

Palm Monday

George Homa

*"Let us prepare the branches of our virtues so that we may see
His glorious Resurrection in joy."*

Matins for the Sixth Greatfast Monday: Sessional Hymn

On this first day of Palm Week, we begin our journey with Jesus to Bethany and ultimately on to Jerusalem where He will be proclaimed the King of Israel. In order to be able to make this trip properly, we must divest ourselves of all the misdeeds of our past lives, and we must engender within ourselves a realization of our sinfulness in God's sight. It is necessary for us to awaken a genuine attitude of repentance if we are to journey further with Jesus. Through the stirring and moving words of today's liturgical services, our Byzantine Catholic Church exhorts us to face ourselves frankly and to recognize unconditionally the rock of our hardened heart. It is only through such an awakened conscience that contrition can enter during these last four remaining days of the Great Fast.

The Holy Prophet Isaiah in the paremia for the Sixth Hour tells us: "I, the Lord Your God, teach you what is for your good and lead you on the way you should go. If you would hearken to My commandments, your prosperity would be like a river." (*Isaiah 48: 18*) The Lord is now leading us to travel a difficult road, a route that leads directly to the passion, the cross, and finally the tomb. But I am well-cognizant of the fact that without these ordeals and trials of life, I would not be a genuine follower of Jesus.

We who journey with Him daily—who bear our cross—can also anticipate that reward which was achieved through the precious wood of the Cross: the glory of the Resurrection. Only if I died to my old self of sin and spiritual laziness can I ever hope to rise to eternal life with divine vigor. As Lazarus was raised from His tomb by the Messiah's power, so someday, I expect to be raised from my earthly tomb by my Messiah: the Lord Jesus. And I want Him to conduct me into the abode of the saints, because in this lifetime, I courageously followed after Him.

May we ever be aware that as humans, we have a fallen nature. It is never a pleasant exercise to recognize our own failures and inadequacies, but let us sincerely try to see our faults and examine the reasons for our inclinations. And throughout these last few remaining days of the Holy Fast, let us intensify our prayer and fasting in order to become more responsive to God's precepts.

SCRIPTURE READINGS: Isaiah 48: 17 - 49: 4

Genesis 27: 1-41

Proverbs 19: 16-25