

**“We Bring to You Glad Tidings of Great Joy”**  
**Entrance of the Lord into Jerusalem**  
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The Entrance of the Lord into Jerusalem — one of the most joyous, and at the same time, one of the saddest events in the earthly life of Jesus Christ.

A large crowd of people greeted Him with cries of: *“Hosanna to the son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!”* — and as a sign of their joy they spread beneath His feet their clothing and palm branches. However, Jesus Christ entered Jerusalem with great glory not in order to receive even more glory, but in order to suffer and to die for the salvation of all people, even for those who in a few days, with hardness of heart and bitterness, will demand from Pilate to “Crucify Him!” The torments on the Cross which awaited Him — this is the sorrow of today’s Feast Day. However, very soon the sorrow of the death on the Cross will change into the joy of the Resurrection, the joy of the everlasting presence of God, which, according to the promise of our Savior, is felt by every Christian: *“and behold, I am with you always, to the close of the age”* (Mt. 28,20).

The apostle Paul speaks about this joy in his Epistle to the Philippians, which we just heard: *“Brethren....rejoice always in the Lord, and again I say — rejoice”* (Philip. 4:4). We must listen attentively to these words and understand that Christianity, from the very beginning up until the very end, is a religion of joy. There are many other religions which teach obedience to God, fear of God, to love God, but perhaps it is Christianity which in reality is in the fullest sense the religion of joy.

When Christ was born, angels appeared to the shepherds and said: “We bring to you glad tidings of great joy.” John the Baptist, preaching about Christ, spoke about himself as the friend of the Bridegroom, who exults in the joy of the Bridegroom. In His parables, our Lord Jesus Christ many times spoke about the path to God as a path of joy. Remember the parable about the treasure hidden *in a field, which a man found and covered up; then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field* (Mt. 13:44), — sells all that he has not by calculation but *out of joy*.

Remember the parable about the lost sheep. The good shepherd, leaving his flock, goes out to search for the one sheep who is lost, and when he finds it, *he lays it on his shoulders rejoicing. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbors, saying to them, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost....Just so....there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance* (Lk. 15:5-7). And even in His last discourse with His disciples at the Mystical Supper, when He foretold about His suffering and death, Christ uses the word “joy” several times: “I want my joy to abide in you *that your joy may be full*” (Jn. 16:24); “Now you have sorrow, but the time is coming when you will no longer remember the sorrow out of joy” (compare: Jn. 16:20-24). And He compares the joy of a Christian, who knows through experience the joy of the Resurrection of Christ, with the joy of a woman, who has sorrow and suffers during childbirth, but when the child is born, she no longer remembers the sorrow and the suffering out of joy, for *a man has been born into the world*.

And, finally, when the myrrh-bearing women came to the tomb of Christ, they saw an angel who told them about the Resurrection of the Lord, and after that they met our Resurrected Savior Himself, and with joy they ran to inform the disciples about all of this.

All of the struggles of the apostles and all of their preaching about the Resurrection of Christ was filled with the same joy which permeates the entire Gospel. This is the way our entire life as Christians should be.

In the spiritual life there are many labors, and we are expected to struggle daily with ourselves, to repent daily and to be faithful to Christ. But the fruit of these struggles contain

joy. And this joy is not simply the result of the struggles of the Christian life — it accompanies the work that we daily put in for our salvation. St. John of the Ladder, in his book “The Ladder of Divine Ascent,” speaks about the joy of repentance, calling it “joy-making mourning” He asks: “Why does repentance, which should be fraught with sorrow, bring us so much joy?” And he answers: “Because this joy is unearthly and has little in common with the amusements of this world, when people think of ways to be entertained in order to just fill the void and to ‘kill time’.” This joy is superficial and quickly dissipates. This joy departs and leaves behind the same emptiness as before. But the joy which is given by Christ remains forever, because this is not superficial earthly joy which quickly dissipates, but God Himself, Who is implanted in man and gives him spiritual peace. The apostle Paul speaks about this when he says: “*the peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus*” (Philip. 4:7). Christ spoke about this peace with His disciples at the Mystical Supper: “*Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you*” (Jn. 14:27), — but a completely special spiritual peace, which proceeds from God. We discover all of this through personal experience in the Christian Church.

During Passion Week we will experience with Christ the sufferings of His final days, when we will follow behind Him step by step right up to Golgotha, right up to the crucifixion and right up to the tomb. In spirit, we will descend with Him into Hades, so that we may also rise with Him in the Resurrection. The sorrows of Passion Week will change into the experience of the Resurrection of the Lord, and the Lord will give us this experience of joy on the night of Holy Pascha.

Our entirely earthly life consists of sorrows which are interspersed with joy, but as a rule there are more sorrows. These sorrows make up our daily cross. God constantly sends trials, but comfort comes only in certain situations. However, it is necessary for us to understand that the time of our earthly life is also a preparation for the future life, that we endure sorrows here so that we may later exult in the Kingdom of God with all the saints, where there is rejoicing without end, where there is unceasing joy in Christ Jesus, — so that we may “enter into the joy of our Lord.”

***Translated from the Russian by Archpriest Peter Olsen***