

THE PARISH NEWSLETTER FEBRUARY 2018

The Nativity of the Mother of God Russian Orthodox Church
617 Sand Creek Road, Albany NY (518) 869-3932

A parish of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad www.albanyrocor.org

Rector: Protopriest Alexis Duncan ; Protopriest Michael Fritz

Protodeacon: Fr. Michael Soloviev

FEBRUARY NAMESDAYS

3	Subdeacon Eugene Fitzpatrick Maximus Parella Maxim Schuler Maxim Bradley	14	Bridget Taylor-Yarowski Brigid Henry
6	Xenia Drobot	22	Markell Popov
9	Reader Gregory Soloviev Gregory Chrkezov	25	Maksim Krykhtin Paula Markesinnis Valentina Popova
11	Theodora (Bella) Dragon		

MNOGAYA LETA! MANY YEARS to all of our Parishioners celebrating their Namesday in the month of February.

IMPORTANT DATES IN FEBRUARY

FEB. 2 nd	Tikhvin Gala Dinner
FEB 4 th -	Youth Choir Superbowl Haiti Fundraiser Coffee Hostess: O. Kinneer; A. McClure; Mat. Anna Duncan
FEB 11th	MEATFARE SUNDAY - Church School Classes Resume Coffee Hostess: T. Fedorov; C. Fedorov-DiLello
FEB. 14th	Vigil 6:30 Meeting of the Lord
FEB. 15th	Liturgy 8:30 am MEETING OF THE LORD - Blessing of Candles
FEB. 18 th	Cheesefare Sunday BLINI; Coffee Hostess: Mat. C Soloviev; Fedorov; Dragon
FEB. 19th	BEGINNING OF GREAT LENT
FEB. 19 th - 23	FIRST WEEK OF LENT - Services every evening at 6:30pm
FEB 24 -	Liturgy 8:30 am Sat. Of St. Theodore
FEB. 25th	SUNDAY TRIUMPH OF ORTHODOXY Coffee Hostess: N. Schuler; T. Taylor

PARISH YOLKA

Thank you to EVERYONE who worked so hard to make this year's Yolka a success. If you helped with the set-up or clean-up, cooking, ,if you performed, if you were one of Santa's helpers and helped with the gifts, helped with the performances – THANK YOU VERY MUCH. The food was delicious, the performances were exceptional and everyone had a very good time. A special Thank you to Matushka Cecelia Soloviev for working with the children to stage this year's play. GREAT JOB EVERYONE.

CHURCH FRESCOES

FATHER THEODORE will return to our Church this FEBRUARY (FEB. 22nd) to continue work on our frescoes. We hope that ALL of our Parishioners will welcome him back. Please remember to bring him some meals and goodies - or better yet, invite him to your house for dinner or take him out to dinner. Stop by and visit him while he is working - so he knows how much we appreciate the beautiful work that he does. Also, if you would like to donate to the Fresco Fund - now is the time to do it. Thank you!.

NEW PARISHIONER'S

You may have noticed some new faces in Church. Please welcome these people to our parish - make them feel like they have found a home. Invite them to Coffee Hour, sit with them during Coffee Hour, tell them about our Sisterhood, Church School, Choir etc. Be friendly, so these people will be glad to return.

CHURCH SCHOOL CLASSES

Church School classes for the 2018 year will begin again on February 11, 2018 at 8:30 am (before Liturgy). Sunday School **Dates Feb 11, Feb 25, Mar 11, Mar 25, Apr 15 (since Apr 8 is Pascha we won't have classes and move the next class to Apr 15), Apr 29, May 13, May 20 - GRADUATION.** If you were unable to bring your children to the Fall classes, please make every effort to bring them to the classes listed above. Your children's spiritual education is extremely important. Sunday School is an extension of what you teach your children at home about God, the Mother of God, the saints, and the spiritual life. Let us work together to give our children the spiritual tools and spiritual foundation they will need not only now in their young lives, but as they get older. May they always keep God in their hearts and in their lives. —Matushka Anna

PROJECT TIKHVIN AND THE TIKHVIN GALA



Thank you Matushka Anna for organizing the Tikhvin Gala Dinner which was held on February 2, 2018. The hall looked beautiful, thank you to everyone who helped with table set up and decorating. The food was delicious - thank you to our wonderful Chefs. Thank you to Sasha Ogora for providing the music for our listening and dancing pleasure. Thank you to Christina Fedorov DiLello and Urij Tabunschikow for organizing the Chinese Raffle and to all of our parishioners who donated baskets to be raffled.

