

# The Voice In The Wilderness

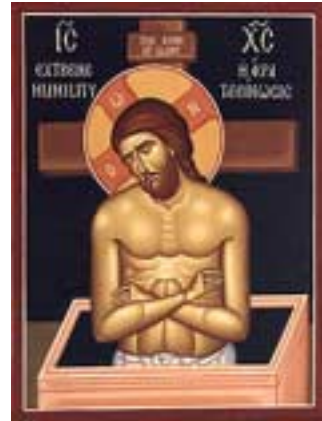
*"A voice crying in the wilderness:  
Prepare ye the way of the LORD..."  
Matthew 3:3*

The Newsletter of St. John the Forerunner Antiochian Orthodox  
Christian Church, the Diocese of Wichita and Mid-America, an  
Orthodox Christian witness to Cedar Park and Central Texas.

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## A Guide to Holy Week and Pascha 2006 St John the Forerunner Antiochian Orthodox Church Cedar Park, Texas

### HOLY WEEK SCHEDULE April 16 – April 23

<b>Palm Sunday</b>	8:00 am	Orthros
	10:00 am	Divine Liturgy
	12:30 pm	Church School
	7:00 pm	Bridegroom Service
<b>Monday</b>	9:00 am	Presanctified Liturgy
	7:00 pm	Bridegroom Service
<b>Tuesday</b>	9:00 am	Presanctified Liturgy
	7:00 pm	Bridegroom Service
<b>Wednesday</b>	9:00 am	Presanctified Liturgy
	7:00 pm	Unction Service
<b>Thursday</b>	9:00 am	Vesperal Liturgy of St. Basil
	7:00 pm	Service of 12 Gospels
<b>Friday</b>	9:00 am	Royal Hours
	3:30 pm	Descent from the Cross Vespers
	7:00 pm	Lamentations
<b>Saturday</b>	9:00 am	Vesperal Liturgy
	11:00 pm	Rush Service
<b>Pascha</b>	12:00 am	Paschal Liturgy
	2:00 am	Paschal Potluck
	2:00 pm	Agape Vespers with Picnic

# ΚΥΡΙΑΚΗ ΤΩΝ ΒΑΙΩΝ PALM SUNDAY

## APOLYTIKION:

Giving us before Thy passion an assurance of the general resurrection, Thou hast raised Lazarus from the dead, O Christ our God. Therefore, like children, we carry tokens of victory, and cry to Thee the Conqueror of death: Hosanna in the Highest; blessed is He that comes in the Name of the Lord.

Palm Sunday summons us to behold our king, the Word of God made flesh. We are called to behold Him not simply as the One who came to us once riding on a colt, but as the One who is always present in His Church, coming ceaselessly to us in power and glory at every Eucharist, in every prayer and sacrament, and in every act of love, kindness and mercy. He comes to free us from all our fears and insecurities, "to take solemn possession of our soul, and to be enthroned in our heart." He comes not only to deliver us from our deaths by His death and resurrection, but also to make us capable of attaining the most perfect fellowship or union with Him. He is the king, who liberates us from the darkness of sin and the bondage of death. Palm Sunday summons us to behold our king: the vanquisher of death and the giver of life.



The kingdom of God is the life of the Holy Trinity in the world. It is the kingdom of holiness, goodness, truth, beauty, love, peace and joy. These qualities are not works of the human spirit. They proceed from the life of God and reveal God. Christ Himself is the kingdom. He is the God-Man, Who brought God down to earth. "He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, yet the world knew Him not. He came to His own home, and His own people received Him not." (John 1:10-11).

Gospel According to St John 12:1-18

On Sunday Evening we celebrate the Orthros of Great Monday .

# ΜΕΓΑΛΗ ΔΕΥΤΕΡΑ GREAT MONDAY

The first part of Great Week presents us with an array of themes based chiefly on the last days of Jesus's Earthly life. The Scripture lessons, hymns, commemorations and ceremonials that make up the festal elements in the respective services of the Cycle highlight significant aspects of salvation history, by calling to mind the events that anticipated the Passion and by proclaiming the inevitability and significance of the Parousia.

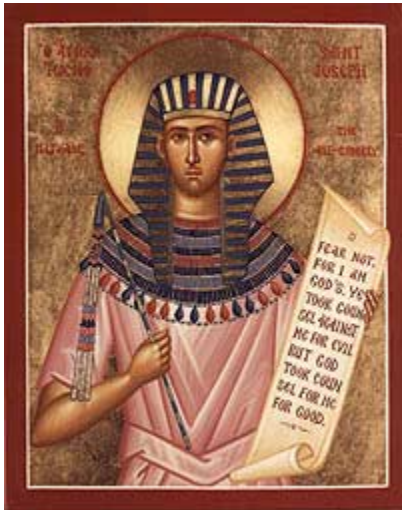
The Orthros of these days (beginning on Palm Sunday evening which is the Orthros of Holy Monday) is called the **Service of the Bridegroom**. The Kingdom of God is compared to a bridal feast and a bridal chamber. The Christ of the Passion is the Bridegroom of the Church. The imagery connotes the final union of the Lover and the beloved. The last days were especially sorrowful and gloomy. The relentless hostility and opposition to Jesus by the religious authorities had reached unparalleled proportions. In the midst of this painful conflict Jesus revealed aspects of His divine authority by passing judgment on the evil plots and false religiosity of His enemies. No disease of the

spirit is more insidious, deceptive and destructive than false religiosity, which can be defined as religious legalism and exhibitionism. Jesus condemned it outrightly. He warned against those whose lives are measured by ceremonials rather than the holiness, mercy and love of God; and those whose evil motivations, intentions and improprieties are cloaked in the respectability of the externals of religious faith and life. False religiosity is a cruel hoax and a betrayal of authentic religious faith. The practitioners of such artificial faith "shut the Kingdom of Heaven against men, for they neither enter themselves nor do they allow those who would enter go in."

