

Saint Paul the Apostle Orthodox Church

24 BURKE ROAD

FREEHOLD, NJ 07728

Palm Sunday

April 5, 2015

Father Robert E Lucas, Pastor; Subdeacon Daniel J. Korba and Nikitas Tsokris, Cantors Rectory 215-862-9227; Parish Center 732-780-3158

We Are A Stewardship Parish Of Time, Talent and Treasure

The mission of our parish faith community is to teach the Gospel message in the rich tradition of the Orthodox Church; to enable people to reflect the image of Jesus Christ in every day activities of life; to offer spiritual formation through changing times; and to celebrate community among Orthodox believers in our Freehold area.

We of St. Paul the Apostle Parish dedicate ourselves to maintaining the sanctity of worship and spiritual enlightenment in a family environment that reaches and involves all ages and unifies all people.

We believe in the spirit of ecumenism in which we share our faith by word and example and extend our spiritual insights to all people.

We accept the responsibility of Christian Stewardship that through generous giving we may all experience a faith communion with Christ as the Center of our lives.

We dedicate ourselves to insuring the well-being of all people so that we may truly experience the message of Christ's salutary gospel.

We are a beacon on a hill with the eyes of many upon us; that beacon is the inspired Light of Christ which must shine brightly in our lives.

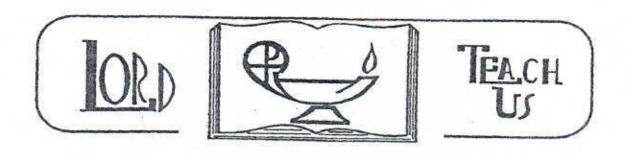
It is not ourselves we preach but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' has shone in our hearts, that we in turn might make known the glory of God shining on the face of Christ. This treasure we possess in earthen vessels to make it clear that its surpassing power comes from God and not from us. We are afflicted in every way possible, but not crushed, perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in us 2 Corinthians 4:5 – 8.

GLAD TIDINGS

+++ Today we have festal anointing on the occasion of the feast of Christ's entry into Jerusalem. The customary greeting is "Christ Is Among Us!" to which we respond, "He Is And Shall Be!"

+++ There will be no Pirohi Sale in April.

- +++ Please remember no meat products are to be consumed this coming week. Great and Holy Friday, Great and Holy Saturday is to be observed with strict fast.
- +++' We pray our faithful will be generous with their holyday offering next Sunday in appreciation for the gift of salvation we receive from the Lord. We ask each family and gainfully employed individual to offer at least \$50.00, the same amount Father requested and was positively responded to some twenty years ago!
- +++ The offering for flowers for the coming feast days was taken, but the response was poor; just enough for today's palms and pussy willows. Please be generous today.
- +++ We remind our faithful diocesan and parish dues are DUE. Only eleven diocesan dues are received. Please fulfill this obligation during this sacred season.
- +++ Every Monday, we have prayerful devotions before the Myrrh bearing icon at 6:00 PM. Everyone is invited to be present in praise. The Birthgiver invites us to manifest our faith in response to her first shown love, to unite our prayers with hers for the salvation of our souls. Invite your friends and neighbors to join us.
- +++ Please keep the intentions of these members of our parish intercession community in your daily prayers: Father George, Barbara, Betty, James, Yevlogia, Nicholas, Maria, Cynthia, Pani Anna Marie, Father Myron, Pani Delores and Andrea...
- +++ The sign-up sheet for both the Web Site and Bulletin sponsors is on the bulletin board in the kitchen. Please sign up as soon as possible. Do NOT make payment until your sign-up month has arrived. This will make it easier for Father to keep track of payments. Thanks in advance to all who support the parish in this way.
- +++ We offer thanks to the Blessed Trinity for inspiring generosity in the souls of our faithful and the blessing of abundant grace in our midst with the offering received last Sunday: Tithe Offering, \$180.00; Candles, \$35.00; Camp Raffle, \$20.00; Kitchen, \$4831.00; Food Coupons, \$120.00; Great Fast Self-Sacrifice, \$20.00; Holyday, \$66.00; Flowers, \$131.00; Special gift offered in memory of +Violetta Radan, \$100.00, for a total of \$5503.00. We express our profound gratitude to the parishioner communicants who offer their God-given treasure and labored for the sake of the Lord and the good of our parish. God bless and reward you good and faithful souls!
- +++ As faithful believers, we intercede and associate ourselves in prayer with the following who have prayed and offered seven day lights for their intentions: Father Lucas, Maria Idronmenos, Anna Zacharyczuk, Bob Gorbich, Marilyn Korba and Pani Buletza.
- +++ We make a PENNIES FROM HEAVEN Canister available for our faithful to bring in pennies for our altar and its appointments. We are already in receipt of \$1819.00 from this apostolate. Even your pennies can help and are a blessing to our parish.



Spiritual Life

Jesus replied: With all the earnestness I possess I tell you this: Unless you are born again, you can never get into the kingdom of God. Born again! exclaimed Nicodemus, What do you mean? How can an old man go back into his mother's womb and be born again? Jesus replied, What I am telling you so earnestly is this: Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of heaven. Man can only reproduce human life, but the Holy Spirit gives new life from heaven; so do not be surprised at my statement that you must be born again. Just as you can hear the wind but cannot tell where it comes from or where it will go next, so it is with the Spirit. We do not know on whom he will next bestow this life from heaven. What do you mean? Nicodemus asked. Jesus replied, you are a respected Jewish teacher and yet you do not understand these things? I am telling you what I know and have seen and you won't believe me. But if you don't even believe me when I tell you about such things as this that will happen here among men, how can you possibly believe me when I tell you what is going on in heaven? For only I, the Messiah, have come to earth and will return to heaven again. And as Moses in the wilderness lifted up the bronze image of a serpent on a pole, even so I must be lifted up on a pole so that everyone who believes in me will have eternal life. For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son so that anyone who believes in him shall not perish but have life everlasting John 3: 3 - 16.

He frees us; he rescues us from death Psalms 68: 20.

If God would withdraw his Spirit, all life would disappear and mankind would turn again to dust Job 34: 14.

No Cross, No Resurrection

It is simply not true, as some would contend, that the Orthodox Church has over emphasized the Resurrection while the Western Church has placed the accent on the Cross of Christ, the one pointing up the divinity of the Lord, while the other ponders more dearly His humanity. In our Church the two cannot be separated or isolated in worship or doctrine. We preach, as did St. Paul, Christ crucified and risen! The Cross is central to Orthodox Christianity: no Cross, no Resurrection! Just as the New Testament fulfills the Old Covenant, the Resurrection is the completion of the task of man's redemption by Christ on the Cross.