THANK YOU to all of our Parishioners and guests who made this such a fun filled and profitable event.

EAD YOUTH CHOIR WEEKEND

On February 3rd and 4th, the Eastern American Youth Choir held a "Youth Choir Weekend" at the Nativity of the Mother of God parish in Albany, New York. Youth choir events are a great way to meet and mingle with fellow Orthodox Christians, as well as to share your love for church singing and music.

The Choir was absolutely beautiful Saturday evening for Vigil and Sunday morning for Liturgy. Thank you Nikhon Schuler for directing and to all the young men who sang so beautifully. Tasia Fedorov posted a video of the choir on her Facebook page - if anyone is interested.

COFFEE HOUR HOSTESSES

Just a reminder. Coffee Hour hostesses are requested to make sure the kitchen is clean after your Coffee Hour, including washing, drying and putting away any dishes, pots, pans or utensils you may have used. Also, any towels you used should be brought home, washed and dried and returned to the hall. Since we do not have anyone cleaning the Church Hall on a regular basis, it is the Coffee Hour Hostesses responsibility to make sure the hall, kitchen and bathrooms are CLEAN. This includes removing ALL trash for hall, kitchen & bathrooms. Wiping down the sinks, scrubbing the toilets, replenishing toilet paper and paper towels. Also, ideally, the entire hall floor should be swept and mopped. If you are unable to mop the entire floor, PLEASE take a damp mop and make sure any dirty spots are mopped. We appreciate all the work of our Coffee Hour Hostesses - preparing all of the delicious food, but we would also appreciate if you could make sure the Hall is clean or our weekly renters. THANK YOU!

CHILDRENS COFFEE HOUR & CAKE AUCTION

Thank you Christina Fedorov-DiLello and Paula Markissinis for coordinating the CHILDRENS COFFEE (Future Sisters of our Church). The Turkey dinner with all of the fixings and Brownie Ice Cream sundaes were delicious. We also had a CAKE AUCTION which was AWESOME. Our Parish Bakers really outdid themselves this year with not only BEAUTIFUL Cakes but absolutely delicious Cakes. THANK YOU! THANK YOU! THANK YOU!. The Children were able to raise \$1,565 towards their playground fund. Thank you to all our little helpers, to our bakers and to those that purchased the cakes.

NATIVITY FLOWERS

Thank you Everyone who donated flowers for the Nativity Season. The Church looked beautiful with all of the Pointesetieas and wreaths. Thank you to Matushka Anna and the flower Committee - you did fantastic job. If anyone is interested in helping with the Flower Committee - please contact Matushka Anna Duncan.

HAITI - SUPERBOWL PARTY

What a GREAT Game - the hall was full of EAGLES FANS so most of the people were happy with the outcome. Thank you everyone who brought food to share - and for those who stayed to clean-up the hall after the Party. A fun way to raise money for the Haiti Orthodox Family Relief Fund. The Youth of our parish help sponsor a family and the Superbowl Party is their biggest fundraiser. Thank you to everyone who helped support this cause - we raised over \$1,000. May God Bless you all!

HANDY MAN for ODD JOBS AROUND YOUR HOME

Do you need some Odd jobs done around your house. I've got the man for you - Tony Garrow (Christina Fedorov DiLello's neighbor). He does just about everything, painting, building additions, back splashes, installing storm doors, carpentry etc. You name it, I'm pretty sure Tony could do it. Honest, reliable and very reasonable. Call Tony at 518 869-3931 (just let him know that you know Christina DiLello. Thanks

If you know of anyone who is sick, in the hospital. Nursing home traveling, or in need of prayers, please let Tasia Fedorov know and she will post it in the Newsletter. If you have any news, have an item to sell or give away, let Tasia know and she will post it in the Newsletter.

DON'T FORGET TO PAY YOUR CHURCH DUES FOR 2018 - Please contact our Church Treasurer, Natasha Smelova if you have any questions. Reminder: WORKING ADULTS DUES ARE \$30 per month

SUNDAYS OF GREAT LENT

Great Lent is fast approaching - Beginning on Monday, February 19th. Here is an article to help you better understand the weeks leading up to Great Lent and the weeks during Great Lent. May we all have a spiritually blessed Great Lent in preparation for the Feast of Feasts - PASCHA.

