

PALM SUNDAY

**APOSTOLIC READING: St. Paul's Letter to the Philippians 4:4-9:**

Brethren, rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. Let all men know your forbearance. The Lord is at hand. Have no anxiety about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is anything excellent, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, do; and the God of peace will be with you.

**Ο ΑΠΟΣΤΟΛΟΣ: Πρὸς Φιλιππησίους Ἐπιστολῆς Παύλου τὸ ἀνάγνωσμα:**

Ἀδελφοί, χαίρετε ἐν κυρίῳ πάντοτε· πάλιν ἐρῶ, χαίρετε. Τὸ ἐπιεικὲς ὑμῶν γνωσθήτω πᾶσιν ἀνθρώποις. Ὁ κύριος . Μὴ δὲν μεριμνᾶτε, ἀλλ' ἐν παντὶ τῇ προσευχῇ καὶ τῇ δεήσει μετὰ εὐχαριστίας τὰ αἰτήματα ὑμῶν γνωρίζεσθε πρὸς τὸν θεόν. Καὶ ἡ εἰρήνη τοῦ θεοῦ ἡ ὑπερέχουσα πάντα νοῦν, φρουρήσει τὰς καρδίας ὑμῶν καὶ τὰ νοήματα ὑμῶν ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ. Τὸ λοιπὸν, ἀδελφοί, ὅσα ἐστὶν ἀληθῆ, ὅσα σεμνά, ὅσα δίκαια, ὅσα ἀγνά, ὅσα προσφιλή, ὅσα εὐφρημα, εἴ τις ἀρετὴ καὶ εἴ τις ἔπαινος, ταῦτα λογίσεσθε. Ἄ καὶ ἐμάθετε καὶ παρελάβετε καὶ ἠκούσατε καὶ εἶδετε ἐν ἐμοί, ταῦτα πράσσετε· καὶ ὁ θεὸς τῆς εἰρήνης ἔσται μεθ' ὑμῶν.

**GOSPEL READING OF THE DAY: This morning's Gospel Reading is from the Holy Gospel according to St. John, Chapter 12, Verses 1-18:**

Six days before Passover, Jesus came to Bethany, where Lazaros was, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. There they made him a supper; Martha served, and Lazaros was one of those at table with him. Mary took a pound of costly ointment of pure nard and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped his feet with her hair; and the house was filled with the fragrance of the ointment. But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples (he who was to betray him), said "Why was this ointment not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?" This he said, not that he cared for the poor but because he was a thief, and as he had the money box he used to take what was put into it. Jesus said, "Let her alone, let her keep it for the day of my burial. The poor you always have with you, but you do not always have me."

When the great crowd of the Jews learned that he was there, they came, not only on account of Jesus but also to see Lazaros, whom he had raised from the dead. So the chief priests planned to put Lazaros also to death, because on account of him many of the Jews were going away and believing in Jesus.

The next day a great crowd who had come to the feast heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem. So they took branches of palm trees and went out to meet him, crying, "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel!" And Jesus found a young donkey and sat upon it; as it is written, "Fear not, daughter of Zion; behold, your king is coming, sitting on a donkey's colt!" His disciples did not understand this at first; but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that this had been written of him and had been done to him. The crowd that had been with him when he called Lazaros out of the tomb and raised him from the dead bore witness. The reason why the crowd went to meet him was that they heard he had done this sign.

