



# ΚΥΡΙΑΚΗ

## A BRIEF SERMON



«I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day, and I heard behind me a loud voice, as of a trumpet» (Rev. 1:10)

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Palm Sunday Evening  
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## The Darkness Shall Not Prevail

*The sublime sufferings on this day shine upon the world  
as a light of salvation (Hymn Palm Sunday Evening)*

**T**onight, my beloved, Great or Holy Week begins, according to the typicon of our holy Church. **Why is it called Great?** Its duration is no different from the other weeks of the year. It is called Great because during this week, humanity remembers the thrice-great events of the life of Christ, which occurred on the shell of this earth.

Time rolls on, the months pass, the years go by, the centuries drift away. And while most things that occur don't make much of an impression on us, there are, however, some times in our personal or family life, or in events concerning our nation, that move us. We all have such hours - milestones that leave a mark on us.

Once, when a Greek sailor's ship was shipwrecked and he was miraculously saved, he wrote in his diary: 'The time that I was in the ocean seemed like a century to me!' **Time acquires significance and dimension by the events that occur within it.**

But when did the clock of humanity, the universal clock, strike its **greatest hours?** Exactly during this week! Because during this week, unrepeatable events occurred, whose beams and impact influence —and will continue to influence— the world throughout the ages. The pinnacle was when Christ, step by step, painstakingly ascended the degrees of martyrdom and **reached Golgotha.** Oh Christ, enlighten us sinners to be able to comprehend the greatness of Your Sacrifice!

There, He offered His blood and saved us. A blood transfusion is given to someone seriously ill —offered by a donor— and the person is saved. In a similar way Christ also, that great **Donor,** gave His untainted, deified blood to the

veins of humanity, so that our sins could be forgiven and we could have eternal life.

In tonight's hymns, the Church tells us of **righteous Joseph,** who was furthermore a small prefiguration of our Lord Jesus Christ. It says that Joseph, during a famine, became a wheat-giver, i.e. he provided people with wheat and saved them from hunger. But Christ wasn't simply a wheat-giver. Beyond bread, beyond the manna which He rained down in the desert, beyond the material goods which He disperses and distributes to the world, Christ gave us —Oh my God, if only we could truly live this— He offered His All-holy body, in order to vanquish death.

Our Lord Jesus Christ is a blood-donor, a wheat-giver, a provider of food; "the heavenly bread, the food of the entire world" (prayer of the offertory). He is worthy of eternal gratitude by all of humanity; up until today He continues to call us all, through the Sacrament of the Divine Eucharist, saying, "Take, eat" (my body) and "Drink of this all of you," (my blood) in order to live eternally.

Our Church expresses this deep gratitude to Christ with inspired hymns, troparia and idiomela, like the one we just heard: "The sublime sufferings on this day shine upon the world as a light of salvation" (Palm Sunday evening). What does 'light of salvation' mean? What light is the inspired hymnographer referring to?

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**Light!** Oh sweet light, the ancient Greek philosopher Homer says. Light is one of the nicest things in the world. But there are two kinds of light: the material light and the spiritual light.

**Material light** is the light from the lantern that the shepherd ignites in his cabin, or outside, to

illumine the hill-tops. The candle or oil-lamp in a chapel gives off light. The chandelier in the church is a light. Lights during the night are the innumerable stars that shine high in the sky's dome. Abundant light during the day is the sun, the 'electric company' of the sky. And just as someone would be crazy to say that the factories generating electricity sprouted on their own, in the same way, and even more crazy and silly someone would be, to say that the sun is a random creation. "Glory to Thee Who hast shown forth the light" (Doxology).

But besides the material light, there is also the eternal **spiritual light**. What is this? You're asking me? Look at history Before Christ. The Apostle Paul says to our idol-worshipping ancestors in Ephesus: *For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord* (Eph. 5:8). The darkness he is referring to is ethical, religious and social. Suddenly a great light was lit. What was this light? **Christ! I am the light of the world** (Jn. 8:12) He said. His whole life, His words and His miracles are light.

Perhaps someone will ask: Did only Christ teach? I don't deny that Plato, Aristotle and other philosophers also taught, but their light was small, the light of **fireflies**. Only the light of Christ is a splendid light, a sun. His teachings were light, His miracles were light, His holy life was light. *Your virtue, Christ, covered the heavens* (Hab. 3:3, Katavasies from the Meeting of the Lord). His holy Passion was light.

As the sun rises to its meridian, in the same way the light of Christ is at its zenith on Holy and Great Friday. On the Cross, **all His virtues shone** to the utmost degree. There, His meekness shone forth, when He was slapped by a slave. His patience, His longsuffering, ("Glory to Thy forbearance, O Lord," we will hear) His forgiveness, His infinite love shone, embracing the whole world and even those who crucified Him. His whole life was a light. But I perceive your uncertainty: —Since Christ is such light, **why do so many people live in the darkness?**

I answer. There are animals that live under the earth, such as moles; there are birds, such as owls; and there are bats, that don't like the daylight - they only come out at night. And St. Basil the Great says that, just as they hate the light, in the same way there are people who close their eyes so as not to see the light; they hate the light, Christ. They hate sermons, catechism, confession and the Sacraments of our Church. If

it were possible, they would like every light of the saints and martyrs on this earth to be extinguished. Christ said it: *the light has come into the world and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil* (Jn 3:19). He explained it clearly: **the reason why some people remain in the dark is because of their profligate lifestyles**; that's why they hate the light. This evening, while you are here in church following the holy drama that is unfolding, other people are elsewhere, in nightclubs, completely indifferent to Jesus of Nazareth. In church, they get impatient if they stay a little while, however at corrupt nightclubs they stay from sunset to sunrise.

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My beloved, I will end now. This era in which we live, is called the "age of enlightenment" due to its progress and achievements, which are truly remarkable: man succeeded even in sending rockets into space. But while this era wants to be called "the age of enlightenment" —how strange— never before has humanity found itself in such a terrible state ethically, religiously and socially. Darkness, a **thick darkness covers our wisdom with pride**. It is written in the Scriptures: *from the sixth hour until the ninth hour there was darkness over all the land* (Mt. 27:45). Why? Because they crucified Christ. And Europe today, despite its civilization, its knowledge and its academies, is dying - it is committing suicide.

**Darkness has enveloped the earth.** It is spreading from the Ural Mountains to Gibraltar and from the North Pole to the South Pole. And the European poet's words are coming true, who said,

"...and here, poor fool, with all my lore,  
I stand no wiser than before" (Goethe's Faust).

Despite all the lights —the schools, the universities and the academies— we blind ones are as uncomprehending as we were previously - we are bats and moles!

But no - take courage! The people of the night —the atheists and unbelievers— will not win. **The light will prevail: Christ, our holy faith.** Each one of us should become a small candle in the darkness of this world. And all of us, young and old, each breath, each mountain and each star, each river and each grave should hymn and praise Him unto the ages (see Dan. 3:35-90). Amen.

(†) **Bishop Augustinos**