PRE-LENT

The paschal season of the Church is preceded by the season of Great Lent, which is itself preceded by its own liturgical preparation. The first sign of the approach of Great Lent comes five Sundays before its beginning. On this Sunday the Gospel reading is about Zacchaeus the tax-collector. It tells how Christ brought salvation to the sinful man and how his life was greatly changed simply because he “sought to see who Jesus was” (Lk 19.3). The desire and effort to see Jesus begins the entire movement through lent towards Easter. It is the first movement of salvation.

Publican and the Pharisee

The following Sunday is that of the Publican and the Pharisee. The focus here is on the two men who went to the Temple to pray—one a pharisee who was a very decent and righteous man of religion, the other a publican who was a truly sinful tax-collector who was cheating the people. The first, although genuinely righteous, boasted before God and was condemned, according to Christ. The second, although genuinely sinful, begged for mercy, received it, and was justified by God (Lk 18.9). The meditation here is that we have neither the religious piety of the pharisee nor the repentance of the publican by which alone we can be saved. We are called to see ourselves as we really are in the light of Christ’s teaching, and to beg for mercy.

Prodigal Son

The next Sunday in the preparation for Great Lent is the Sunday of the Prodigal Son. Hearing the parable of Christ about God’s loving forgiveness, we are called to “come to ourselves” as did the prodigal son, to see ourselves as being “in a far country” far from the Father’s house, and to make the movement of return to God. We are given every assurance by the Master that the Father will receive us with joy and gladness. We must only “arise and go,” confessing our selfinflicted and sinful separation from that “home” where we truly belong (Lk 15.11–24).

Meatfare

The next Sunday is called Meatfare Sunday since it is officially the last day before Easter for eating meat. It commemorates Christ’s parable of the Last Judgment (Mt 25.31–46). We are reminded this day that it is not enough for us to see Jesus, to see ourselves as we are, and to come home to God as his prodigal sons. We must also be his sons by following Christ, his only-begotten divine Son, and by seeing Christ in every man and by serving Christ through them. Our salvation and final judgment will depend upon our deeds, not merely on our intentions or even on the mercies of God devoid of our own personal cooperation and obedience.

. . . for I was hungry and you gave Me food, I was thirsty and you gave Me drink, I was a stranger and you took Me in, I was naked and you clothed Me, I was sick and in prison and you visited Me. For truly I say to you, if you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to Me (Mt 25).

We are saved not merely by prayer and fasting, not by “religious exercises” alone. We are saved by serving Christ through his people, the goal toward which all piety and prayer is ultimately directed.

Cheesefare

Finally, on the eve of Great Lent, the day called Cheesefare Sunday and Forgiveness Sunday, we sing of Adam’s exile from paradise. We identify ourselves with Adam, lamenting our loss of the beauty, dignity and delight of our original creation, mourning our corruption in sin. We also hear on this day the Lord’s teaching about fasting and forgiveness, and we enter the season of the fast forgiving one another so that God will forgive us.

If you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will forgive you; but if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your heavenly Father forgive you your trespasses (Mt 6.14–18).

GREAT LENT

The season of Great Lent is the time of preparation for the feast of the Resurrection of Christ. It is the living symbol of man’s entire life which is to be fulfilled in his own resurrection from the dead with Christ. It is a time of renewed devotion: of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. It is a time of repentance, a real renewal of our minds, hearts and deeds in conformity with Christ and his teachings. It is the time, most of all, of our return to the great commandments of loving God and our neighbors.

In the Orthodox Church, Great Lent is not a season of morbidity and gloominess. On the contrary, it is a time of joyfulness and purification. We are called to “anoint our faces” and to “cleanse our bodies as we cleanse our souls.” The very first hymns of the very first service of Great Lent set the proper tone of the season:

Let us begin the lenten time with delight . . . let us fast from passions as we fast from food, taking pleasure in the good words of the Spirit, that we may be granted to see the holy passion of Christ our God and his holy Pascha, spiritually rejoicing.

Thy grace has arisen upon us, O Lord, the illumination of our souls has shown forth; behold, now is the acceptable time; behold, now is the time of repentance (Vespers Hymns).