The tone of Great Week is clearly one of *somberness and sorrowfulness*. The liturgical assembly is not gathered to mourn a dead hero, but to remember and commemorate an event of cosmic significance: the Son of God experiencing in His humanity every form of suffering at the hands of feeble, misdirected and evil men. We mourn our sinfulness as we stand in contrite silence before the awesome, inscrutable mystery of Christ, the God-Man who carries his kenosis to the extreme limits accepting the death of the cross.

Great Week reveals to us the utter shame of the Fall, the depths of Hell, Paradise lost, and the absence of God. And so we mourn! There is no other way to deal with our rebellion and with God's unfathomable humility and condescension except to experience the rending of the heart. It is out of this kind of mourning that true repentance is born. to be experienced as the honest commitment to the life-long process of grasping, accepting and choosing to follow the values of the Christian life.

The liturgy of the days of the Bridegroom represents the most urgent and emphatic call to such repentance. The faithful are reminded that no sin is so great as to defy the bounds of divine mercy, for Christ gives everyone the power to slay sin and to share in His victory.



#### ORTHROS OF GREAT MONDAY (celebrated on Palm Sunday Evening)

*On Great Monday* we commemorate Joseph the Patriarch, the beloved Son of Jacob (Genesis 37-50). Because of his exceptional qualities and remarkable life, our patristic and liturgical tradition portrays Joseph as a *typos Christou*, a prototype, prefigurement or image of Christ. The story of Joseph illustrates the mystery of God's providence, promise and redemption. Innocent, chaste and righteous, his life bears witness to the power of God's love and promise. The lesson learned from Joseph's life is summed up in the word he addressed to his brothers who previously betrayed him, "*Fear not.. As for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, to bring about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today. So do not fear; I will provide for you and your little ones.*" (Gen 50:19-21). The commemoration of the noble, blessed and saintly Joseph reminds us that in the great events of the Old Testament, the Church recognizes the realities of the New Testament.

Also on Great Monday we commemorate the cursing of the fig tree. The fig tree is symbolic of Christ's judgment on the faithless, unrepentant, unloving will be certain and decisive on the Last Day. It also makes it clear that nominal Christianity is not only inadequate, it is also despicable and unworthy of God's kingdom. Genuine Christian faith is dynamic and fruitful.

#### GOSPEL READING : According to St. Matthew 21:18-43

*EXAPOSTEILARION:* I see your bridal chamber all bedecked, my Savior; but I have no fit wedding garment to venture in. O Giver of Light, make my soul's attire radiant and save me.

#### VESPERS OF GREAT MONDAY (celebrated on Great Monday Morning)

In our parish the Pre-Sanctified Liturgy is celebrated on the first three days of Great Week.. In the development of the Pre-Sanctified Liturgy, Wednesdays and Fridays were observed with a total fast, which meant complete

abstinence from food and drink until the late afternoon. This practice was especially true for Great Lent. The total fast signified both the spiritual concentration and expectation of an approaching joy as well as the last and ultimate preparation for a decisive spiritual event and feast. For this reason a total fast was observed also in preparation for Holy Communion.

From early times it was considered inappropriate to celebrate the Eucharist on fast days. The reason for this is based on the understanding of the Holy Eucharist as the feast of the Church. Inasmuch as the celebration of the Eucharist constitutes a feast (the spiritual banquet), it is incompatible with fasting. While fasting signifies the way toward the fullness, the Eucharist is the manifestation of that fullness.

The combination of these factors resulted in the development of the Liturgy of the Pre-Sanctified Gifts. The gifts of the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ are consecrated at the Sunday Liturgy and are distributed during the fast days. The Pre-Sanctified Liturgy manifests vividly the spirit of joyous-sorrow which characterizes the Orthodox Lenten Season and Great Week.

## ΜΕΓΑΛΗ ΤΡΙΤΗ GREAT TUESDAY

**TROPARION** Behold! The Bridegroom sets forth in the dead of the night. And blessed is that servant whom he shall find on watch; unworthy the one he shall come upon sleeping. See to it, O my soul, that sleep does not overtake you, lest you be given up to death and be shut out of the kingdom. Rouse yourself then, and sing out: "Holy, Holy, Holy are You, our God, through the prayers of the Forerunner\*, save us." \*St John the Baptist, the Forerunner (*Prodromos*)

**The Synaxarion:** *On the Holy and Great Tuesday we remember the parable of the ten virgins from the Holy Gospel. This greatest of Tuesdays brings to mind ten virgins, bearing the victory of the just Master. O bridegroom Christ, count us among the prudent maidens, and include us in Your chosen flock, showing mercy on us. Amen.*



ORTHROS OF GREAT TUESDAY (celebrated on Great Monday Evening)

*On the Great and Holy Tuesday*, the Church calls to remembrance two parables. The one is the parable of the ten Virgins (Mt 25:1-3); the other, the parable of the Talents (Mt 25:14-30). From these parables we learn two basic lessons. The first is that Judgment Day will be upon us unexpectedly and to be ready for it. The time that one decides for God is now and not some undefined point in the future. The tragedy of the closed door at the marriage feast is that it is of our own making and that we close it-- not God. Secondly we are reminded that watchfulness and readiness signify spiritual alertness, attentiveness, and vigilance.

**GOSPEL READING:** According to St. Matthew (22:15-46 and 23:1-29)



# ΜΕΓΑΛΗ ΤΕΤΑΡΤΗ GREAT WEDNESDAY

TROPARION

Behold! The Bridegroom sets forth in the dead of the night. And blessed is that servant whom he shall find on watch; unworthy the one he shall come upon sleeping. See to it, O my soul, that sleep does not overtake you, lest you be given up to death and be shut out of the kingdom. Rouse, yourself then, and sing out: "Holy, Holy, Holy are You, our God, through the prayers of the Theotokos, save us."