Orthodoxy is not the faith of the Resurrection alone; it is also the faith commitment of the holy Cross, the totality of all Christ taught. We are not a partial or fragmented faith. We live the fullness of Christ's teaching and living experience. We call upon and share the totality of grace from the Cross to the empty tomb. It is from the Cross that joy has come into the world. "We bow to Your Cross , O Lord, and we praise Your holy Resurrection" is the hymn we sing on the feast of the Exaltation of the Life-giving Cross and on the third Sunday of the Great Fast. Both mysteries are closely inter-related and united because they give expression to a wholeness of revealed faith.

St. John Damascene praises the Holy Cross with these beautiful and arresting words:

"Every action and every miracle of Christ is most divine and marvelous, but the most compelling marvel of all is His honorable Cross. For no other element has subdued death, expiated the sin of the first parents, destroyed hell, bestowed the Resurrection, granted power to us of condemning death itself, prepared the return to original blessedness, opened the gates of Paradise, given our nature a seat at the right hand of the Father, and made us the children of God, save the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. The death of Christ on the Cross clothed us with the hypostatic wisdom and power of God." On The Orthodox Faith.

The Power And Wisdom of God

St. Paul the Apostle says of the Cross, "For the Jews demand signs and the Greeks seek wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a scandal, to the Greeks foolishness, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God" 1 Corinthians 1: 24.

The early Fathers of the Church tell the story of the devil speaking and saying, "Three things I fear in Christians; that in which they bathe, Baptism; that with which they are nourished in church, the Eucharist; and that which they wear about their necks, the Cross." It is strange the prince of evil recognizes the power of the Cross in the life of a believer. It is the life-giving Cross which repels the devil, which saves us; the Cross we must take upon ourselves if we will be saved; the Cross by which we must enter into and share in the suffering of Christ and subsequently in the victorious Resurrection of Christ.

The Cross of Christ is in reality a plus sign; the greatest plus sign this world has ever known. It is God's great plus sign for you and me. It means that God offers me great pluses in His blessings and grace as I go through life:

I need not be alone with my problems and troubles. I can have the great plus of God's presence, His guidance, His wisdom and His direction. Sinful man plus God's mercy equals forgiveness. Confused man plus Christ equals new purpose, new meaning, a totally new person. Guilt-ridden man plus Christ equals "the peace of God that surpasses all understanding" Philippians 4: 7. Weak man plus Christ equals enduring strength. "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" Philippians 4: 13. Despairing man plus Christ equals hope. "And this hope will not leave us disappointed because the love of God has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us" Romans 5: 5. The Cross was not the end for Jesus; neither will it be the end for those who believe in Him. The risen Christ will have the final word. And the last word is "In the world you have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world" John 16: 33.

WISDOM! BE ATTENTIVE!

Blessed is He Who comes in the name of the Lord. We bless you from the house of the Lord. Entrance Hymn, Feast of the Entrance of Our Lord into Jerusalem.

O Christ God, You confirmed the resurrection of all before the time of Your passion by raising Lazarus from the dead; therefore we, as the children of Israel, carry the symbols of victory and cry out to You, the Conqueror of death: "Hosanna in the highest! Blessed is He Who comes in the name of the Lord." Troparion; Lazarus Saturday

In heaven, You are enthroned on high; on earth You ride upon a colt of a donkey. O Christ God, You received the praise of angels and the hymns of children crying out to You: "Blessed is He Who comes to restore Adam!" Kontakion, Feast of the Entrance of Our Lord into Jerusalem.

Blessed is He Who comes in the name of the Lord; God is the Lord, and has revealed Himself to us. Prokimenon, Feast of the Entrance of Our Lord into Jerusalem.

We have been baptized with You through baptism, O Christ our God! We have become worthy of immortal life through Your resurrection. We cry out to You: "Hosanna in the highest! Blessed is He Who comes in the name of the Lord." Troparion, Feast of the Entrance of our Lord into Jerusalem.

Christ, the Joy of all, the Truth, the Light, the Life, and the Resurrection of the world, appeared to those on earth. Because of His goodness, He became also the image of resurrection, granting divine forgiveness to all. Kontakion, Lazarus Saturday.

Let us all gather this day, the new Israel, the Church of the Gentiles, and with the prophet Zechariah, let us say, Rejoice, O daughter Sion, shout for joy, O daughter Jerusalem: behold your King comes to you; He is the Saviour, meek and humble, seated on the colt of a donkey, a beast of burden. Carrying psalms, let us praise Him as did the children: "Hosanna in the highest! Blessed is he Who is coming, the King of Israel." Vesper hymn, Feast of the Entrance of our Lord into Jerusalem.

Having first praised You with their palms, the ungrateful people then crucified You; but we honor You with our unchanging faith as our Benefactor, O Lord, and we unceasingly cry out to You: "Blessed is He Who comes to draw Adam forth from the tomb." Matins hymn, Feast of the Entrance of our Lord into Jerusalem.

Blessed is He Who comes in the name of the Lord; God is the Lord, and has revealed Himself to us. Communion Hymn, Feast of the Entrance of our Lord into Jerusalem.

Who Is Winning?

O my God, I delight to do your will Psalms 40: 8.

A friend had a dog whose favorite game was to play tug-of-war with a rubber pull-toy. She would grip one end of the toy with her teeth and the friend would grip the other end with his hand. Because she was a very small dog, the human effort to win sometimes lifted her up off the ground. But she still stubbornly gripped the toy without letup.

Sinful human nature, or what God's revelation to us in Scripture calls "the flesh" is a lot like that dog, continually playing tug-of-war with our heavenly Father. From an early age, our thinking, our words and then our actions say, "My will be done." Or we may modify our stubborn approach and say, "Lord, change your will." There are even those who would venture to observe, "Lord, God don't act so predictably."

Our Lord, God and Saviour Jesus Christ always wanted to do the will of the Father. When He was agonizing in prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane just prior to his arrest and crucifixion, He prayed, "Take this cup away from me." But in the very next breath, He let go of his own human will and yielded to the wisdom of his Father, saying, "Nevertheless, not my will but yours be done" Mark 14: 36.

The Fathers of the Church have unanimously and continually emphasized and pointed out that the words, "No, Lord" are a contradiction in terms. Only as we say, "Yes, Lord" and actually mean it and then live it, can we really call him Lord.