It is our repentance that God desires, not our remorse. We sorrow for our sins, but we do so in the joy of God’s mercy. We mortify our flesh, but we do so in the joy of our resurrection into life everlasting. We make ready for the resurrection during Great Lent, both Christ’s Resurrection and our own.

Lenten Fasting

A special word must be said about fasting during lent. Generally speaking, fasting is an essential element of the Christian life. Christ fasted and taught men to fast. Blessed fasting is done in secret, without ostentation or accusation of others (Mt 6.16; Rom 14). It has as its goal the purification of our lives, the liberation of our souls and bodies from sin, the strengthening of our human powers of love for God and man, the enlightening of our entire being for communion with the Blessed Trinity.

The Orthodox rules for lenten fasting are the monastic rules. No meat is allowed after Meatfare Sunday, and no eggs or dairy products after Cheesefare Sunday. These rules exist not as a Pharisaic “burden too hard to bear” (Lk 11.46), but as an ideal to be striven for; not as an end in themselves, but as a means to spiritual perfection crowned in love. The lenten services themselves continually remind us of this.

Let us fast with a fast pleasing to the Lord. This is the true fast: the casting off of evil, the bridling of the tongue, the cutting off of anger, the cessation of lusts, evil talking, lies and cursing. The stopping of these is the fast true and acceptable (Monday Vespers of the First Week).

The lenten services also make the undeniable point that we should not pride ourselves with external fasting since the devil also never eats!

The ascetic fast of Great Lent continues from Meatfare Sunday to Easter Sunday, and is broken only after the Paschal Divine Liturgy. Knowing the great effort to which they are called, Christians should make every effort to fast as well as they can, in secret, so that God would see and bless them openly with a holy life. Each person must do his best in the light of the given ideal.

In addition to the ascetic fasting of the lenten season, the Orthodox alone among Christians also practice what is known as eucharistic or liturgical fasting. This fasting does not refer to the normal abstinence in preparation for receiving the holy eucharist; it means fasting from the holy eucharist itself.

During the week days of Great Lent the regular eucharistic Divine Liturgy is not celebrated in Orthodox churches since the Divine Liturgy is always a paschal celebration of communion with the Risen Lord. Because the lenten season is one of preparation for the Lord’s Resurrection through the remembrance of sin and separation from God, the liturgical order of the Church eliminates the eucharistic service on the weekdays of lent. Instead the non-eucharistic services are extended with additional scripture readings and hymnology of a lenten character. In order that the faithful would not be entirely deprived of Holy Communion on the lenten days, however, the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts is celebrated on Wednesday and Friday evenings.

Even during Great Lent, Saturday (the Sabbath Day) and Sunday (the Lord’s Day) remain eucharistic days, and the Divine Liturgy is celebrated. On Saturdays it is the normal Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom, usually with prayers for the dead. On Sundays it is the longer Liturgy of Saint Basil the Great.

The well-known teaching that Saturdays and Sundays are never days of fasting in the Orthodox Church, an issue emphasized centuries ago when controversy arose with the Latin Church, refers only to this eucharistic-liturgical fast. During Great Lent, even though the eucharistic fast is broken on Saturdays and Sundays, the ascetical fast continues through the weekends since this fasting is an extended effort made from Meatfare Sunday right to Pascha itself.

Lenten Services

The weekday services of Great Lent are characterized by special lenten melodies of a penitential character. The royal gates to the altar area remain closed to signify man's separation through sin from the Kingdom of God. The church vesting is of a somber color, usually purple. The daily troparia are also of an intercessory character, entreating God through his saints to have mercy on us sinners.

At the Matins the long Alleluia replaces the psalm: God is the Lord . . . the Psalmody is increased. The hymnology refers to the lenten effort. Scripture readings from Genesis and Proverbs are added to Vespers, and the Prophecy of Isaiah to the Sixth Hour. Each of these books is read nearly in its entirety during the lenten period. Epistle and gospel readings are absent because there are no Divine Liturgies.

At all of the lenten services the Prayer of Saint Ephraim of Syria is read. It supplicates God for those virtues especially necessary to the Christian life.

O Lord and Master of my life: take from me the spirit of sloth, faint-heartedness, lust of power and idle talk.

But grant rather the spirit of chastity, humility, patience and love to Thy servant.

Yea, O Lord and King, grant me to see my own errors and not to judge my brother, for blessed art Thou unto ages of ages. Amen.

