

The Savior will arrive in Bethany in relative secrecy four days after the death of His friend, Lazarus. He has to come unnoticed because His enemies, the ruling elite of the nation, are planning to kill Him and are on the lookout for Him. He will stop just outside of town and wait. The two sisters, Martha and Mary, informed of His arrival, will run out to meet Him and at His request, escort Him to the tomb of their brother. A large crowd will gather with them at the tomb. The grief of the sisters and the crowd will illicit a response from Jesus that will reveal His true humanity. Unable to control His own grief, He will begin to openly weep. Then, He will perform His greatest miracle, demonstrating that He is also God. He will resurrect the man already dead for four days. This has never happened before and will never happen again. The tomb will be opened at His command, and He, after praying, will call Lazarus to come out. The world will be in great awe to see the dead man, with his face covered by the burial cloth and hands and feet tied together by the shroud, walk out of the tomb alive. This incredible miracle will convince the last of the people, those who want to accept Jesus as the Savior but who were not completely convinced, to stop doubting. The Church will eternally remember this miracle by naming it Lazarus Saturday.

The next day, we will travel with Jesus from Bethany to make His last entrance into the holy city, Jerusalem. We will see Jesus once again stop outside of the city to ask for a young, never ridden, donkey colt to be brought to Him. By riding on this colt into the city, Jesus will symbolically reveal to us His two natures. He will be entering into the city in triumph as the King of Kings. Therefore, He cannot just walk in but must enter mounted on a horse. At the same time to demonstrate His humanity and humility, He will enter mounted but not on a fine horse, but a donkey. While approaching the city coming down a large hill leading into Jerusalem, we will once again see Jesus' human side. Seeing the glorious sight of His magnificent city and what terrible events will happen there after which the city will be destroyed, Jesus will once again in a human emotion express His grief and weep.

The entry into the city will be magnificent. Seeing Him approach, all of the people of the city will rush out to meet Him in exalted joy. Singing triumphant verses, they will cut down palm branches or take off their outer robes to lay them in front of Him, making a welcome carpet for Him to enter on. What a tragedy, though, is to follow. These same people who will greet Jesus with such enthusiasm and overwhelming joy will in just several days will be savagely demanding His death through a most ignoble execution. They will demand that He be crucified.

My dear brothers and sisters, the details that I am giving you, in respect to everything that will happen, are very meager because of constraints on time and space. It is very important to read the Gospel accounts of these two events in order to experience what will happen in full detail. After reading about them, out of our love and gratitude to our Savior, we need to gather in Church for the services when these events will take place. If you attend the cathedral, the schedule on services is posted on the website. If you attend another church, please do all that you can to attend the services there. There is no way that we can adequately begin the most-holy days of Passion Week, leading to the celebration of Pascha without experiencing these two events.

May God give us strength to persevere. The Gospel reading for Lazarus Saturday is John, 11:1-45. The Palm Sunday Gospel reading is John 12:1-18

With Love in Christ,

Archpriest Serge Kotar