

Entrance into Jerusalem

In St. Mark's and St. Luke's accounts of our Lord's entrance into Jerusalem, we are told that the donkey that Jesus is riding upon has never been ridden by anyone else. To us in today's world, this may seem like a meaningless piece of information, but to the Jewish hearers of this gospel in the first century, they would have understood this passage to mean that this animal was one that could be offered to God. It is mentioned in many different passages in the Old Testament that an animal that was going to be offered to God must not have been put into secular use first. This was originally meant to teach the Jewish people to give of their best to God, not their old, beat-up ox that they had used to plow the fields with for the last 10 years. So, in this case also, this donkey that the disciples untied and led to Jesus had never been used for a secular purpose and so it was one that was worthy of being offered to God and it was then offered to Jesus for His entrance into Jerusalem.

Also, in St. Matthew's account of the Palm Sunday entrance, we hear that Jesus fulfills the prophecy of Zechariah, "Your king is coming to you, a just savior is he, humble, and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey." Jesus does not enter Jerusalem seated on a war horse like a military conqueror, but He enters Jerusalem humbly seated on the colt of a donkey. He is the King of Peace, not the King of War. He comes to bring peace to His people.

in the reading we heard at today's Divine Liturgy from St. John's gospel, we hear how a multitude cut palm branches and went out to meet Jesus. They shouted, "Hosanna, blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord! The king of Israel" This was reminiscent of how victorious kings were welcomed back into Jerusalem after a great victory over their enemies. Jesus by His entrance into Jerusalem was preparing to destroy the greatest enemy of all, death. As we prepare to travel with Christ through this Holy Week, may we remain faithful to Christ, the Victor, even when things seem very dark, for we know that the victory has already been won. Let us not turn against Christ as the crowds who shouted Hosanne on Palm Sunday and then crucify Him on Great and Holy Friday. During this Holy Week, let us remain faithful to Christ, as the Holy Theotokos did, standing with Christ at the foot of the Cross, that we too, like her, may see the risen Christ on the great and glorious morning of Pascha.