**Ἡ σημερινὴ εὐαγγελικὴ περικοπὴ: ἐκ τοῦ κατὰ Ἰωάννην Εὐαγγελίου τὸ ἀνάγνωσμα, κεφ. 1, ἐδάφ. 1-18.**

Dear Brothers and sisters in Christ: It is through the grace of God that I am out of quarantine and will celebrate the Palm Sunday Divine Liturgy, as well as services for Holy Week and Pascha, together with Christo Pappademos, our Pastoral Assistant and George Tsolias, one of our Cathedral Chanters., and (remotely) together with you, the faithful of the Annunciation Cathedral. Although for the first time in our 100 year history we will not be gathered in one place this year, we will nevertheless be gathered as one people. Although our chapel will be virtually empty, it will be filled with your faith and of the saints and martyrs and all those who have gone before us. We will navigate these waters with optimism and with hope. For, what is hope, but the expression of our faith. And what is faith but, as St. Paul expresses it in his letter to the Hebrews, Chapter 11, verse 1: *the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.* We will look ahead to the day when we will come together in the new Cathedral, when this pandemic is behind us, and thus sing praises to our God, who loves us, who became one of us, who suffered for us and died for us, and who was raised from the dead. This is the essence of Holy Week and Pascha. This is what we're all about as Orthodox Christians.

**This Sunday, April 12,** I would ask that you go to your back yard (or your neighbor's yard, if you don't have one---with their permission, of course) and cut a branch. Hold it with you as you participate via live stream in the Divine Liturgy and during the prayer for the blessing of palms. **On Holy Wednesday, April 15,** I would ask that you place some oil on a plate or in a small bowl as we celebrate the *Ephelaion* Service. At the conclusion, anoint yourselves and your loved ones. Make the sign of the Cross on your doorposts, as the Israelites did during that first Passover (see Exodus 12). **On Holy Thursday, April 16,** we will celebrate the Divine Liturgy of St. Basil, which marks the institution of the Holy Eucharist. Body and Blood of this Divine Liturgy are kept in the Tabernacle on the Holy Altar and taken whenever we visit the sick in hospitals, nursing homes, or in their homes. **On Holy and Great Friday, April 17,** we will celebrate the Lamentations. **On Holy Saturday, April 18,** we will hear the "first resurrection." What is celebrated is the Vespers Divine Liturgy of St. Basil, already anticipating the Resurrection. **On Holy Pascha, April 19,** I would ask you to receive the Paschal light in your homes, virtually. As we intone, "Come receive the light from the unwaning Light, and glorify Christ risen from the dead," light your own candle, thus proclaiming the Resurrection of Christ, looking forward to his Kingdom, and the day when *there will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the former things have passed away* (Revelation 21:4) The Paschal Divine Liturgy will follow.

**Please note that, for security and for practical purposes, all services will be celebrated at 10 am** instead of in the evening and will be streamed via the Cathedral's YouTube channel at <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCUf2Vd0DB9LftkwxbbRCj2g>. Understandably, the services will be simplified, as circumstances require. Meanwhile, continue to light your virtual candles by visiting the Cathedral's web site, <https://www.annunciation.org/virtual-candle>. In turn, we will light them during the services. May God hear our prayers!

**EVERYTHING IS ON HOLD:** We are living in unusual times; one might say, *apocalyptic* times. End of the world times. Not that this is necessarily the end of life. But, certainly, the end of life as we've known it. In the 'Gospel According to Matthew, chapter 24, verses 3-12, we read about the *end-times*. The disciples come up to Jesus and ask, "What will be the sign of your coming, and of the end of the age?" And Jesus replies, "You will be hearing of wars and rumors of wars [substitute pandemics], but that is not yet the end... This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come." There is much life ahead. Humanity will survive this pandemic. The question is, how will that life be lived? Our present circumstances not only call us to reevaluate our priorities, but to allow our lives to be transformed and, in turn, to transform others, by becoming apostles of the Gospel of love...the love of God, who became what we are and suffered as we suffer...the love of one another. Meanwhile, all of our parish ministries at the Cathedral are on hold, except for the Gospel of love, the Gospel of hope. May it lead, as His Eminence Metropolitan Gerasimos shared with us a few days ago, the transformation of our spiritual desert to a spiritual oasis, or as Christo Pappademos shared with us last Sunday, "let us use this situation to see what we can become!"



*"The Church shall be a home for Orthodox Christians from every ethnic and national background. It shall be a house of prayer for all humankind, in which the Holy Name of our Triune God shall be extolled and all of creation sanctified."*