The Synaxarion:

*On the Holy and Great Wednesday the Holy Fathers have decreed the commemoration of the sinful woman who anointed the Lord with myrrh, as this occurred shortly before His saving Passion.*

*A woman pouring myrrh over Christ's body anticipated the embalming by Nicodemus.*

*Anointed with spiritual myrrh, Christ our God, free us from the passions that overwhelm, and be merciful to us as the One who alone is holy and loves mankind. Amen.*

ORTHROS OF GREAT WEDNESDAY (celebrated on Great Tuesday Evening)

*On the Great and Holy Wednesday*, the Church calls to remembrance the sinful woman who anointed the head and feet of Jesus shortly before the passion and of Judas, the disciple who betrayed the Lord. The woman acknowledged Jesus as the Lord, the other severed himself from the Master. The one was set free, while the other became a slave. The one inherited the kingdom, the other fell into perdition.

*Freedom* belongs to the nature and character of a human being because he has been created in the image of God. Man and his true life is defined by his uncreated Archetype, who, according to the Greek Fathers, is Christ. Freedom is not a contrivance of human ingenuity and cleverness, but a divine gift. Man is free because his being has been sealed with the image of God. He has been endowed with and possesses divine qualities. The elemental exercise of freedom lies in one's conscious decision and desire to fulfill his vocation to become a person or to deny it; to become a being of communion or an entity unto death; to become a Saint or a devil.

Since man is able to resist God and turn away from Him, he can diminish and disfigure God's image in him to the extreme limits. He is able to misuse, abuse, distort, pervert, and debase the natural powers and qualities with which he has been endowed. He is capable of sin. Sin turns him into a fraud and imposter. It limits his life to the level of biological existence, robbing it of divine splendor and capacity. Lacking faith and moral judgment, man is capable of turning freedom into license, rebellion, intimidation and enslavement.

Sin is more than breaking rules and transgressing commandments. It is the willful rejection of a personal relationship with the living God. It is separation and alienation; a way of death. Sin is the denial of God and the forfeiting of Heaven. It is the seduction, abduction, and captivity of the souls through provocations of the devil, through pride and mindless pleasures. Hell is man's free choice; it is when he imprisons himself in an agonizing lack of life, and deliberately refuses communion with the loving goodness of God, the true life. To sin is to miss the mark, to fail to realize one's vocation and destiny. It brings disorder and fragmentation. It diminishes life and causes the most pure and noble parts of our nature to end up as passions.

*Repentance*, on the other hand, is a deliberate choice and act. It is a gift bestowed by Christ, who takes us unto Himself through His Church, in order to forgive, heal and restore us to wholeness. The gift he gives us is a new and clean heart.

The process of healing and restoring our damaged, broken, wounded and fallen nature is on-going. God is merciful and long-suffering towards His creation. He accepts repentant sinners tenderly and rejoices in their conversion. The act of repentance is not some kind of cheerless, morbid exercise. It is a joy-bringing event and enterprise, which frees the conscience from the burdens and anxieties of sin and makes the soul rejoice in the truth and love of God. From the interior sorrow it proceeds to the verbal acknowledgement of the concrete sins before God and the witness of His Church. The repentant sinner turns freely towards God in an attitude of love and trust. Then he focuses his truest and deepest self, his heart, continually on Christ, in order to become like Him. Experiencing the embracing love of God as freedom and transfiguration, he authenticates his own personal existence and shows heartfelt concern and compassion and love for others.

Toward the end of the Orthros of Great Wednesday the *Hymn of Kassiane* is chanted.

Lord, the woman caught in a multitude of sins, sensing Your divinity, assumes the duty of a myrrh bearer; lamenting, she provides myrrh in anticipation of Your burial. "Woe to me!" she cries, "for me night is a frenzy of excess, dark and moonless, a love affair with sin. You draw from the clouds the waters of the sea; will You accept the source of my tears? In Your inexpressible condescension You made the heavens bend down, incline now to the groaning of my heart. I will cover Your spotless feet with kisses, then dry them with the tresses of my head. Eve heard those footfalls in the twilight of Paradise and hid herself in fear. Who can fathom the magnitude of my transgressions, or the depths of your judgments, O Savior of my soul. In your boundless mercy do not reject me Your servant.

**GOSPEL READING:** According to St. John (12:17-50)

VESPERS OF GREAT WEDNESDAY are celebrated on Great Wednesday Morning and include the Pre-Sanctified Liturgy.

## ΜΕΓΑΛΗ ΠΕΜΠΤΗ GREAT THURSDAY



**The Synaxarion:**

*On the Holy and Great Thursday it seems good to the Holy Fathers and in what was handed to us by the holy Apostles to celebrate four events: the washing of the feet, the Mystical Supper, the agonizing Prayer and the Seizing of the Lord.*

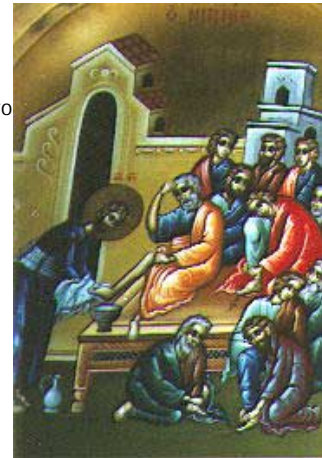
*On the Great and Holy Thursday* the focus of the Church turns to the events that occurred in the Upper Room and at the garden of Gethsemane. In the Upper Room, Jesus established and instituted the Mystery of the Holy Eucharist. At the Mystical Supper, He gave a radically new meaning to the food and drink of the sacred meal. He identified Himself with the bread and wine: *"Take, eat, this is my Body.... Drink of it all of you, for this is my Blood of the New Covenant."*

We have learned to equate food with life because it sustains our earthly existence. In the Eucharist the distinctively unique human food--- bread and wine--- becomes our gift of life. Consecrated and sanctified, the bread and wine become the Body and Blood of Christ. This change is not physical but mystical and sacramental. While the qualities of bread and wine remain, we partake of the true Body and Blood of Christ. In the eucharistic meal God enters into such a communion of life that He feeds humanity with His own being, while still remaining distinct. In the words of St. Maximos the Confessor, Christ, "transmits to us divine life, making Himself eatable." The Author of Life shatters the limitations of our createdness, Christ acts that "we might become sharers of divine nature."