Is there a "No, Lord," anywhere in your life? Do not be like that puppy dog that would not let go. Instead, imitate the perfect example of Jesus Chris and let go of your tugging and warring will and yield to that of our Almighty Father.

Lord, help; us to submit to you, to follow and obey; and give us strength to fight the urge to do things our own way.

Otherwise we reveal ourselves for who we are. A strong will oftentimes conceals a strong won't.

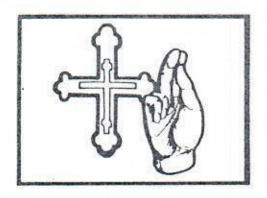
We Cross Ourselves

We many times have to wonder if our faithful have ever pondered how rich in meaning is the sign of the Cross as we Orthodox Christians make it.

To make the sign of the Cross, we join the thumb, the index and middle fingers of the right hand at their tips, and at the same time we rest the fourth and little finger in the palm of the hand. First we touch the forehead, then the chest, and immediately following the right and then left shoulder in that order. At the end we let the hand fall to the side as we make a bow. The thumb, index and middle fingers touching each other at their tips represent the Holy Trinity: God the Eternal Father Who created us, God the Son Who redeemed us, and God the Holy Spirit Who abides in us and strengthens us; three persons in one God, the Blessed Trinity.

Then we let the fourth and little fingers representing the two natures of Christ, the human and divine, drop into the palm of the hand to denote that the Son of God "came down from heaven" and became man for our salvation. Thus, we make the sign of the Cross to remind ourselves of Who God is and what our relationship with Him is. We think about what He did for us, and how He never stops expressing His eternal love for us, the pinnacle of creation. Every time we cross ourselves, each time we bless ourselves, we recall the great price He paid to redeem us.

What we ought also to do is show ourselves worthy all His efforts! By our response, we should glorify Him in appreciation.



ARE YOU THE KING?

Of all the titles given to Jesus, the one he seems to have liked the least is the title of king. If Jesus had been asked what he wanted to be called, he might well have said, "Call me anything but king!"

Where Is the Newborn King?

Recall, for instance, the terrible trouble Jesus got into the first time he was called king. "Astrologers from the east arrived one day in Jerusalem," Matthew tells us, "and they asked, 'Where is the newborn king of the Jews?" (Matthew 2:2). That question set off a chain reaction that led to the Holy Family's flight into Egypt and the massacre of little boys in Bethlehem (Matthew 2:13-16).

Jesus Recoiled from Kingship

During his ministry Jesus recoiled from the prospect of becoming a king. After he fed five thousand with a few loaves and fish, "Jesus realized that they would come and carry him off to make him king, and he fled to the mountain alone" (John 6:15). King? No, thank you!

The Bad News of Kings

Jesus knew his Hebrew Scriptures well enough to know that kings did not enjoy a good reputation. The history of Israel was riddled with rebellious regents, corrupt kings, and lax leaders. Even Israel's favorite king, David, was an adulterer and a murderer.

The King of the Jews

At the trial before his crucifixion, Jesus' persecutors and prosecutors tried to get him to admit that he was a king. When Pilate asked him point blank, "Are you the king of the Jews?" Jesus answered, "That is your term" (Luke 23:3). The inscription on the cross—"This is the king of the Jews" (Luke 23:38)—was no proud title but a final humiliating affront not only to Jesus but also to the Jews. This is a king—battered, bloodied, hanging from a cross?! Like king, like people.

The World's Most Unique King

We can continue to call Jesus king as long as we remember that he is the world's most unique king. Jesus is the king who comes not to be served but to serve. Jesus is the king whose first loyal, royal subject is the criminal to whom he says, "This day you will be with me in paradise"

SCRIPTURE

TRIVIA

1. What did Peter do when the rooster crowed three times and he realized he denied Jesus?

2. Who said, "I don't even know this fellow you are talking about"?

QUIZ

3. After Jesus' arrest, why did the soldiers throw dice?

4. Who was already dead for three days before he was raised from the dead?

Who said, "I have sinned, for I have betrayed an innocent man"?

6. Who was the man whose ear Peter cut off when Jesus was arrested?

7. Who said, "You demanded the release of a murderer and killed the Author of life"?

Who in St. Matthew's Gospel carries the Cross for Christ?

9. 'Who washed his hands clean from Jesus' death?

10. What color was the robe put on Jesus before He was taken away to be crucified?

11. Where was Jesus taken when He was arrested?

12. How did Jesus refer to Judas when Judas betrayed Him?

13. With whom did Jesus celebrate the Mystical Supper?

14. What did the sign board on the Cross say?

ANSWERS TO TRIVIA QUIZ

1. He cried bitterly (Matthew 26: 75). 2. Simon Peter (Mark 14: 71). 3. To see who would get Jesus' clothing. (Matthew 27: 35). 4. Lazarus of Bethany (John 11:39, 41). 5. Judas. (Matthew 27: 3, 4). 6. Malchus (John 18: 10). 7. St. Peter (Acts of the Apostles 3: 14). 8. Simon of Cyrene (Matthew 27: 32). 9. Pontius Pilate (Matthew 27: 24). 10. scarlet (Matthew 27: 28). 11. To the High Priest's home (Mark 14: 53). 12 He called him friend. (Matthew 26: 50). 13. His disciples (Luke 22: 14). 14. "The King of the Jews" (Mark 15: 26).





Great and Holy Wednesday

The Bride of Christ, our blessed Church has gathered us during this most holy time to further advance the cause of our salvation. Because this service of glorification of our God is misunderstood and thus often abused by ordinary people, we provide a better insight and understanding so there is no questionable confusion any longer.

Just as our Saviour and Lord Jesus Christ is anointed for burial, the Body of Christ lovingly anoints her faithful children for burial of imperfection and sinfulness, "...now consider yourselves dead to sin but alive for God in Jesus Christ" Romans 6: 11.

Today the Church celebrates with us that we have individually approached the sacramental Mystery of Reconciliation and out of separation and brokenness, have returned once again to the embrace of Christ through the forgiveness of our sins. Having expressed sorrow for the separation, for our sinfulness, we are once again united to the Lord. So the Church utilizes the grace of the sacramental Mystery of Anointing of the Sick to strengthen us against the further, even continuing assault of the devil that we are strengthened to overcome temptation and bury our imperfections and proclivity to sin to overcome fall from grace.

The word and description "sin" literally simply means "missing the mark." It denotes failure to be what a believer in Christ must be and to do what one should do. We know we are originally made and created in the image of God, to live in union with God's divine life and to rule over all of creation. Man's failure in this task is his sin which plainly has been called his fall from grace.

