



My Beloved Ones,

Palm Sunday is a day of great joy for all Orthodox Christians, when we welcome our Lord into Jerusalem, waving palm branches, and singing, *“Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel!”* (John 12:13) In this way is the Epistle reading especially appropriate when St. Paul greets the Philippians with *“Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near”* (Philippians 4:4-5).

We know that Jesus entered the city on a donkey which His Disciples had fetched from the villagers of Bethpage, saying only, *“The Lord needs it”* (Luke 19:31). In this way the prophecy was fulfilled: *“See, your king comes to you; triumphant and victorious is he, humble and riding on a donkey”* (Zechariah 9:9). Indeed, though the citizens eagerly greet their

King (especially after His miraculous raising of Lazarus), perhaps they do not recognize that the path our Lord takes, from Bethpage to Jerusalem is also how the Passover Lamb is brought into the city before its sacrifice in the Temple. In all these ways, Our Lord demonstrates that His Messianic claim is not through military victory on a horse of battle, but victory over death through humble submission. Though this day is a moment of happy rest before His Passion, it is also meant to point the way to His Crucifixion, and His Victory over death.

We know that Holy Week will take us to the foot of the Cross, and so St. Paul’s words are meant to offer us comfort when he says, *“Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving... the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus”* (Philippians 4:6-7). Even as the Mystical Supper, Christ’s Betrayal, and His Crucifixion will test our hearts, *“...brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you”* (Philippians 4:8-9).

My Beloved Children in Christ, may we begin Holy Week by meditating on how our Lord’s love for us is so great that he demonstrated true humility, both when the public praised Him, and then when they condemned Him. Truly, He was willing to demonstrate the greatest kind of servitude, all so that we might have eternal life with Him.

**+ALEXIOS**  
Metropolitan of Atlanta