The Eucharist is at the center of the Church's life. It is her most profound prayer and principal activity. It is at one and the same time the source and the summit of her life. In the Eucharist, the Church manifests her true nature and is continuously changed from a human community into the Body of Christ, the Temple of the Holy Spirit, and the People of God. In the Eucharist the Church remembers and enacts sacramentally the redemptive event of the Cross and participates in its saving grace. The Eucharist goes not repeat what cannot be repeated. Christ is not slain anew and repeatedly. Rather the Eucharistic food is changed concretely and really into the Body and Blood of the Lamb of God, "Who gave Himself up for the life of the world." In the Eucharist we receive and partake of the resurrected Christ. We share in His sacrificed, risen and deified Body, "for the remission of sins and life eternal." In the Eucharist Christ pours into us-- as a permanent and constant gift-- the Holy Spirit, "Who bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God-- and if children-- then heirs with Christ."

The events initiated by Jesus at the Mystical Supper were profoundly significant. By teaching and giving his disciples His final instructions and praying for them as well, He revealed again His divine Sonship and authority. By establishing the Eucharist, he enshrines to perfection God's most intimate purposes for our salvation, offering Himself as Communion and life. By *washing the feet of His disciples*, He summarized the meaning of His ministry, manifested His perfect love and revealed His profound humility.

The act of washing of the feet (John 12:2-17) is closely related to the sacrifice of the Cross. Both reveal aspects of Christ's kenosis. While the Cross constitutes the ultimate manifestation of Christ's perfect obedience to His Father, the washing of the feet signifies His intense love and the giving of Himself to each person's ability to receive Him.



Another significant episode leading to the Passion was the *prayer and agony* in the Garden of Gethsemane. Although Jesus was the Son of God, He was destined as man to accept fully the human condition, to experience suffering and to learn obedience. Divesting himself of divine prerogatives, the Son of God assumed the role of a servant. He lived a truly human existence. Though He Himself was sinless, He allied Himself with the whole human race, identified with the human predicament and experienced the same tests. The moving events in the Garden of Gethsemane dramatically and poignantly disclosed the human nature of Christ. The sacrifice He was to endure for the salvation of the world was imminent. Death, with all its brutal force and fury, stared directly at Him. Its terrible burden and fear-- the calamitous result of the ancestral sin-- caused Him intense sorrow and pain. Instinctively, as a man He sought to escape it. He found Himself in a moment of decision. In His agony he prayed to His Father: "*Abba, Father, all things are possible to Thee; remove this cup from me; yet not what I will, but what Thou will.*"

Jesus offered His unconditional love and trust to the Father. He reached the extreme limits of self-denial-- "not what I will"-- in order to accomplish His Father's will. His acceptance of death was not some kind of stoic passivity and resignation but an act of absolute love and obedience. In that moment of decision, when He declared His acceptance of death to be in agreement with the Father's will, he broke the power of the fear of death with all its attending uncertainties anxieties and limitations. He learned obedience and fulfilled the divine plan.

**Prayer** is the power that fuels the spiritual life. As breathing, eating, drinking, and thinking are essential to human existence, prayer is a fundamental element and activity of the Christian life. Authentic Orthodox spirituality is constituted by a vibrant prayer life rooted in the life of the Church, her faith and her sacraments; and related, as well, to the practice of fasting, which is seen primarily as obedience to and love for God, the transformation of the

passions, and acts of charity. Prayer is the most sublime experience of the human soul. Without it the soul is left cold and spiritless. It cannot enter into a sustained personal relationship with God.

Prayer is an act of faith. It brings us to the threshold of another world. Through it we reach and cross the ultimate frontier. We touch another world, which we come to experience as extraordinary peace, beauty, goodness, joy and trust. We encounter the living God and converse with Him. The Holy One, who alone has existence, embraces us with his tender mercy, compassion and love. Divine light penetrates the depths of our soul to reveal our sins, purge our iniquities, heal our brokenness, illumine our intellect, strengthen our will, and gladden our heart.

At the Garden of Gethsemane, Judas betrayed Christ with a kiss, the sign of friendship and love. The betrayal and crucifixion of Christ carried the ancestral sin to its extreme limits. In these two acts the rebellion against God reached its maximum capacity. The seduction of man in paradise culminated in the death of God in the flesh. To be victorious evil must quench the light and discredit the good. In the end, however, it shows itself to be a lie, an absurdity and sheer madness. The death and resurrection of Christ rendered evil powerless.

On Great Thursday light and darkness, joy and sorrow are so strangely mixed. At the Upper Room and in Gethsemane the light of the kingdom and the darkness of hell come through simultaneously. The way of life and the way of death converge. We meet them both in our journey through life.

#### **ORTHROS OF GREAT THURSDAY**

According to present parish practice, the Orthros for Great Thursday has been superseded by the Sacrament of Holy Unction (See Great Wednesday).

#### **VESPERAL LITURGY OF ST. BASIL (Celebrated on Great Thursday Morning)**

The Vespereal Liturgy of St. Basil the Great is celebrated and we recall in the Gospel readings the institution of the Holy Eucharist, the Washing of the Feet of the Disciples, the Agony in the Garden of Gethsemane and the Betrayal by Judas and the Trial before the Sanhedrin.

During the Preparation for the Liturgy another Lamb is cut from the Prosphora and consecrated that it may become the reserved Sacrament for the sick.