The falloff man means that we failed in our God-given challenging vocation. This is the meaning of the very first book of Scripture. Man was seduced by evil into believing he could be "like God" by his own will power and effort.

In the tradition of Orthodoxy the eating of the "tree of knowledge of good and evil" is interpreted as man's actual taste of evil, his literal experience of sin. And as St. Gregory the Theologian explains it is man's attempt to go beyond what is possible for his created limitations; his attempt to do that which is not yet within his power to realize by himself.

Whatever we might think about it, it is clear man has failed in his original vocation. He disobeyed God's command through pride, through jealousy and the lack of humble gratitude

to our heavenly Father by yielding to the temptation and suggestion of the devil. We also miss the mark of our calling. We transgress the laws of God. The beloved disciple provides an interesting insight for us: "Everyone who sins acts lawlessly for sin is lawlessness" 1 John 3: 4. So man in the beginning ruined himself and all of creation which was entrusted to his care and cultivation. By our sin we bring ourselves and all creation with us, under the rule of sin and death.

According to God's revelation to us in Scripture all these elements go together: sin;, evil, the devil, suffering and death. There is never one without the other and all the common result of man's rebellion against God and his loss of communion with the Source of Life. Sin begets even more sin and greater evil. It initiates disharmony, the ultimate corruption of death in everyone and everything.

Man still is the created image of God because that cannot be changed, but he fails to keep his image pure and to retain divine likeness. He defiles his own humanity with evil, perverts himself and deforms his creation so that it cannot be the pure reflection of God that it was created to be. Our world as well also remains good, indeed "very good" according to the witness of his Maker, but it also shares the sorry consequences of its created master's sin and suffers with him in mortal agony and corruption. Thus, through man's sin the world falls under the rule of the devil and "...lies in wickedness" 1 John 5: 19. St. Paul explains it this way: "Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world and with sin, death, death thus coming to all men inasmuch as all sinned" Romans 5: 12.

The Genesis story of reality reveals that man's potency for eternal growth and development in God was turned instead into his own multiplication and cultivation of wickedness and his transformation of creation into the devil's princedom, a cosmic cemetery "groaning in trail" Romans 8: 22, until it is rescued and saved by our heavenly Father.

The Church repeats, echoes, mirrors and reverberates the fundamental message today; man and the world need to be saved. God gives the promise of salvation from the very beginning, the promise which begins to be fulfilled in history in the person of Abram, the father of Israel, the forefather of Christ and the father of faith response to God's first shown love. "And the Lord said to Abraham, "I will make you a great nation...and by you all the families of the earth will be blessed" Genesis 12: 3: 22: 15. Because Abraham believed God, from him came the Chosen People among whom in the flesh is Jesus Christ the Lord and Saviour of Creation. "Even as he promised our fathers, promised Abraham and his descendants forever" Luke 1: 55; "The oath he swore to Abraham our father he would grant us: that, rid of fear and delivered from the enemy, we should serve him devoutly and through all our days be holy in

his sight" Luke 1: 73 - 75. Christ it is who comes from the Father to save people from their sins, to open their tombs and to grant eternal life to all creation.

Even as small children we have been taught and civil propriety demands that we apologize when we offend someone. The sacramental Mystery of Penançe is our formal act of reconciliation with God in the Church when we permit sin to sever and rip us away from the life of Christ in his Body. Because reconciliation, or whatever else it may be called, confession of sin, penance, repentance, we prefer the word and description of St. Paul when he thanks God for "...giving us the gift of the ministry of reconciliation" 2 Corinthians 5: 18. What it means is admitting, confessing, verbally being sorry for our offenses against God, ourselves and each other. How blessed are we to have the ability in the life of our Church for Christ "Whose sins you forgive, they are forgiven; whose sins you retain, they are retained" John 20: 23, which makes plain the priest confessor must actually hear the sin enunciated so that a judgment of genuine penitence and sorrow for sin can be made. We do not confess to nebulous sins, but to particular faults and sins of which we are guilty. We confess in the presence of a priest confessor because we offend God and the priest is his representative. We call upon the grace of the Holy Spirit to make known to us our sins and we invoke the Birthgiver of God and the saints because we offend the Church of whom they are representatives so that in their intercessory prayer, we will be strengthened to overcome the temptation of the devil.

This sacramental Mystery exists in the life of the Church to permit and allow, even encourage repentance and conversion to the purity of Christ's intentions and aspirations for each of us. What is required is sincere sorrow for sin and for breaking communion with our heavenly Father. The second necessity is actually enunciating with admission of the fault in particular instances by naming the sin. Third is the actual eagerness to be unburdened from our sin by participating in the grace of this sacramental Mystery. The final necessary element is the formal prayer of absolution through which the forgiveness of God through Christ is sacramentaly bestowed upon the repentant sinner. What the priest is looking for is sorrow for sin, repentance for sin and an eagerness not to repeat past sins again. This can only be done in the relationship of a spiritual father and his spiritual child. This can only be done if the child seeks forgiveness and makes a true apology to our Creator God.

The sacramental Mystery presupposes a firm belief and absolute conviction that Christ himself is present in the Church by the grace of the Holy Spirit and the priest is there to assure, to assist and to offer affirmation of God's forgiveness. Thus we see the results of all this effort, if individual and personal auricular confession forms in and today's unifying and strengthening as well as affirmative spiritual action in recognizing we are wounded by the devil in his

tempting us, so we need additive strengthening grace to resist the power of hell. Understood for what it is, the sacramental Mystery is then cherished as the great Mystery by which God reunites us to himself who sincerely desire to overcome and check the defects of their lives and change their living to the way we were originally created in paradise in the beginning. We must never forget only our God can forgive sin and it is done through Christ in his bride, the Church.

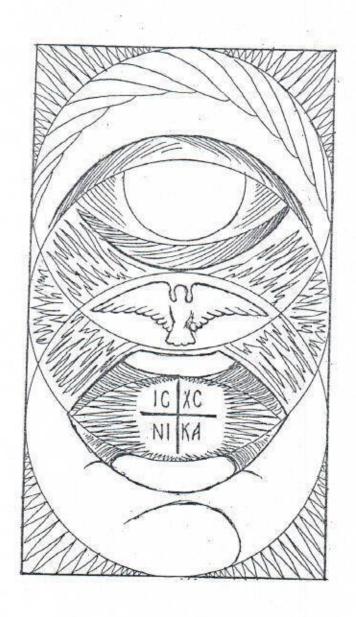
We have been told of unfounded circumstances where some try to mitigate the value of the sacramental Mystery of Reconciliation by approaching it from a dimension it does not possess. There is no such thing as General Confession or Group Confession except in emergency circumstances when a disaster occurs and through lack of enough priests to hear individual confessions of large numbers of gathered believers, a general absolution can be pronounced after those present are to elicit sorrow for sin and genuine repentance are interiorly inspired.

