

218 Christ, our Pascha, takes upon himself the sin of the world, suffering, and death: "What suffering did he accept for our sake? This was the suffering of love. Love is long-suffering."¹⁷⁵ The Passover of Christ is the manifestation of God's love: "Now before the festival of the Passover, Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart from this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end" (Jn 13:1). The Lord willingly accepts his death: "I lay down my life in order to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again" (in 10:17-18). Christ offers himself in sacrifice for us, "as the Priest and simultaneously as the Lamb of God, who takes the sin of the world."¹⁷⁶ Christ conquered death by his Resurrection, for God will not suffer his "holy one to see corruption" (Ps 15[16]:10). On account of the Resurrection, the death of Christ has become our passage to new life.

219 "The last enemy—death" (see 1 Cor 15:26), against which the human race was powerless, is now destroyed by the Pascha of Christ. "We do indeed die, but we do not continue in it; which is not to die at all. For the tyranny of death, and death indeed, is when he who dies is nevermore allowed to return to life. But when after dying is living, and that a better life, this is not death, but sleep."¹⁷⁷ The Resurrection of Christ is a unique and unrepeatable historical event and the foundation of Christian faith: "If Christ has not been raised ... your faith has been in vain" (1 Cor 15:14). Faith in the Risen Christ is the beginning of our Pascha.

220 Every year Christians prepare for the celebration of holy Pascha during the time of the Great Fast (Lent). The Fast lasts forty days as an image of the forty-year journey of the People of God into the Promised Land and the forty-day fast of Christ in the wilderness. By training the Christian to abstain from sin, the Fast leads to interior freedom and true joy. Throughout the Fast, the Church liturgically accompanies Christians with hymns from the Lenten Triodion that point to the deeper sense and purpose of the Fast—reconciliation with God and neighbour, service to God and others.

a. Entrance of the Lord into Jerusalem

221 The Church begins to celebrate the Resurrection as victory over death with the commemoration of the raising of Lazarus, during which Jesus reveals himself to be "the Resurrection and the Life." "Those who believe

¹⁷⁵ ORIGEN, *Commentary on Ezekiel*, 6, 6: PG 13, 714.

¹⁷⁶ GREGORY OF NYSSA, *Oration I: On Holy Pascha*, 1: PG 46, 612.

¹⁷⁷ JOHN CHRYSOSTOM, *Homilies on Hebrews*. Homily 17, 2: PG 63,129.

in me, even though they die, will live" (Jn 11:25). The Floral Triodion begins with Lazarus Saturday. It leads into Holy Week, which bears the good news about Christ's victory over sin and death through his Passion and the Cross. The sign of the imminent victory is the entrance of Christ, the God-man, into Jerusalem. "As man he wept for Lazarus, and as God he resurrected him from the dead. As man he sat upon the donkey, and as to God they cried out to him: `Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.'"¹⁷⁸

222 In the liturgical hymns of Palm Sunday, also known as Flowery Sunday, we sing of the children of Jerusalem, who greeted Christ as King even though the Pharisees and scribes refused to accept Him: "O, evil and adulterous generation, why have you treated your Lord so faithlessly? .., Why have you rejected the prophet's words which proclaim him? Your own children sang to your shame today: `Hosanna to the son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!'"¹⁷⁹ Just as the people greeted Christ with branches from trees, so Christians also greet Christ with "palms of virtue"¹⁸⁰ as he enters upon his voluntary Passion. Those who have not acquired virtues and have rejected Christ are compared to the barren fig tree: "The rod of Aaron, though dried up and withered, was changed into a green branch that put forth leaves; but the lawless assembly was changed into an unfruitful fig tree."¹⁸¹

223 The liturgical texts of Holy Week present us the example of the repentant woman, who with expensive ointment anointed the feet of the Saviour (see Mt 26:6-16; Lk 7:36-50). The repentant harlot, "having recognized the divinity of Christ," receives from him the forgiveness of her sins and moves us towards repentance. "Accept the fountain of my tears, O you who draw down from the clouds the waters of the sea. Incline to the groanings of my heart, O you who in your ineffable self-emptying have bowed down the heavens. I shall kiss your most pure feet and wipe them with the hairs of my head."¹⁸² Jesus was invited by the Pharisee, but it was the harlot who received the blessing: "O Jesus, life-giving Bread, you have eaten with Simon the Pharisee, that the harlot might gain your grace that is beyond all price, by pouring out the ointment on your head."¹⁸³

¹⁷⁸ ILARION, METROPOLITAN OF KYIV, *Sermon on Law and Grace*, 26.

¹⁷⁹ *Floral Triodion*, Great and Holy Monday, Vespers, Aposticha.

¹⁸⁰ See *Lenten Triodion*, Sixth Week of the Fast, Monday Matins, First and Second Sessional Hymns.

¹⁸¹ *Floral Triodion*, Great and Holy Monday, Compline, Canon, Ode 9.

¹⁸² *Floral Triodion*, Great and Holy Wednesday, Matins, Aposticha.

¹⁸³ *Floral Triodion*, Great and Holy Wednesday, Great Compline, Canon, Ode 9.