**GOSPEL READING: St Matthew 26:2-20; St John 13:3-17; St Matthew 26:21-39, St Luke 22:43-45; St Matthew 26:40-27:2**

#### **KOINONIKON**

Receive me today, Son of God, as a partaker of Your mystical supper; for I will not reveal Your mystery to Your enemies, nor give you a kiss as did Judas. But as the thief I confess to You: Lord, remember me in Your kingdom.

Pascha {Easter} preparations begin on Holy Thursday when the traditional Easter bread, tsoureki, is baked, and eggs are dyed red (red is the color of life as well as a representation of the blood of Christ).

# ΜΕΓΑΛΗ ΚΑΙ ΑΓΙΑ ΠΑΡΑΣΚΕΥΗ GREAT AND HOLY FRIDAY



Glory to Your Forebearance, O Lord, Glory to You

## TROPARION:

As the glorious disciples, in the washing of the feet, were enlightened, the profane Judas, ravaged by greed, was benighted. And to the lawless judges he surrenders You, the Just Judge. Consider, you who love money, the one who hanged himself for the sake of it. Shun the insatiate heart that could dare such a deed against the Teacher. Lord, benevolent above all humans, glory to You.

## APOLYTIKION:

You have ransomed us from the curse of the law by Your precious Blood. Nailed to the Cross and pierced with the lance, You have poured forth immortality on mankind. Glory to You, our Savior.

## The Synaxarion:

*On the Holy and Great Friday we commemorate the holy, saving and awesome Passion of our Lord and God and Savior Jesus Christ: that he was spat upon, scourged, struck, ridiculed and mocked. We remember, too, the purple robe, the rod, the sponge, the vinegar, the nails, the lance; and above all, the Cross and death-- all of which He willingly endured for us. Further we remember the saving confession of the grateful thief who was crucified with Him,*

*You are the living God, though put to death on the Tree, Though naked and dead, You are the Word of the living God.*

*The Thief opened the locked doors of Eden, using as the key "Remember me."*

*In Your marvelous and infinite compassion, Christ our God, have mercy on us. Amen.*

*On Great Friday the Church remembers the ineffable mystery of Christ's death.* Death -- tormenting, indiscriminate, universal-- casts its cruel shadow over all creation. It is the silent companion of life. It is present in everything, ready to stifle and impose limits upon all things. The fear of death causes anguish and despair. It shackles us to the appearances of life and makes rebellion and sin erupt in us. Death is an abomination, the final indignity, the ultimate enemy. It is not of God but of men. Death is the natural fruit of the old Adam who alienated himself from the source of life and made death a universal destiny, whose very fear perpetuates the agony of sin. It was through one man that sin entered the world and through sin death, and thus death pervaded the whole human race.

The day of Christ's death is the day of sin. The sin which polluted God's creation from the breaking dawn of time reached its frightful climax on the hill of Golgotha. There sin and evil, destruction and death came into their own.

Ungodly men had Him nailed to the cross, in order to destroy Him. However, His death condemned irrevocably the fallen world by revealing its true and abnormal nature.

In Christ, who is the New Adam, there is no sin. And, therefore, there is no death. He accepted death because He assumed the whole tragedy of our life. He chose to pour His life into death, in order to destroy it; and in order to break the hold of evil. His death is the final and ultimate revelation of His perfect obedience and love. He suffered for us the excruciating pain of absolute solitude and alienation-- "My God, my God, why has Thou forsaken me!" Then he accepted the ultimate horror of death with the agonizing cry, "*It is finished.*" His cry was at one and the same time an indication that He was in control of His death and that His work of redemption was accomplished, finished, fulfilled. How strange! While our death is radical unfulfillment, His is total fulfillment.

The day of Christ's death has become our true birthday. "Within the mystery of Christ dead and resurrected, death acquires positive value. Even if physical, biological death still appears to reign, it is no longer the final stage in a long destructive process. It has become the indispensable doorway, as well as the sure sign of our ultimate Pascha, our passage from death to life, rather than from life to death."

From the beginning the Church observed an annual commemoration of the decisive and crucial three days of sacred history, Great Friday, Great Saturday and Pascha. Great Friday and Great Saturday have been observed as days of deep sorrow and strict fast from Christian antiquity. Liturgically, the profound and awesome event of the death and burial of God in the flesh is marked by a peculiar kind of silence--- by the absence of a eucharistic celebration. Great Friday and Great Saturday are the only two days of the year when no eucharistic assembly is held.

#### ORTHROS OF GREAT FRIDAY (Celebrated on Great Thursday evening)

This service is the longest of all divine services currently used by the Church. Its first outstanding and unique feature is that it contains a series of twelve Gospel readings and thus it is known by the pious as the "*Service of the Twelve Gospels*".

First Gospel reading: According to St. John 13:21-18:1

*1st Antiphon: The rulers of the people take counsel together, against the Lord, and against his Anointed*

*A lawless accusation is laid against me, Lord, O Lord, forsake me not*

*Let us present our pure affections to Christ, and as His friends, through Him, make an offering of our souls. Let us not, like Judas, choke ourselves with the cares of this world, but from the treasuries of our hearts let us cry: Our Father who are in Heaven, deliver us from evil.*

Second Gospel Reading: According to St. John 18:1-28

Third Gospel Reading: According to St. Matthew 26:57-75

*9th Antiphon: They set a value of thirty pieces of silver on the One who is beyond value, as His own people appraised Him. Watch and pray, that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit is indeed willing, but the flesh is weak.*

*For food they offered me gall, and vinegar for my thirst. But You, O LOrd, raise me up and I will repay them.*

Fourth Gospel Reading According to St. John 18:28- 19:16

*12th Antiphon: Thus says the Lord to His countrymen: "My people, what have I done to you or how have I disturbed you? I gave light to your blind; your lepers I cleansed; a bed-ridden man I raised up. My people, what have I done for you, and how have you repayed me? In place of the manna you gave me gall; instead of water, vinegar; instead of*

