

RAISING SAINTS

CHILDREN + FAMILY MINISTRY // WEEKLY GUIDE FOR TEACHERS + PARENTS

PALM SUNDAY / OPENING OF THE DOORS

Palm Sunday celebrates the triumphant entry of our Lord Jesus Christ into Jerusalem. The Gospels tell us how Jesus entered the city of Jerusalem and was received as King. The crowds greeted him with shouts of joy, but quickly abandoned him a few days later as they called for his crucifixion.

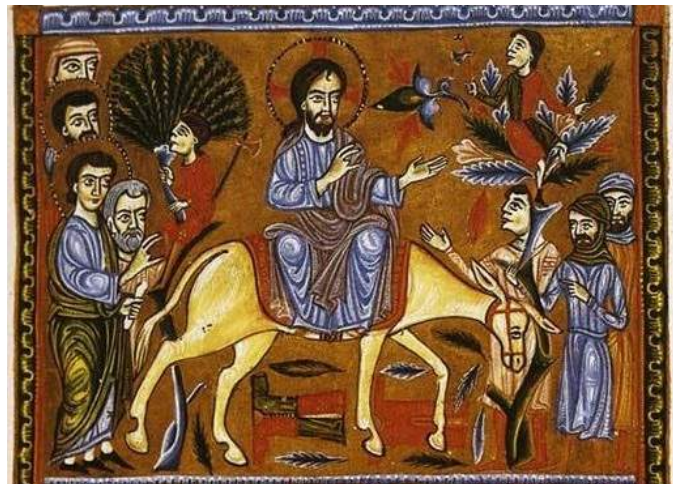
On this day we also have the service of the Opening of the Door. In the Book of Directory of Feasts of the Armenian Church (Donatzooytz), the Order of the Opening of the Door is incorporated in the Vespers liturgy of Palm Sunday, which is celebrated at sundown. The liturgy is rich with psalms, scripture readings and hymns all pointing to the triumphant entry of Jesus into Jerusalem, his return at the Second Coming to inaugurate his eternal Kingdom, and our need to be ready at all times to greet him.

According to the Donatzooytz, the opening of the Door should be held outside of the church's main doors, and with the opening of the doors all enter the church symbolizing the entrance of the faithful into the heavenly Jerusalem. However, unseasonable weather, and often hostile social environments have gradually forced the service to be held in the sanctuary, and instead of the opening of the church doors, the curtain of the altar, which was closed during the season of Lent symbolizing our separation from God due to our sins, is opened.

There are many pious traditions associated with this service. One of the most moving acts of piety is the gathering of people with speech impediments at the door of the church. When the curtain of the altar and the door of the church are opened, the tongues of those seeking

healing are blessed with the sign of the cross with the key of the church asking God that with the opening of the doors he may open the locks of the tongue of the person with the speech impediment.

For our children we shall focus on the themes of readiness at all times to meet Jesus Christ when he comes at the Second Coming. The key to that readiness is constant prayer as we are advised by Jesus Christ. One of the hymns sung during this service summarizes the parable of the Wise and Foolish Bridesmaids (Matthew 25:1-13).



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The triumphal entry of our Lord into Jerusalem, Jesus washes the feet of His Disciples, by Sargis Pidzak, 1336, Sis, Cilicia, ms5786 Matenadaran collection.

**Canticle Hymn for Great Tuesday Tone 4
Eemasdoon Goosankun (The Wise Bridesmaids)**

The wise bridesmaids, having prepared
oil for their lanterns,
Greeted the heavenly bridegroom
with lit lanterns.

While the unwise bridesmaids having no oil,
Were unprepared for the coming
of the bridegroom with extinguished lanterns.

Therefore, may we prepare spiritual oil,
So we may enter into the bridal chamber
of the eternal bridegroom with lanterns lit.

You are my hope and the forgiver of my sins,
Do not ignore the flow of my tears.
Have mercy on me, O Lord.

As the priest knocks on the door to be opened he sings this chant. This brings to our attention the need that we all have for God's mercy to accept us as he forgives our sins.

Open to us, O Lord, (repeated three times)
The gates of mercy,
We implore you sorrowfully.

Parents and teachers, make every effort to have your children be present at the celebration of Palm Sunday and experience the hopeful message of the Opening of the Door service. It is that hope in our Lord's forgiving presence that will enable our young children to live and face the challenges presented to them by a secularized society. May God bless you in that effort.

YN. SIRARPI AIVAZIAN

Note: The material for the children will be presented in three levels in order to make it age appropriate:
Level 1: Ages 5-8 (K-3rd grades)
Level 2: Ages 9-12 (4-7th grades)
Level 3: Ages 13-17 (8-12th grades)



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