

PALM SUNDAY TEACHES US THAT WE MUST PREPARE TO RECEIVE THE LORD

—by Nikiforos Theotokis—

When the God-man Jesus Christ, due to His extreme love and compassion, entered Jerusalem to endure suffering, the Cross, and even death for the salvation of the human race, Simon the leper prepared a dinner for Him; Mary (Lazarus' sister) anointed His immaculate feet with valuable myrrh and wiped them with her hair; the citizens of Jerusalem greeted Him with bay leaves; some people from the crowds strewed the streets with branches from trees, while others laid their garments down on the ground so Jesus could pass over them; His disciples praised Him; the innocent children offered hymns to Him; the multitudes received Him by crying out and shouting, **“Hosanna to the Son of David. Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest” (Mt. 21:9)**. Judas the traitor, on the other hand, prepared to receive Him with a treacherous kiss, while the archpriests and their council convened to plot and kill not only Jesus Christ, but also Lazarus as well.

What type of preparation do we make in order to receive Him? Do we prepare in a holy manner as the reverent people (of that time) who worthily honored and received Him, or do we prepare in a destructive manner as did Judas the traitor and the iniquitous and evil council of the archpriests?

Dear Christian: Jesus Christ, your Savior is coming. Have you prepared for Him a dinner like Simon the leper? “I do not see Him,” you respond, “so how can I prepare a meal for him?” You are mistaken! He is before your eyes almost every hour. When you see a poor person, you see Christ Himself. Thus, whatever you do for a poor person, you do for Jesus Christ, as He affirmed, **“Assuredly I say to you, inasmuch as you did these things to one of the least of these My brothers, you did it to Me” (Mt. 25:40)**. If during these days of Great Lent you open your heart compassionately and provide a meal for the poor, and give food to the hungry, and satisfy the needs of orphans and widows, then you also prepare a dinner (just as Simon the leper did) for Jesus Christ; then you also become worthy (just like Simon the leper) of receiving Him.

My dear Christian: your Lord is coming. Do you also anoint His immaculate feet with myrrh like Mary? “But how can I do this,” you ask, “since I do not have Him in front of me?” God is omnipresent: He is everywhere. He stands by your side at all times. Don’t you hear what the Prophet says? **“I beheld the Lord eve before me, for He is at my right hand, that I might not be shaken” (Ps. 15:8)**. Even though you do not see Him with your physical eyes, you see Him with the eyes of your soul. Mary anointed His feet with **“very costly, pure myrrh of nard” (Jn. 12:3)**. You can wash His feet with the warm tears of repentance on account of your sins. The myrrh of Mary was worth three hundred dinars. The value of the myrrh of tears is priceless because the tears of repentance are equivalent to holy baptism. **“Even one tear that is shed,”** states St. Gregory of Nyssa, **“is equivalent to the bath [of baptism].”** When God witnesses your tears, he erases your sins and gives you eternal blessedness and salvation: **“blessed are you who weep now, for you shall laugh” (Lk. 6:21)**. Mary first anointed the feet of Jesus and then wiped them with her hair. Anoint His feet with your tears, and then offer to him your entire mind and submit all your thoughts to His holy will. The hairs of our head are offshoots of the body; the thoughts of our mind are the fruits of the heart. God asks for our heart: **“My son, give Me your heart” (Pr. 23:25)**.