*loving me you nailed me to the Cross. No longer then can I endure. I will summon to me the nations and they will glorify me, together with the Father and the Spirit. And to them I will grant eternal life."*

*Today the veil of the temple is rent as a reproach to the lawless. And the sun hides its rays as it witnesses the Master crucified.*

*Pharisees and lawgivers of Israel, the company of the Apostles calls out to you: "Behold the temple which you have destroyed; behold the lamb whom you have crucified. You consigned Him to the tomb, but by His own power He arose. Do not deceive yourselves. For it is He who saved you from the sea and fed you in the wilderness. He is life and light and the peace of the world."*

5th Gospel: According to St. Mathew 27:3-32

At the 15th Antiphon the *Estauromenos*, the Cross with the icon of the Crucified Christ is taken out of the Sanctuary and, as the faithful kneel, carried in procession around the Church and placed in the middle of the solea.

*Today is hung upon the Tree, He who suspended the earth amid the waters.*

*A crown of thorns crowns Him, Who is the King of Angels. He is wrapped in the purple of mockery, Who wrapped the heavens with clouds. He is buffeted with blows, Who freed Adam in the Jordan. He is transfixed with nails, Who is the Bridegroom of the Church. He is pierced with a lance, Who is the Virgin's Son.*

*We worship Your Passion, O Christ, Show us also Your glorious Resurrection.*

6th Gospel: According to St. Mark 15:16-32

*Prokeimenon: They divided my garments among them, and cast lots for my clothing*

7th Gospel: According to St. Matthew 27:33-54

8th Gospel: According to St. Luke 23:32-49

*Oikos: Seeing her own Lamb led to the slaughter, Mary, the Virgin Mother, followed with the other women, crying out: "Where do You go, Child? For whose sake are You in such haste? Might there be another marriage at Cana, and You are hurrying there to turn the water into wine for them? Shall I come with You, Son, or would You rather I wait? Speak but a word, O Word; do not pass me by in silence, You Who kept me pure. For You are my Son and my God."*

9th Gospel: According to St. John 19:25-37

10th Gospel: According to St. Mark 15:43-47

11th Gospel: According to St. John 19:38-42

*Aposticha: All creation was transformed by awe as it beheld You hanging on a Cross. The sun went dark, and the earth was shaken to its very foundation. All things suffered with Him Who is the Maker of All things. Lord, Lord, You suffered willingly for us; Glory to You.*

12th Gospel: According to St. Matthew 27:62-66

## THE ROYAL HOURS OF GREAT FRIDAY (Celebrated on Great Friday Morning)

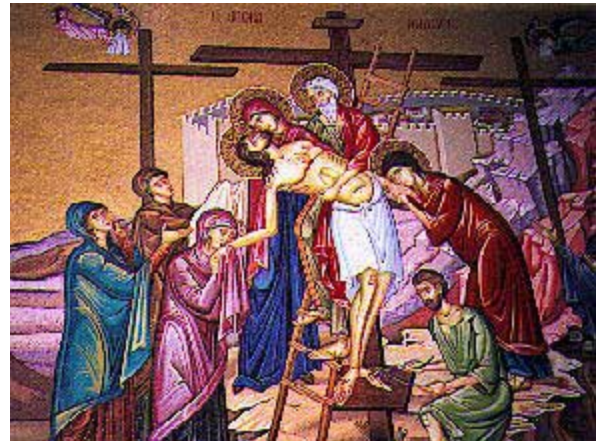
On the Great Friday the Royal Hours (deriving the name from Psalms 5 and 2) are celebrated in the absence of a eucharistic assembly. On the Great Friday the normal service of the Hours are expanded to include a Prophecy, Epistle and Gospel reading.

Traditional foods eaten on Holy Friday are tahinosoupa, a soup made with tahini, lettuce with vinegar, and lentil soup. Traditionally, women and children take flowers to the church to decorate the Epitaphios (the symbolic bier of Christ).

# ΜΕΓΑ ΚΑΙ ΑΓΙΟΙ Ι CABBATON GREAT AND HOLY SATURDAY

## THE VESPERS OF GREAT SATURDAY (Celebrated on Great Friday Afternoon)- THE APOKATHELOSIS- The Unnailing from the Cross

On the afternoon of the Great and Holy Friday, the service of Great Vespers of the Great Saturday\* is celebrated with great solemnity. This service concludes the remembrance of the Lord's passion, and leads us towards watchful expectation as we contemplate the Lord's descent into Hades, the theme of Great Saturday. Known as the *Apokathelosis*, a named derived from the re-enactment of the deposition of Christ from the Cross and of the Procession of the *Epitaphios* (the icon depicting the burial of Christ. This rite originated in the Church of Antioch and during the course of the nineteenth century came to the Church of Constantinople where it received the form we know today.



\* As mentioned in the Holy Week introduction there is about a 12 hour time shift in the services of Holy Week.

### DOXASTI KON:

*Today a strange and fearsome mystery is witnessed. The infinite One is held; the One who loosed the curse of Adam is bound; the One Who tries the inward heart of men is Himself tried; He Who sealed the deeps is sealed in prison; the One before Whom the powers of heaven stand quaking stands before Pilate; the Creator is struck by the hand of the creature; the One Who judges the living and the dead is judged for the Cross; the One Who despoiled Hades is shut up in a tomb. Lord of forbearance, enduring all out of love, saving all from the curse, glory to You.*

After the conclusion of the Gospel reading, the Priest removes the figure of Christ from the Cross and wraps it in a new linen cloth, brought into the altar and laid upon the Holy Table. During the singing of the Aposticha while the faithful kneel, the Priest processes around the Church with the *Epitaphios* and upon the conclusion of the procession places it in the *kouvouklion*, a symbolic tomb decorated with flowers. These flowers will be distributed to the faithful at the conclusion of the Orthros of Great Saturday. This part of the service originated in the fifteenth century.

