us from year to year not because he changes, but because we do. This year, if all is well, we will have grown and changed, our minds made more open by a deeper immersion in the flow of grace, by our practice of mindfulness throughout the year. Hopefully, we have developed the ability to stay awake for longer and longer periods of time. That is the point of spiritual practice after all.

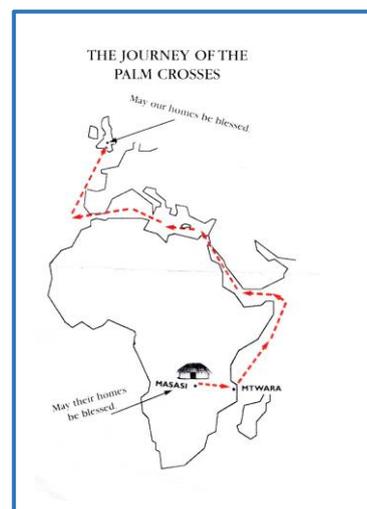
From a sermon preached by Fr. Antony Hughes on Palm April 28, 2013. Full text, with several other Holy Week sermons, available at [The Spiritual Practice of Holy Week | St. Mary Orthodox Church of Central Square in Cambridge, Massachusetts](http://TheSpiritualPracticeofHolyWeek|St.MaryOrthodoxChurchofCentralSquareinCambridge.Massachusetts)

Our Palm Crosses

This year, like last, we have bought our palm crosses from African Palms, a charity which provides work and some extra income to people in the village of Masasi in Tanzania.

‘The aim of African Palms is to give people living in a very poor part of Tanzania the possibility of earning some extra money. The people’s daily work is the planting of maize, millet and some ground nuts to feed themselves and their families. The important thing about the Palm Cross project is that it does not interfere with their work of producing the food they need to live. African Palms was started in 1965 and after a very small beginning has grown so that churches in the USA, Canada, Sweden, Norway and other European countries now buy African Palm Crosses for their Palm Sunday Service. People look forward to being able to do the work. Their work is really good and the crosses are made beautifully. Here in the United Kingdom at the end of each year, if there is any money over after all the costs are paid, it is covenanted to a charitable trust, The African Palms Association. The trust aims to give help to schools and for medical work in the area.’

Like last year, crosses will be posted to parishioners who cannot come to the Liturgy on Lazarus Saturday when they will be blessed by Father Trayan after the service.



Gordon

It is with sadness that we report the sudden death last week at the age of 76 of Gordon Steven, our neighbour in Saint Anne’s Cottages – ‘Flash Gordon’, the bottled gas supplier. He was a good friend of our parish, and we will miss him.

May his Memory be Eternal!

A Poem for Palm Sunday

The Donkey

by
G.K. Chesterton
(1874 – 1936)

When fishes flew and forests walked
And figs grew upon thorn,
Some moment when the moon was blood
Then surely I was born.

With monstrous head and sickening cry
And ears like errant wings,
The devil's walking parody
On all four-footed things.

The tattered outlaw of the earth,
Of ancient crooked will;
Starve, scourge, deride me: I am dumb,
I keep my secret still.

Fools! For I also had my hour;
One far fierce hour and sweet:
There was a shout about my ears,
And palms before my feet.

A poem for Great and Holy Thursday

Love (III)

by
George Herbert
(1593-1633)

Love bade me welcome: yet my soul drew back,
Guilty of dust and sin.
But quick-eyed Love, observing me grow slack
From my first entrance in,
Drew nearer to me, sweetly questioning
If I lacked anything.

"A guest," I answered, "worthy to be here":
Love said, "You shall be he."

"I, the unkind, ungrateful? Ah, my dear,
I cannot look on thee."

Love took my hand, and smiling did reply,
"Who made the eyes but I?"

"Truth, Lord; but I have marred them; let my shame
Go where it doth deserve."

"And know you not," says Love, "who bore the blame?"
"My dear, then I will serve."

"You must sit down," says Love, "and taste my meat."
So I did sit and eat.

