

April 21, 2016

My Beloved Ones,

I greet you with love in the name of our Lord God and Savior Jesus Christ. I wish that I could be with you to celebrate the holiest time of the year, but I want you to know that I will be praying for our God-protected Metropolis from Mt. Athos during Holy Week and Pascha.

After all our preparation during Great Lent, our fasting and prayer, our worship and charity, we are now invited to enter Holy Week. In the Orthodox Church, Holy Week is not simply a commemoration of historical events; it is a chance to relive the saving Crucifixion and Life-giving Resurrection of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. It is a terrible and wonderful journey: terrible because the Lord will have to endure so much; wonderful because if we take this journey with Him, it has the power to transform us not only for seven days, but for the rest of our lives.

We will behold the resurrection of Jesus' friend after four days in the tomb, on the Saturday of Lazarus.

We will stand by the side of the road in Jerusalem on Palm Sunday and hail the triumphant Jesus with palm branches while He enters the city as a King, riding on a donkey.

We will prepare our souls at the beautiful Bridegroom Services on Palm Sunday evening, and the following two nights, Holy Monday and Holy Tuesday.

We will receive spiritual and bodily healing in the Sacrament of Holy Unction, on Holy Wednesday.

We will share in the Mystical Supper, enriching our lives on Holy Thursday morning; and we shall suffer with our Lord Jesus, as we listen to the Gospel accounts of His Crucifixion on Holy Thursday evening.

We will mourn beside His dead body, singing the Lamentations, as we accompany His funeral procession and see His sacred body entombed on Holy Friday.

We will anticipate His coming Resurrection at the morning Liturgy on Holy Saturday and at night as we gather to prayerfully await the Resurrection. At midnight in the darkened Church, the Paschal Candle will illumine the darkness and the light shall spread throughout the world as we sing "Christ is Risen!" and celebrate the Divine Liturgy of the Resurrection.

And then we shall join together for the Agape Vespers, those Vespers of Love which restate the victory of Christ against all that distorts our true humanity.

My beloved children, I pray that we are all prepared for this journey; that our hearts are open and ready to accept the spiritual gifts that shall come about from witnessing the end of our Lord and Savior's earthly ministry, and the beginning of something truly glorious.

Καλή Ανάσταση,

+ALEXIOS

Metropolitan of Atlanta