## THE APOSTICHA

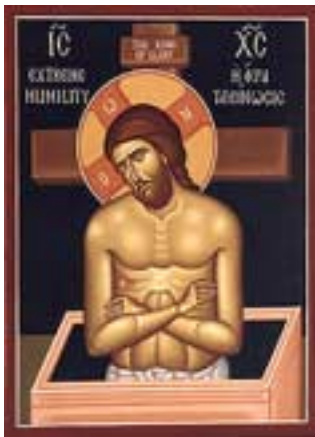
*When the Arimathean lowered You from the Cross, O Christ, the life of all, now dead, he ministered to You with myrrh and linen. Profoundly moved in heart and speech, he hastened to enshroud You, while himself enshrouded in awe yet rejoicing he cried out to You: "Glory to Your condescension, loving God!"*

*When for the sake of all, You the Redeemer of all, were laid in a new tomb, Hades the scornful covered at sight of You. The bolts were broken, the gates shattered, graves opened up, the dead were raised. Then Adam, rejoicing with thanks, cried out to You, "Glory to Your condescension, loving God!"*

*When by Your free will You were closed up bodily in the tomb, yet remained in Your divine nature beyond confining or defining, You closed down the chambers of death and rendered Hades utterly empty, Christ the King. Then did You render the Sabbath worthy of divine blessing and glory, and of Your own splendor.*

*When the heavenly Powers saw You falsely accused as an imposter, and the tombstone sealed by the very hands that lanced Your pure breast, they shuddered at Your indescribable forbearance. yet rejoicing over our salvation, they cried out to You, "Glory to Your condescension, loving God!"*

GOSPEL READING: According to: St. Matthew 27:1-38; St Luke 23:39-43; St Matthew 27:39-54; St John 19:31-37; St Matthew 27:55-61



## ORTHROS OF GREAT SATURDAY (Sung on Great Friday Evening)

### APOLYTIKIA

*Lowering Your pure body from the Cross, Joseph wrapped it in clean linen with fragrant spices and laid it in a new tomb. When You descended into death, Life Immortal, You struck Hades dead with a lightning flash of Divinity; and when You raised up the dead from the underworld, all the heavenly Powers shouted: "O Lifegiver, Christ our God, Glory to You!" Standing by the tomb the angel said to the myrrh-bearing women: "Myrrh is for the dead; but Christ has shown Himself stranger to death."*

### The Synaxarion:

*On the Holy and Great Saturday we celebrate the burial of our Lord, God and Savior Jesus Christ in His divine body, and His descent into Hades, by which our race was called out of death and transported to eternal life.*

*Watchmen, in vain do you guard the tomb. No grave can contain the source of life.*

*In Your inexpressible condescension, Christ our God, have mercy on us. Amen.*

On Great Saturday, the Church contemplates the mystery of the Lord's descent into Hades, the place of the dead. Death, our ultimate enemy, is defeated from within. Our focus is on the Tomb of Christ. This is no ordinary grave. It is not a place of corruption, decay and defeat. It is life-giving, a source of power, victory and liberation. Great Saturday is the day between Jesus's death and His resurrection. It is a day of watchful expectation, in which mourning is being transformed into joy. The day embodies in the fullest possible sense the meaning of *xarmolypti*, joyful-sorrow, which has dominated the celebrations of Holy Week.

Great Saturday is the day of pre-eminent rest. Christ observes a Sabbath rest in the tomb. His rest, however, is not inactivity but the fulfillment of the divine will and plan for the salvation of humankind and the cosmos. He who brought all things into being, makes all things new. the recreation of the world has been accomplished once and for all. Through His incarnation, life and death, Christ has filled all things with Himself. He has opened a path for all flesh to the resurrection from the dead, since it is not possible that the Author of Life would be dominated by corruption.

The solemn observance of Great Saturday helps us to recall and celebrate the great truth that "despite the daily vicissitudes and contradictions of history and the abiding presence of hell within the human heart and human society," life has been liberated! Christ has broken the power of death. The death of Christ is the greatest miracle as well as the ultimate manifestation of God's boundless love for the whole creation. It is no mere man who died. The One who was laid in the tomb is none other than the eternal deathless Word of God, who taking on flesh humbled Himself, obediently accepting even death, death on a cross.

It is not without significance that the icon of the Resurrection in our Church is the Descent of Christ into Hades, the place of the dead. This icon depicts a victorious Christ, reigning in glory, trampling upon death, and seizing Adam and Eve in His hands, plucking them from the abyss of hell.

This is the only day in the entire liturgical year that the Church may not assemble for a eucharistic celebration. Sadly, this prohibition has been inadvertently circumvented by a faulty liturgical practice, caused by the gradual shift of the Paschal Vesperal Liturgy to the morning hours of Great Saturday.

On Friday evening the faithful gather around the *kouvouklion* which is decorated with flowers in which is placed the icon of the Burial of Christ, the *Epitaphios*. The *engomia* are sung which are short poetic verses lamenting the passion, death and burial of Christ. They are divided into three stasis or stanzas, which according to the liturgical texts number 185. In parish usage the numbers are greatly reduced.

After the *Engomia* are sung the *Evlogitaria* are sung. In the liturgical tradition of the Orthodox Church there are two types, the resurrectional (which are prescribed for Sundays) and the funereal (which are prescribed for funerals and memorial services). Even though we are observing the burial of Christ, the resurrectional *evlogitaria* are chanted. The reason for this is clear. On Great Saturday we contemplate the defeat of death. The Author of Life is trampling down Hades and is transforming death into life. Funeral hymns are not appropriate to Him Who is the source and giver of life. Also the funeral *evlogitaria* presuppose deceased Christians and are not appropriate for Christ.