The Vespers service which begins the lenten season is called the Vespers of Forgiveness. It is customary at this service for the faithful to ask forgiveness and to forgive each other. At the Compline services of the first week of lent the Canon of Saint Andrew of Crete is read. This is a long series of penitential verses based on Biblical themes, to each of which the people respond: Have mercy on me, O God, have mercy on me. This canon is repeated at Matins on Thursday of the fifth week.

On Friday evening of this same fifth week, the Akathistos Hymn to the Mother of God is sung; and the Saturday Divine Liturgy also honors the Theotokos.

The first Saturday of Great Lent is dedicated to the memory of Saint Theodore of Tyre. The second, third, and fourth Saturdays are called Memorial Saturdays since they are dedicated to the remembrance of the dead.

On Memorial Saturdays the liturgical hymns pray universally for all of the departed, and the Matins for the dead, popularly called the parastasis or panikhida, is served with specific mention of the deceased by name. Litanies and prayers are also added to the Divine Liturgy at which the scripture readings refer to the dead and their salvation by Christ.

Saturday, even during the non-lenten season, is the Church's day for remembering the dead. This is so because Saturday, the Sabbath Day, stands as the day which God blessed for life in this world. Because of sin, however, this day now symbolizes all of earthly life as naturally fulfilled in death. Even Christ the Lord lay dead on the Sabbath Day, "resting from all of his works" and "trampling down death by death." Thus, in the New Testament Church of Christ, Saturday becomes the proper day for remembering the dead and for offering prayers for their eternal salvation.

SUNDAYS OF LENT

Triumph of Orthodoxy

Each of the Sundays of Great Lent has its own special theme. The first Sunday is called the Feast of the Triumph of Orthodoxy. It is a historical feast commemorating the return of the icons to the churches in the year 843 after the heresy of iconoclasm was overcome. The spiritual theme of the day is first of all the victory of the True Faith. "This is the victory that overcomes the world, our faith" (1 Jn 5.4). Secondly, the icons of the saints bear witness that man, "created in the image and likeness of God" (Gen 1.26), becomes holy and godlike through the purification of himself as God's living image.

Sr Gregory of Palamas

The Second Sunday of Lent is the commemoration of Saint Gregory Palamas. It was Saint Gregory (d.1359) who bore living witness that men can become divine through the grace of God in the Holy Spirit; and that even in this life, by prayer and fasting, human beings can become participants of the uncreated light of God's divine glory.

Sunday of the Cross

The Third Sunday of Lent is that of the Veneration of the Cross. The cross stands in the midst of the church in the middle of the lenten season not merely to remind men of Christ's redemption and to keep before them the goal of their efforts, but also to be venerated as that reality by which man must live to be saved. "He who does not take up his cross and follow me is not worthy of me" (Mt 10.38). For in the Cross of Christ Crucified lies both "the power of God and the wisdom of God" for those being saved (1 Cor 1.24).

Saint John of the Ladder (Climacus)

The Fourth Sunday of Lent is dedicated to Saint John of the Ladder (Climacus), the author of the work, *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*. The abbot of Saint Catherine's Monastery on Mount Sinai (6th century) stands as a witness to the violent effort needed for entrance into God's Kingdom (Mt 10: 12). The spiritual struggle of the Christian life is a real one, "not against flesh and blood, but against . . . the rulers of the present darkness . . . the hosts of wickedness in heavenly places . . ." (Eph 6.12). St John encourages the faithful in their efforts for, according to the Lord, only "he who endures to the end will be saved" (Mt 24.13).

Saint Mary of Egypt

The Fifth Sunday recalls the memory of Saint Mary of Egypt, the repentant harlot. Mary tells us, first of all, that no amount of sin and wickedness can keep a person from God if he truly repents. Christ himself has come “to call sinners to repentance” and to save them from their sins (Lk 5.32). In addition, Saint Mary tells us that it is never too late in life—or in Lent—to repent. Christ will gladly receive all who come to him even at the eleventh hour of their lives. But their coming must be in serious and sincere repentance.

