



My Beloved Ones,

This Sunday we shall join the joyful children of Jerusalem who welcome our Lord, waving palm branches, and singing, “ὡσαννά, εὐλογημένος ὁ ἐρχόμενος ἐν ὀνόματι Κυρίου, βασιλεὺς τοῦ Ἰσραὴλ. Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel!” (John 12:13) We know that the reason for the crowd is because they heard of Jesus’ miraculous raising of Lazarus in the village of Bethany, not far from Jerusalem. Throughout His Ministry, our Lord had demonstrated His Father’s Will. Now, in raising Lazarus from the dead, He has prefigured His own Resurrection.

We also know that many of those welcoming Christ expect an earthly Messiah to drive the Romans from Israel. When He appears before them five days later in chains, these same people will chant to Pilate, “Crucify Him!” (Matthew 27:22) However, I ask us to look at the children, whose joyful recognition of Christ is dismissed by the Elders of the Temple. Christ Himself quotes Scripture: “...Have you never read, ‘Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings, you have brought perfect praise?’” (Matthew 21:16) Through their purity, these children can recognize that Jesus calls for a spiritual change of heart, rather than revolution. What then, do these faithful young people mean as they shout for the King of Israel?

The key is found in the Greek word, ὡσαννά, which is taken from the Aramaic meaning “Lord, save!” The children, who offer their tunics for the donkey to walk on, understand that the Lord has come to save us, not from oppression, but from our own sins. Palm Sunday is a day of joy as we prepare for a week of spiritual struggle because we Orthodox understand that through His entry into Jerusalem, the Son of God not only takes His final steps toward His voluntary and Life-saving Passion: the joy we experience as we surrender our souls to His saving work is present in every Liturgy, and in every Sacrament. We are not reenacting an event, we welcome Christ into the Jerusalem that is our Sanctuary, understanding that He is present forever in our Churches, so long as we are willing to welcome Him into our hearts, and into our lives.

My Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ, I wish for each one of you a blessed Saturday of Lazarus and Palm Sunday. Let us enjoy a brief rest as we bask in the glorious light of our Lord’s triumphant entry into Jerusalem, and its promises for that Feast of Feasts, Pascha.

**+ALEXIOS**  
Metropolitan of Atlanta