There are reasons why believers who have their origins where Islam dominated, in the past and were not able to make a proper confessions of sin. Islam did not permit our priests to be educated, so the priesthood was passed from father to son and after a few generations, the full and proper spiritual formation lacked a great deal. Priests who did not receive proper education meant to function as spiritual advisors were in time forbidden to hear confessions because they were not equipped to offer the appropriate spiritual advice to their flock. Specially prepared monastics were dispatched on a circuit as it were, but were too few to meet the overwhelming challenge of large numbers of penitents. What was introduced as a temporary response or remedy to a serious problem was not rectified. Our bishops and priests accepted this and some still continue it. In this country, and except for the limited people who came under Moslem domination, all Orthodox believers submit themselves to individual confession for the forgiveness of sin.

Let us not continue to use the excuse of past limitations to interfere with our spiritual life. Let us not allow insecurities of the past continue to intimidate and dominate us today. We are in a free country, so we ought to act freely and confess our sins as the Lord prescribes. Let us not use our freedom as license and avoid a serious relationship with the Lord.

Come up then and give thanks to our God that through the life of our blessed Church we are now taught correctly and have the opportunity to be reconciled with our heavenly Father and enjoy the benefit of additional grace from the sacramental Mystery of Anointing of the Sick to strengthen us and help defeat the temptation we so often experience along with the assaults of the devil on our life.

This sacramental Mystery is being offered in addition to what is first required in concert with our God insisting the sacramental Mystery of Reconciliation, or repentance, of penance, of confessing our sins be also received. Receiving this sacramental Mystery instead of or in place of actual Confession of sin does not work, nor can it work because that is not its purpose. Amen.



Entrance of the Lord into Jerusalem

Today our God once again is demonstrative of his loving presence with us. Isaiah the Old Covenant Prophet announces to his contemporaries, "God is with us!" Isaiah 8: 10. And it is just as true for us today as we welcome him among us and cheer him on as He slowly makes his way upon the colt of a donkey for the Passover celebration. So we are ecstatic. Our God is with us. How can we believe it? We see him accepting the praise and worship of the city's residents. The people of God are never alone; therefore they should not be lonely. God is with us and interjects himself into our lives. He notices every thought, word, action, every trial, every enemy and every danger. He is with us as Father, loving and holding communion with us. He is with us as Lord of Hosts, having all the armies of the earth and heaven under his direction to befriend and ennoble us. He is with us as saving brother because we are no longer servants or slaves, but elevated to the status of children of God. He is with us as Guide to lead; as Counselor to plead our cause; as Friend to supply and comfort us; as a holy, sin-hating God.

He is present with us to reprove us, to complete us, to correct us, to preserve us, to save us with an everlasting redemption. He is present with us to affirm us in our

Beloved in Christ, let us remember today and never forget. God is with us. Everywhere and always. This should check levity, prevent impatience, make us honest, encourage prayerfulness, inspire us with fortitude, produce diligence in fidelity. If God is with us, He is for us and if God be for us, who can be against us? Do we so walk by our conduct and our lives to say, "God is with us"?

St. Gregory Nazianzen sums up the traditional Orthodox perspective of his coming among us in so dramatic and deliberate way. This feast is not an end to itself, but a means to renewal for our sake. It points to sanctification and recreation for the whole universe, not simply the citizens of Jerusalem. The world held in bondage by man's sinful perversion is the world Christ comes to shake out of its lethargy and restore to the Eternal Father, the very same world He is come to redeem.

As He enters Jerusalem, He enters our lives. By our greeting him and welcoming him we invite him to participate in the difficulties and even trivialities of our daily existence that so often overwhelm us. By reason of the love that Christ re-introduces among us, our world is alive once again, vibrant in daily life. Creation fell by human failure now we are summoned urgently to cooperate in its restoration and redemption. Not only the capital city of the Jews, but all of us join in our yearning cry for redemption, for salvation, for adoption into the family of our God.

We do not quarrel here and test the Lord, asking "Is the Lord in our midst" Exodus 3: 7? Just as Jerusalem's inhabitants in today's celebration, the people of ancient Israel in the desert were willing to follow the Lord as long as everything was going all right. But just as things got tough, the tough did not get going, they started quarreling and grumbling with Moses, blaming him for their plight.

Believing is free, but it will cost something to prove that faith response is sincere and serious, to yourself, to our God and to your fellow man. The Old Covenant Jews forgot about the Promised Land. It was lost in the situation at hand. They wanted proof that God was still there. They could not understand He is always with us; He is forever in our midst. "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there I am among them."

So many times, we like the faithless Jews of the desert think God is only with us in good times, in our peaks of success. We think He is with us only when things go our way and we have no complaints. We do not have any justification for thinking like that at all. He thrived and succeeded in hardship most of his earthly life. And yet when difficulty confronts us, we question our own faith commitment, "Is the Lord in our midst?" we loudly wonder. How many times, from the deepest recesses of our conscience do we receive an honest answer?

Yes! Emphatically Yes! The Lord is in our midst. The Lord is among us! He is and always will be! BUT, we have to open our hearts to acknowledge him. It is something like a man knocking on the door waiting to be allowed inside. He is there alright, but he cannot enter unless we unlock the door and permit him entrance. Today Christ

knocks on the doors of the lives of Jerusalem's citizenry and they turn out in record numbers to welcome him.

Since so many do not act as if He were in our midst, they do not recognize his presence nor acknowledge it. He is always among us. He is always in our midst. It is we, who by our lack of loving, by our cold and separated hearts, by our neglect, by lack of sincerity, fail to recognize him among us. We must therefore redirect our lives, be open, be thoughtful, be prayerful, participate in the worship of the Church more often without making silly asinine excuses, prepare to worthily receive the sacramental Mysteries, support the works of God, always; summed up: really live like we recognize him in our midst.

Because Christ is among us, Orthodoxy is not a vague, cold, impersonal ideal for salvation. It is a living reality that turns our duties into privileges, our yearning into fulfillment and all our hardships into astounding achievements

Never mind if things seem to have gone all wrong from time to time. God knows it as well as you do. Trust in him; utilize and call upon his grace to overcome whatever obstacles seem to deter your pilgrimage path. He will make them right at the best time. Just as today, as He is received with fanfare, He transforms the events which in a few days will contrast rather sharply and sternly with today's welcome into an astounding victory beyond all imagination and expectation. Believing is free, but it will cost an astounding amount to prove and live that belief.



