

The Sixth Week

Being disclosed in a Canon of the 5th week, the Gospel parable about the rich man and Lazarus serves as the subject of hymns also in the 6th week. The Holy Church calls us "to run from the cruelty and hatred of mankind of the rich man and to emulate the fortitude and longsuffering of Lazarus" and to beg the Lord that, "Having grown poor through the pleasures of this life, He make us rich in virtues", and deliver us "from the torment of Gehenna" and "that we may enjoy rest in the bosom of the Patriarch Abraham". Continuing also in this week, as well as in the previous one to call us to spiritual efforts of piety, the Holy Church appeals to us: "Come, brethren, and before the end with pure hearts let us all draw near to the compassionate God. Casting aside the cares of this life, let us take thought for our souls. Through abstinence let us reject with loathing the pleasures of food, and let us busy ourselves with acts of passion." "Through abstinence let us destroy the passions and through godlike actions let us bring to life the spirit." "Let us fast, pouring out streams tears from our soul, that we may be granted mercy". Together with this the Holy Church, "having begun the sixth week", invites all of us: "Let us sing to Christ a hymn in preparation for the Feast of Palms who comes" "to raise Lazarus from the tomb" and "who comes seated on the foal of an ass". According to this, the 6th week is called "the threshold of lifegiving of Lazarus", mainly is the Week of Palms", "the Flowery" or "Flower bearing". In its Forefeast hymns the Holy Church sings: "Rejoice, O Bethany, home of Lazarus: for Christ comes to you and shall perform a mighty work, bringing Lazarus to life." "O faithful let us follow Martha and Mary, let us send to the Lord divine acts as prayers, that He may come to raise up from the dead our mind, which lies dead in the tomb of insensible laziness, lacking all feeling of the fear of God, and now having no vital energy, crying out: O Lord, by Your dread authority You has raised up Your friend Lazarus of old, O Compassionate One, so now enliven all of us, granting us Your great mercy". "The Lord comes seated, as is written, upon a foal. O people, prepare to receive in fear the King of all, and to welcome Him with palms as Victor over death, who raised Lazarus from Hades." "Having enlightened and cleansed our souls by fasting, let us go to meet Christ, who comes into Jerusalem in the flesh." "With the Children let us also meet Christ our God, bringing works of mercy instead of palms, and fervent prayer instead of branches singing Hosanna: bless, and exalt Him forever." "Come let us prepare for meeting the Lord, carrying branches of virtue to Him. So shall we receive Him in our souls as in the city of Jerusalem, worshipping and singing to Him".

Friday of the 6th week ends the Holy Forty Day Fast. In the services for this day we sing: "Having completed the forty days that profit our souls, we ask You, O

Lover of man: Grant us also to behold the Holy Week of Your Passion, that we may glorify Your mighty acts and Your ineffable plan for our sakes" 1). Together with these in the service for this day the Holy Church prepares her children to worthily commemorate Lazarus raised from the dead and especially the Entry of the Lord into Jerusalem, appealing: "Having completed the Forty Day Fast that is pleasing to our soul, let us cry out: Rejoice, O City of Bethany, the home of Lazarus, rejoice Martha and Mary, his sisters. For tomorrow Christ will come, by His word to give life to your dead brother". "Those who are in the deserts and on the mountains, and in the caves, let us gather together carrying palms 2), to meet the King and the Master: for He comes to save our souls"; "For this meeting we carefully go, offering branches of virtue to Him".

1) Those who carried out the Holy Forty Day Fast as taught by the Holy Church, with fasting and reverence, in prayer and fervent compunction who have cleansed the soul and heart with tears of repentance, who with fervent love for the Lord have sincerely united themselves to Him by partaking of His body, who created fruits worthy of repentance, and was strengthened, as much as possible, for the way of the Lord's precepts. For that the Holy Forty Day Fast was truly "pleasing to the soul". Deprivation of the more pleasant, fattening food has brought forth, certainly, the perceived ease and vigor of the body, the freshness of ideas, the vivacity and activity of all the powers of the soul, the pleasant sensation of internal calm and inner peace. Prayerful vigils, seeming so difficult for the distracted mind, have become not only easy, but also sweetness for the heart, bearing fruit for the spirit, pouring into the soul truly lenten joy full of grace and comfort, light and life. Everything external has lost power and authority over him through the soul which has become more concentrated within itself, has grown fonder of conversation alone with God and with his own conscience; that before he was occupied, carried away with the imaginary and deceptive pleasure, which now has become worthless, having lost its allure, became unworthy of attention, finally, unpleasant and boring. The carnal passions themselves, not finding food any more in a body tamed by fasting, neither in the soul concentrated in thinking about God and prayer, have become weakened and have stopped. The very apparently untamable passions of the soul: anger and rage, ambition and envy, spite and hatred, having met with the spirit of repentance and sorrow before God, with thoughts about death and the judgment of God, with reflection about the suffering of Christ and about the truth of God punishing all kinds of sins, are pacified and suppressed. The conscience, having been delivered from the violence of the passions, having woken from the sleepiness of the vanity and sweetness of everyday life, clarified by the light of the Word of God, touched by the prayers and hymns of the church, itself became impressionable by the power of its accusations, explanations and inclinations from