Lazarus Saturday and Palm Sunday

The week following the Sunday of Saint Mary of Egypt is called Palm or Branch Week. At the Tuesday services of this week the Church recalls that Jesus’ friend Lazarus has died and that the Lord is going to raise him from the dead (Jn 11). As the days continue toward Saturday, the Church, in its hymns and verses, continues to follow Christ towards Bethany to the tomb of Lazarus. On Friday evening, the eve of the celebration of the Resurrection of Lazarus, the “great and saving forty days” of Great Lent are formally brought to an end:

Having accomplished the forty days for the benefit of our souls, we pray to Thee, O Lover of Man, that we may see the holy week of Thy passion, that in it we may glorify Thy greatness and Thine unspeakable plan of salvation for our sake . . . (Vespers Hymn).

Lazarus Saturday is a paschal celebration. It is the only time in the entire Church Year that the resurrectional service of Sunday is celebrated on another day. At the liturgy of Lazarus Saturday, the Church glorifies Christ as “the Resurrection and the Life” who, by raising Lazarus, has confirmed the universal resurrection of mankind even before His own suffering and death.

By raising Lazarus from the dead before Thy passion, Thou didst confirm the universal resurrection, O Christ God! Like the children with the branches of victory, we cry out to Thee, O Vanquisher of Death: Hosanna in the highest! Blessed is he that comes in the name of the Lord! (Troparion).

Christ—the Joy, the Truth and the Light of All, the Life of the world and its Resurrection—has appeared in his goodness to those on earth. He has become the Image of our Resurrection, granting divine forgiveness to all (Kontakion).

At the Divine Liturgy of Lazarus Saturday the baptismal verse from Galatians: As many as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ (Gal 3.27) replaces the Thrice-holy Hymn thus indicating the resurrectional character of the celebration, and the fact that Lazarus Saturday was once among the few great baptismal days in the Orthodox Church Year.

Because of the resurrection of Lazarus from the dead, Christ was hailed by the masses as the long-expected Messiah-King of Israel. Thus, in fulfillment of the prophecies of the Old Testament, He entered Jerusalem, the City of the King, riding on the colt of an ass (Zech 9.9; Jn 12.12). The crowds greeted Him with branches in their hands and called out to Him with shouts of praise: Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord! The Son of David! The King of Israel! Because of this glorification by the people, the priests and scribes were finally driven “to destroy Him, to put Him to death” (Lk 19.47; Jn 11.53, 12.10).

Palm Sunday

The feast of Christ's triumphal Entry into Jerusalem, Palm Sunday, is one of the twelve major feasts of the Church. The services of this Sunday follow directly from those of Lazarus Saturday. The church building continues to be vested in resurrectional splendor, filled with hymns which continually repeat the Hosanna offered to Christ as the Messiah-King who comes in the name of God the Father for the salvation of the world.

The main troparion of Palm Sunday is the same one sung on Lazarus Saturday. It is sung at all of the services, and is used at the Divine Liturgy as the third antiphon which follows the other special psalm verses which are sung as the liturgical antiphons in the place of those normally used. The second troparion of the feast, as well as the kontakion and the other verses and hymns, all continue to glorify Christ's triumphal manifestation "six days before the Passover" when he will give himself at the Supper and on the Cross for the life of the world.

Today the grace of the Holy Spirit has gathered us together. Let us all take up Thy cross and say: Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest! (First Verse of Vespers).

When we were buried with Thee in baptism, O Christ God, we were made worthy of eternal life by Thy resurrection. Now we praise Thee and sing: Hosanna in the highest! Blessed is he that comes in the name of the Lord! (Second Troparion).

Sitting on Thy throne in heaven, and carried on a foal on earth, O Christ God, accept the praise of angels and the songs of children who sing: Blessed is he who comes to recall Adam! (Kontakion).

At the vigil of the feast of Palm Sunday the prophecies of the Old Testament about the Messiah-King are read together with the Gospel accounts of the entry of Christ into Jerusalem. At Matins branches are blessed which the people carry throughout the celebration as the sign of their own glorification of Jesus as Saviour and King. These branches are usually palms, or, in the Slavic churches, pussy willows which came to be customary because of their availability and their early blossoming in the springtime.

As the people carry their branches and sing their songs to the Lord on Palm Sunday, they are judged together with the Jerusalem crowd. For it was the very same voices which cried Hosanna to Christ, which, a few days later, cried Crucify Him! Thus in the liturgy of the Church the lives of men continue to be judged as they hail Christ with the "branches of victory" and enter together with Him into the days of His "voluntary passion."