Life Is Fragile

Handle with Prayer

The

HERSH

Honor

Of Your

Presence

Is Requested At The

Salutary Events

Which Result

In Your Salvation

Passion Week Service Schedule

Great and Holy Wednesday 7:30 PM Sacramental Mystery of Holy Anointing

Just as Christ on this day is anointed for burial, the Church lovingly anoints her faithful children for burial of imperfection and sinfulness... "...now consider yourselves dead to sin but alive for God in Jesus Christ" Romans 6: 11.

Great and Holy Thursday 7: 30 PM Mystical Supper celebrated at Divine Liturgy of St. Basil the Great with Vespers.

We join the Master at the altar table to hear His prayer: "I have given them the glory you gave me that they may be one, as we are one – I living in them, you living in me – so that their unity may be complete" John 17: 22, 23.

Great and Holy Friday 10:30 AM Reading of the Passion Gospels of Christ

We witness the Passion of the Lord as we accompany Him for the arrest, trials, the denials, the sentencing and final execution on the Cross. "Yet it was our infirmities that he bore, our sufferings that he endured, while we thought of him as stricken, as one smitten by God and afflicted, but he was pierced for our offenses, crushed for our sins, upon him was the chastisement that make us whole, by his stripes we were healed. We had all gone astray like sheep, each following his own way, but the Lord laid upon him the guilt of us all" Isaiah 53: 4-6.

7:30 PM Vespers of the Passion with Procession and Entombment of Holy Shroud followed by Vigil.

We prayerfully participate in the burial of our Saviour. "They took Jesus' Body and in accordance with Jewish burial custom bound it up in wrappings of cloth with perfumed oils" John 19: 40.

Great and Holy Saturday 9:00 AM Divine Liturgy of St. Basil the Great

We pray and mediate as the Lord's body lies in the tomb, effecting salvation of our souls by His entrance into the place of the righteous dead. "In the place where he had been

crucified there was a garden and in the garden a new tomb in which no one had ever been buried" John 19: 41.

7:30 PM Matins of the Resurrection with Procession followed by blessing of Paschal Foods.

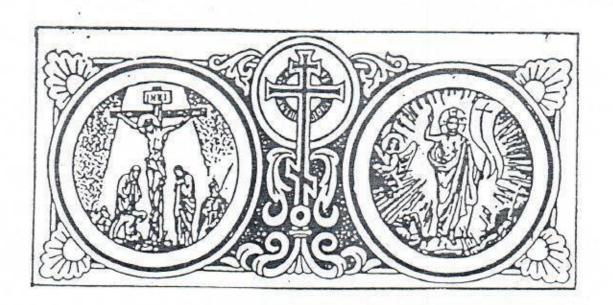
"I have seen the Lord..." John 20: 18. "You became a believer because you saw me" John 20: 29. "When he seated himself with them to eat, he took bread, pronounced the blessing, then broke the bread and began to distribute it to them" John 24: 30.

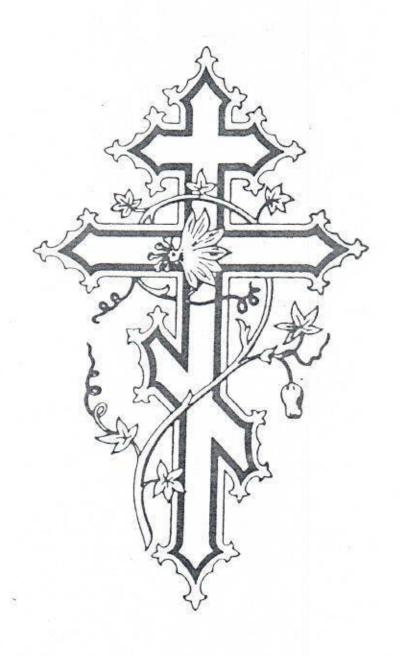
The Glorious Resurrection of our Lord, God and Saviour, Jesus Christ

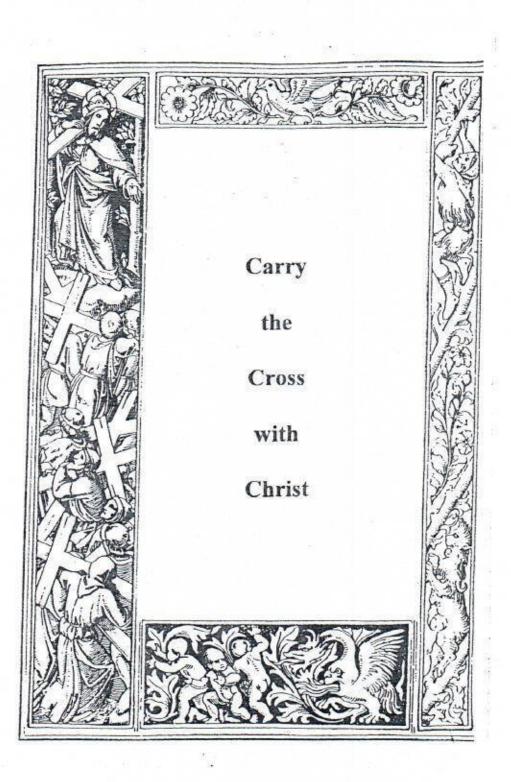
9:30 AM Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom concluded with festal anointing and blessing of Paschal Foods.

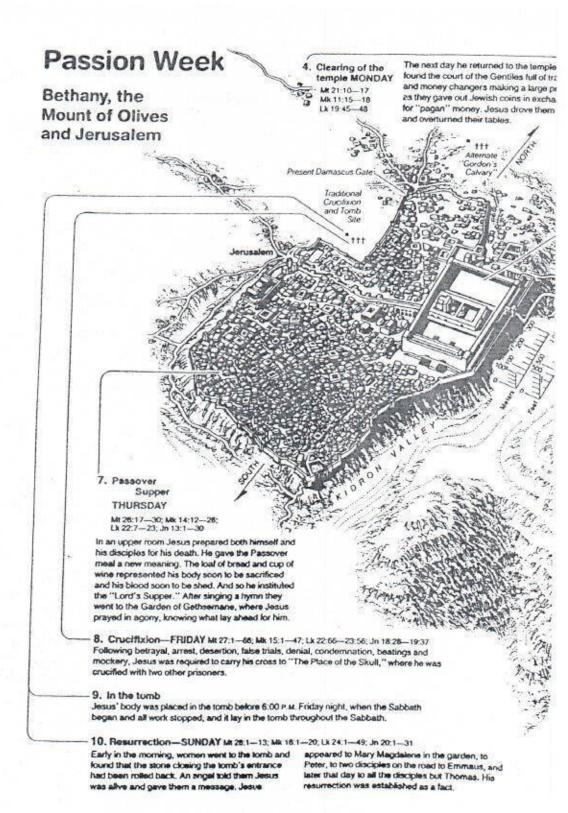
"But these have been recorded to help you believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, so that through this faith you may have life in his name" John 20: 30, 31.