Holy Week and Easter Services Online

For those who cannot get to our Holy Week and Easter services, Elizabeth Theokritoff suggests various possibilities to access livestreamed services:

'St Nicholas parish in Oxford stream pretty much everything, and it is now very easy to tune in, either via **mixlr** (audio) or via Facebook: <https://www.stnicholas-oxford.org/>

They usually start late, so one has to keep one's nerve. Services are in English and Slavonic - plenty of English.

For those happy with services in Greek, our own Fr John Hookway streams services from north London:

<https://www.facebook.com/StDemetriusUK>

For timetable, see <https://www.stdemetrius.uk/>; but their Holy Week timetable is not out yet.

Services from St Tikhon's Monastery in Pennsylvania are beautiful and all in English, but not very practical on account of the time difference. But people could catch Bridegroom matins at 9.30 pm via their web site with live streaming button,

<https://sttikhonsmonastery.org/>

See timetable at https://sttikhonsmonastery.org/calendar/month_print.php?month=4&year=2021

The Vicariat in France will be livestreaming all Holy Week services, but have not yet finalized their schedule. For details see <https://www.facebook.com/lettreVicariat>. (Services in French with some Slavonic.)

In His Own Time

In vain is the labour, it is fruitless and harmful, when we seek to discover in ourselves high spiritual gifts prematurely: merciful God gives them in His own time, to the constant, patient, humble fulfillers of the Gospel commandments. Amen.

From *Love of God* by Saint Ignaty Brianchaninov 1807-1867 (Feast Day April 30th)

From a MS published at

<http://www.byzcath.org/forums/ubbthreads.php/topics/253010/The%20Love%20of%20God%20by%20>

This Week We Celebrate

‘The services of Holy Week constitute a single liturgical event’ Fr Thomas Hopko

On Saturday April 24th: **Saturday of the Raising of Lazarus**

On Sunday 25th: **The Entry of Our Lord into Jerusalem – Palm Sunday**

Holy Apostle and Evangelist Mark (Services transferred to May 4th)
Epistle Philippians 4:4-9 Gospel John 12:1-18

On Monday 26th: **Great and Holy Monday**

**Commemoration of Blessed Joseph the All-Righteous,
and of the Unfruitful Fig Tree that was Cursed by Christ**

On Tuesday 27th: **Great and Holy Tuesday**

Commemoration of the Parable of the Wise and Unwise Virgins

On Wednesday 28th: **Great and Holy Wednesday**

Commemoration of the Woman who Anointed the Lord with Myrrh

On Thursday 29th: **Great and Holy Thursday**

**Commemoration of the Washing of the Feet, the Mystical Supper,
the Prayer in Gethsemane, and the Betrayal**

Saint Endellion of Cornwall (6th C) Sister of Saint Nectan

On Friday 30th: **Great and Holy Friday**

Celebration of the Holy and Redeeming Passion of the Lord

Holy Apostle James the Son of Zebedee

On Saturday May 1st: **Great and Holy Saturday**

Celebration of the Burial of the Lord and of His Descent into Hell

Noticeboard

Services:

Saturday April 24th: Lazarus Saturday

Divine Liturgy and Blessing of Palms – Saint James’ Hall 10.30am

Sunday 25th: Palm Sunday

Divine Liturgy – Plymouth 9.30am Torquay 9.30am

Matins (Bridegroom Service) – Saint Anne’s 3.00pm

Monday 26th · Tuesday 27th, Wednesday 28th:

Matins (Bridegroom Services) – Saint Anne’s 6.30pm

Thursday 29th: Holy Thursday

Vespers/Liturgy – Saint James’ Church (not the Hall) 10.30am

Service of the Twelve Gospels – Saint James’ Hall 6pm

Friday 30th: Holy Friday

Vespers - Saint James’ Hall 3.30pm

Matins (Burial Service) – Saint James’ Hall 6.30pm

Saturday May 1st: Holy Saturday

Vespers and Divine Liturgy – Saint James’ Hall 9.30

May 1st/2nd : Easter Night

Paschal Vigil and Liturgy - Exeter Cathedral 10pm

NB Entry by ticket only – email martinolsson827@btinternet.com to apply

May 2nd: Easter Day

Paschal Vespers - Saint James’ Hall 6pm