the depth of sin on the mountain of the law of God and from the allure of temptations to the beauty of virtue and spiritual perfection. The entire soul fervently fasting and praying is illuminated by the grace of light: it knows itself and all the surroundings more clearly, it begins to understand through faith and hope the spiritual world more clearly, it rules more freely over its flesh, above its needs, propensities and strivings, it more deeply feels the need for the highest treasure, the righteousness in Christ, the easing of conscience, the grace of coexistence. Who has felt in himself these spiritual fruits of fasting that awaits him coming on the eve of the higher holy days, comfort without compare with anything earthly; therefore everything that is truly joyful and comforting for us in the present life, is enclosed for us in the death of the Savior on the Cross and His resurrection, remembered by the Holy Church in the holy days of Passion Week and Pascha. And the true faster Lord Jesus Christ Himself will enter into the living, sincere partnership of His passion, in order to be glad later by the unutterable joy of His Resurrection which makes usual the more unusual joy of the Lord of pure spirits which no one and nothing on earth can take away from the soul, the loving Lord. But, according to the unutterable mercy and longsuffering of God, and who before carried out the Holy Forty Day Fast not as if it would demand holiness of its days and the true benefit of the soul, who even during these days of universal repentance and salvation did not begin, as it should, the work of his salvation, is still the opening of the door of the mercy of God, and opens the entrance to the holy place of repentance for the reception of mercy and the remission of sins, life and salvation. And each sinner should primarily take advantage of coming saving days of the Passion of Christ for his sanctification and salvation, and not remain a cold and unfeeling spectator of the suffering of Christ undertaken for our salvation, and not be indifferent and for his own self to partake of the share which awaits him in eternity. Vividly thinking about the "intolerable anger of the Lord against sinners", he with special fervent compunction, according to the management of the Holy Church, must be moved to appeal: "Despising the divine commands, my soul, you have been embraced by the snares of the enemy, and by your own choice you have betrayed yourself to corruption. Sunk in slumber through your many sins, you have profaned the divinely woven garment and made yourself unfit for the royal marriage; but you shall be dragged away because of your sin. For if you sit at the wedding feast clad in the clothing of the passions, He will ask you how you came in, and you will be cast out from the bridal chamber. But call out to the Savior: O Dreadful Eye, You have become what I am, without ceasing to be who You were. Before Your Cross, for my sake You have worn a mantle of mockery, tear off my sackcloth, and clothe me with the robe of gladness; and deliver me from the outer darkness and eternal weeping, to deliver me, and have mercy on me". And who will carry out the saving days of the Passion of Christ with the sincere confession of

one's sins, with the resolute intention not to return to one's former sinful life, with the firm desire to please the Lord by fulfilling His sacred commandments, that one will not lose the reward of life-creating joy of the resurrection of Christ: "for He is the Master who loves mankind, who accepts the last, as He also accepts the first, who gives rest even at the 11th hour as He does at the first hour". (See details in *The Complete Sermons of Demetrius, Archbishop of Chersonese*, vol.4, pp. 355 fol.).

2) The venerable hermits, during the season of the Holy Forty Day Fast secluded themselves in the desert (see page 499). They returned to their monasteries on Palm Sunday.

On this Friday the Great Compline is appointed. From this Friday up to the Monday of St. Thomas week "we sing neither the Hymn to the Martyrs, nor the Hymn to the Theotokos, nor anything from the Octoechos".

On Saturday of the 6th Week, the Holy Church commemorates the miracle of raising Lazarus accomplished by the Savior six days before the Jewish Passover during which He suffered (John 11:45-57). The Holy Church glorifies the raising of Lazarus, as proof of the divine power of Jesus Christ and as evidence of the resurrection of Jesus Christ and in the general resurrection of all the dead, as is expressed in the Troparion of the feast. The faithful finding out the great value accomplished by the Lord remembered in today's miracle, the Holy Church hymns: "O Lord, your voice destroyed the kingdom of Hades and the word of Your authority raised from the grave the one who was dead four days, and Lazarus became once again the saving first fruits of the regeneration of the world. All things are possible to You, O Master and King of all". But at the same time the Holy Church reminds also that the commemoration of this event has served as the beginning of the resolute revolt of the council of the priests and Pharisees against the Savior. Performed before the eyes of innumerable people, the great miracle of the resurrection of Lazarus turned many to the faith in Jesus Christ and caused the strongest indignation against Him by the high priests and elders of Judah, and the Sanhedrin now decided, upon the advice of Caiaphas to arrest Jesus only where it will be possible (John 11, 47-50). Thus the paradigm of the resurrection of Lazarus served as the direct reason for the condemnation of the Savior to death. Therefore since the very first century the Christian Divine Services were established to remember this great miracle before the Passion Week itself. In the Fourth century the general church considered the resurrection of Lazarus a solemn feast as can be seen from the set of homilies for this day by St. John Chrysostom, the Blessed Augustine, and others. In the VII and VIII centuries the sacred church hymnographers: St. Andrew of Crete, St. Cosmas of Maium and St. John of

Damascus have created special hymns and canons for this feast that are still sung to this day.

In accordance with the meaning of the commemoration events on this day, as well as on Sunday, at the second Kathisma **in Matins** we sing the Resurrection Sticheron: "The Angelic choir was amazed". And before the Canon we sing the sticheron for the Resurrection: "Having beheld the Resurrection of Christ". After the Canon we proclaim: "Holy is the Lord our God", and before the Great Doxology we sing the Resurrection Theotokion: "Most Blessed are you, O Theotokos Virgin", as at the Sunday Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom. Instead of the Trisagion we sing: "As many as have been baptized into Christ" because on this day in antiquity catechumens were baptized. **The Epistle:** Heb. 12:28-1_:1-8; sel. 333. **The Gospel:** John 11:1-45; sel. 39. It is not forbidden to intone the Litany for the Departed on Lazarus Saturday (Tserkovnyi Vestnik (Church Messenger) 1890, 27). **At the meal**, besides oil and wine, the eating of caviar is allowed.

Concerning the saints that are appointed on the days from this Saturday until Thomas Sunday see pages 515-516.

*S. V. Bulgakov, **Handbook for Church Servers**, 2nd ed., 1274 pp., (Kharkov, 1900) pp. 526-8.
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