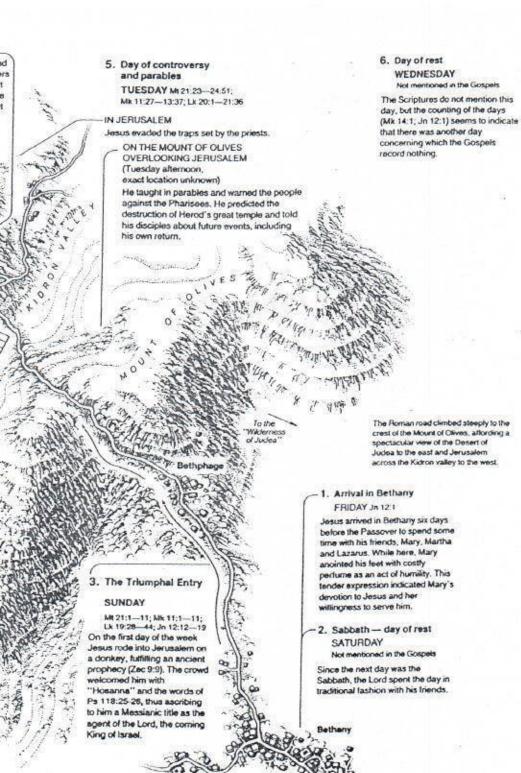
Confessions are heard prior to and after all services so that by the feast of the radiant Resurrection we should all be prepared for triumphal celebration!











the Dead Sea



THE DIVINITY OF CHRIST

hrist's divinity is shown over and over again in the New Testament. For example, in John 5:18 we are told that Jesus' opponents sought to kill him because he "called God his Father, making himself equal with God."

In John 8:58, when quizzed about how he has special knowledge of Abraham, Jesus replies, "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I Am"—invoking and applying to himself the personal name of God—"I Am" (Ex. 3:14). His audience understood exactly what he was claiming about himself. "So they took up stones to throw at him; but Jesus hid himself, and went out of the temple" (John 8:59).

In John 20:28, Thomas falls at Jesus' feet, exclaiming, "My Lord and my God!" (Greek: Ho Kurios mou kai ho Theos mou—literally, "The Lord of me and the God of me!")

In Philippians 2:6, Paul tells us that Christ Jesus "[w]ho, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped" (New International Version). So Jesus chose to be born in humble, human form though he could have simply remained in equal glory with the Father for he was "in very nature God."

Also significant are passages that apply the title "the First and the Last" to Jesus. This is one of the Old Testament titles of Yahweh: "Thus says Yahweh, the King of Israel and his Redeemer, Yahweh of armies: 'I am the First and I am the Last; besides me there is no god'" (Is. 44:6; cf. 41:4, 48:12).

This title is directly applied to Jesus three times in the book of Revelation: "When I saw him [Christ], I fell at his feet as though dead. But he laid his right hand upon me, saying, 'Fear not, I am the First and the Last'" (Rev. 1:17). "And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write: The words of the First and the Last, who died and came to life'" (Rev. 2:8). "Behold, I am coming soon, bringing my recompense, to repay every one for what he has done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the beginning and the end" (Rev. 22:12–13).

This last quote is especially significant since it applies to Jesus the parallel title "the Alpha and the Omega," which Revelation earlier applied to the Lord God: "I am the Alpha and the Omega,' says the Lord God, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty" (Rev. 1:8).

As the following quotes show, the early Church Fathers also recognized that Jesus Christ is God and were adamant in maintaining this precious truth.

IGNATIUS OF ANTIOCH

"Ignatius, also called Theophorus, to the Church at Ephesus in Asia . . . predestined from eternity for a glory that is lasting and unchanging, united and chosen through true suffering by the will of the Father in Jesus Christ our God" (Letter to the Ephesians 1 [A.D. 110]).

"For our God, Jesus Christ, was conceived by Mary in accord with God's plan: of the seed of David, it is true, but also of the Holy Spirit" (ibid., 18:2).

"[T]o the Church beloved and enlightened after the love of Jesus Christ, our God, by the will of him that has willed everything which is" (Letter to the Romans 1 [A.D. 110]).

ARISTIDES

"[Christians] are they who, above every people of the earth, have found the truth, for they acknowledge

God, the Creator and maker of all things, in the only-begotten Son and in the Holy Spirit" (Apology 16 [A.D. 140]).

TATIAN THE SYRIAN

"We are not playing the fool, you Greeks, nor do we talk nonsense, when we report that God was born in the form of a man" (Address to the Greeks 21 [A.D. 170]).

MELITO OF SARDIS

"It is no way necessary in dealing with persons of intelligence to adduce the actions of Christ after his baptism as proof that his soul and his body, his human nature, were like ours, real and not phantasmal. The activities of Christ after his baptism, and especially his miracles, gave indication and assurance to the world of the deity hidden in his flesh. Being God and likewise perfect man, he gave positive indications of his two natures: of his deity, by the miracles during the three years following after his baptism, of his humanity, in the thirty years which came before his baptism, during which, by reason of his condition according to the flesh, he concealed the signs of his deity, although he was the true God existing before the ages" (Fragment in Anastasius of Sinai's The Guide 13 [A.D. 177]).

IRENAEUS

"For the Church, although dispersed throughout the whole world even to the ends of the earth, has received from the apostles and from their disciples

the faith in one God, Father Almighty, the creator of heaven and earth and sea and all that is in them; and in one Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who became flesh for our salvation; and in the Holy Spirit, who announced through the prophets the dispensations and the comings, and the birth from a Virgin, and the passion, and the resurrection from the dead, and the bodily ascension into heaven of the beloved Christ Jesus our Lord, and his coming from heaven in the glory of the Father to reestablish all things; and the raising up again of all flesh of all humanity, in order that to Jesus Christ our Lord and God and Savior and King, in accord with the approval of the invisible Father, every knee shall bend of those in heaven and on earth and under the earth . . . " (Against Heresies 1:10:1 [A.D. 189]).

