

My Beloved Ones,

This coming Palm Sunday, we—and millions of Orthodox Christians all over the world—shall join together with the citizens of Jerusalem for the joyous feast, shouting to our Lord and Savior, *“Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel!”* (John 12:13)

When I say that we shall join with them, I am not speaking figuratively; for as Orthodox Christians believe that this feast, like all the feasts of our Church, is as much a present reality as it is a commemoration of past events. Keeping this fact in mind will assist us in making our participation in this year’s Holy Week services more active. We are not meant to be viewers respectfully watching reenactments of things, but active watchful participants in things that are taking place before our very eyes.

We will prepare our souls at the beautiful Bridegroom Services on Palm Sunday evening, and the following two nights, Holy Monday and Holy Tuesday, receiving along with His disciples, the final lessons of His earthly ministry to prepare us for what is to come.

We will receive spiritual and bodily healing in the Sacrament of Holy Unction, on Holy Wednesday as we observe how the Sinful Woman sees fit to honor our Lord with anointing—even as Judas betrays the Master for thirty pieces of silver.

We will share in the Mystical Supper, enriching our lives on Holy Thursday morning; and we shall suffer with our Lord Jesus, as we experience His awful and incomprehensible Passion through 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.

+ALEXIOS

Metropolitan of Atlanta