"Nevertheless, what cannot be said of anyone else who ever lived, that he is himself in his own right God and Lord . . . may be seen by all who have attained to even a small portion of the truth" (ibid., 3:19:1).

CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA

"The Word, then, the Christ, is the cause both of our ancient beginning—for he was in God—and of our well-being. And now this same Word has appeared as man. He alone is both God and man, and the source of all our good things" (Exhortation to the Greeks 1:7:1 [A.D. 190]).

"Despised as to appearance but in reality adored, [Jesus is] the expiator, the Savior, the soother, the divine Word, he that is quite evidently true God, he that is put on a level with the Lord of the universe because he was his Son" (ibid., 10:110:1).

TERTULLIAN

"The origins of both his substances display him as man and as God: from the one, born, and from the other, not born" (The Flesh of Christ 5:6-7 [A.D. 210]).

"That there are two gods and two Lords, however, is a statement which we will never allow to issue from our mouth; not as if the Father and the Son were not God, nor the Spirit God, and each of them God; but formerly two were spoken of as gods and two as Lords, so that when Christ would come, he might both be acknowledged as God and be called Lord, because he is the Son of him who is both God and Lord" (Against Praxeas 13:6 [A.D. 216]).

ORIGEN

"Although he was God, he took flesh; and having been made man, he remained what he was: God" (The Fundamental Doctrines 1:0:4 [A.D. 225]).

HIPPOLYTUS

"Only [God's] Word is from himself and is therefore also God, becoming the substance of God" (Refutation of All Heresies 10:33 [A.D. 228]).

HIPPOLYTUS OF ROME

"For Christ is the God over all, who has arranged to wash away sin from mankind, rendering the old man new" (ibid., 10:34).

NOVATIAN

"If Christ was only man, why did he lay down for us such a rule of believing as that in which he said, 'And this is life eternal, that they should know you, the only and true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent?' [John 17:3]. Had he not wished that he also should be understood to be God, why did he add, 'And Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent,' except because he wished to be received as God also? Because if he had not wished to be understood to be God, he would have added, 'And the man Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent;' but, in fact, he neither added this, nor did Christ deliver himself to us as man only, but associated himself with God, as he wished to be understood by this conjunction to be God also, as he is. We must therefore believe. according to the rule prescribed, on the Lord, the one true God, and consequently on him whom he has sent, Jesus Christ, who by no means, as we have said, would have linked himself to the Father had he not wished to be understood to be God also. For he would have separated himself from him had he not wished to be understood to be God" (Treatise on the Trinity 16 [A.D. 235]).

CYPRIAN OF CARTHAGE

"One who denies that Christ is God cannot become his temple [of the Holy Spirit] . . . " (Letters 73:12 [A.D. 253]).

GREGORY THE WONDERWORKER

"There is one God, the Father of the living Word, who is his subsistent wisdom and power and eternal image: perfect begetter of the perfect begotten, Father of the only-begotten Son. There is one Lord,

only of the only, God of God, image and likeness of deity, efficient Word, wisdom comprehensive of the constitution of all things, and power formative of the whole creation, true Son of true Father, invisible of invisible, and incorruptible of incorruptible, and immortal of immortal and eternal of eternal. . . . And thus neither was the Son ever wanting to the Father, nor the Spirit to the Son; but without variation and without change, the same Trinity abides ever" (Declaration of Faith [A.D. 265]).

ARNOBIUS

"'Well, then,' some raging, angry, and excited man will say, 'is that Christ your God?' 'God indeed,' we shall answer, 'and God of the hidden powers'" (Against the Pagans 1:42 [A.D. 305]).

LACTANTIUS

"He was made both Son of God in the spirit and Son of man in the flesh, that is, both God and man" (Divine Institutes 4:13:5 [A.D. 307]).

"We, on the other hand, are [truly] religious, who make our supplications to the one true God. Someone may perhaps ask how, when we say that we worship one God only, we nevertheless assert that there are two, God the Father and God the Son—which assertion has driven many into the greatest error . . . [thinking] that we confess that there is another God, and that he is mortal. . . . [But w]hen we speak of God the Father and God the Son, we do not speak of them as different, nor do we separate each, because the Father cannot exist without the Son, nor can the Son be separated from the Father" (ibid., 4:28–29).

COUNCIL OF NICAEA I

"We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, God from God, light from light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, one in being with the Father. Through him all things were made" (Creed of Nicaea [A.D. 325]).

"But those who say, "There was a time when he [the Son] did not exist,' and 'Before he was born, he did not exist,' and 'Because he was made from non-existing matter, he is either of another substance or essence,' and those who call 'God the Son of God changeable and mutable,' these the Catholic Church anathematizes" (Appendix to the Creed of Nicaea [A.D. 325]).

PATRICK OF IRELAND

"Jesus Christ is the Lord and God in whom we believe, and whose coming we expect will soon take place, the judge of the living and the dead, who will render to everyone according to his works" (Confession of St. Patrick 4 [A.D. 452]).

CHRIST'S ENTRY INTO JERUSALEM

hirty-three years had passed since that special night in Bethlehem when the heavens announced the birth of a new King. Three years had passed since St. John the Baptist pointed a finger at the Lord and said: "Behold the Lamb of God who taketh away the sins of the world..." Now the time had come to turn the page of the Old Testament era, and to usher in the new kingdom of Christ. This is the meaning of PALM SUNDAY.

The event is filled with references to the Old Testament. "Behold, your king is coming to you, humble . . ." St. Matthew quotes from the prophet Zechariah. The Hosannas, the waving of palms and branches, the exclamations "Son of David" and "King of Israel" . . . here now is the summit of the old kingdom, for a new one is at hand.

It was indeed a King who rode into Jerusalem that day, but it was a King like none other the world has ever known. In fact, it was the world's only true King. And here He was, the Lord of lords, yet coming in the most humble fashion, riding on a donkey.

There has been previous attempts by the people to proclaim Jesus their king, to acknowledge Him as Master. But Christ had thwarted these attempts. Now the time was ripe; now all was at hand. Now He accepted the exclamations, the waving and the singing. He let the cry go forth: "Hosanna to the Son of David: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord."

We have here, then, the beginning of the Kingdom of God. As Christians, we have our King, we have the One we love above all else, Who claims our loyalty. Through baptism, we have been brought into this Kingdom of Christ. We are citizens of this kingdom, responsible for it. This is the kingdom of love, peace and kindness; of all those things that Christ stands for.

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