The procession of the epitaphios takes place at the conclusion of the Doxology and is usually conducted outside the Church. During the procession it is customary to sing the Trisagion- *Aghios o Theos* in a solemn manner and there are usually three or four stops where the Priest intones portions of the Fervent Litany. In many places it is customary that the people pass under the Epitaphios as they reenter the Church. By this practice, we express the belief that we have already passed from death to life.

Upon the Return of the Epitaphios into the Church, the Priest removes it from the Kouvouklion and places it on the Holy Table to remain there until the Apodosis of Pascha (Wednesday before the Ascension).

ΑΝΑΓΓΕΛΙΟΝ ΗΜΕΡΑ  
ΚΥΡΙΑΚΗ ΤΟΥ ΠΑΣΧΑ  
DAY OF RESURRECTION  
SUNDAY OF PASCHA

## DEATH AND RESURRECTION

Great Week comes to an end at sunset of Great Saturday, as the Church prepares to celebrate her most ancient and preeminent festival, Pascha, the Feast of Feasts. The time of preparations will give way to the time of fulfillment. The glorious and resplendent light emanating from the Empty Tomb will dispel the darkness. Christ, risen from the dead, cracks the fortress of death and takes "captivity, captive" All the limitations of our createdness are torn asunder. Death is swallowed up in victory and life is liberated. "For as by a man came death, by a man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive." Pascha is the dawn of the new and unending day.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the fundamental truth and absolute fact of the Christian faith. It is the central experience and essential kerygma of the Church. It confirms the authenticity of Christ's remarkable earthly life and vindicates the truth of His teaching. It seals all of His redemptive work. Christ's resurrection is the guarantee of our salvation. Together with His ascension it brings to perfection God's union with us for all eternity.

The resurrection made possible the miracle of the Church which in every age and generation proclaims and affirms "God's plan for the universe, the ultimate divinization of man and the created order." The resurrection has not yet abolished the reality of death. But it has revealed its powerlessness. We continue to die, because we die out, as a result of the Fall. Our bodies decay and fall away. God allows death to exist but turns it against corruption and its cause sin, and sets a boundary both to corruption and sin. Physical death does not destroy our life of communion with God. Rather, we move from death to life; from this fallen world to God's reign. Death disrupts and dissolves the fundamental unity of the human person, created by God as a single psycho-physical organism made of both soul and body. The separation of body and soul is the death of man himself, the discontinuation of his existence. Death and corruption of the body are a sort of falling away of the "image of God" in man. It is precisely here that we discover the meaning of Christ's resurrection as the abolishment of Hades and the reintegration of human nature.

Hades, "the place of hopeless disembodiment and disincarnation", has been abolished by Christ's resurrection. In Christ all human nature is fully and completely cured from unwholeness and mortality. This restoration will be actualized and revealed to its full extent in the general resurrection. Christ has healed out dreadful brokenness and tragic unfulfillment. Every death, every separation of soul and body, every disembodiment is temporary, for all will rise. Therefore, dying is no longer a defeat. The death of the body becomes a sleep and death itself the gate to life. In Christ the life of the flesh is being continuously transfigured into a life of the spirit. The Holy Spirit sows the seed of immortality into our bodies and renews our souls daily.

God wants to make us gods by grace, men that we are, but with out consent and not against our will. The miracle of Pascha, with its promise and gift of eternity and plenitude, is always accessible to everyone. However, salvation is accomplished only in perfect freedom, through an act of faith. No one can be compelled to believe in or love God. To receive the grace of the Paschal mystery and to keep it operative in us we must want to engage ourselves actively and creatively in the godly life by the power of the Holy Spirit. Salvation does not come about merely as the result of individualistic piety, but through a living and dynamic relationship with the Church. As baptized devout members of the Church we become part of a community which affirms and defines our Christian identity. The faith community reminds us continuously of our vocation and helps us to realize our ultimate destiny. It calls us to abjure the false values of the fallen world and inspires us to seek after all that is noble, good, natural and sinless. It encourages us to struggle against all forms of oppression and unjust conditions which devalue and diminish human life; do more for others in the life of the world; and work for the fulfillment of the Church's vocation in the world.

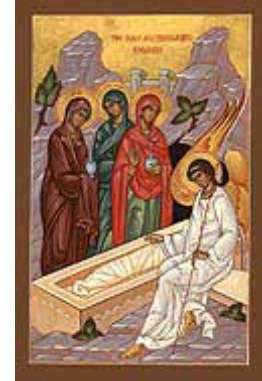
Hell is found on either side of death. It is not a place but a state of being, a state of radical unfulfillment, an act of apostasy, a severance of the ultimate relationship, a deliberate rejection of God. God does not send anyone to hell. Hell is made by the devil and by men who persist in their rebellion against God, His truth and love.

In the early Church, Pascha was considered the most appropriate time for conferring the sacraments of baptism, chrismation and the Eucharist, by which salvation is made one's own personal gift. Through the celebration of the baptismal rites, the Church realizes the cosmic significance of Christ's resurrection. Christ, our true Passover, has made possible our passage from death to life and from the world of sin to the Life of God. At every Divine Liturgy

we live out its implications. We renew repeatedly our baptismal pledge and are formed continuously into the body of Christ. Filled with incomparable hope, we are called to faith and to a mission: to transform both ourselves and the world by furthering the Kingdom of God within us and within the world.

### THE PASCHAL VESPERAL LITURGY (Celebrated on Saturday Morning)

Great Saturday is a day of gloom and watchful expectation. It is a day of profound silence since there is not a Eucharistic celebration. The Liturgy which is celebrated on Saturday morning properly belongs AFTER Sundown on Saturday (The beginning of Sunday according to the Church's reckoning of the time). This Liturgy is Paschal in character and content and the timing of it inadvertently confuses the faithful. By some of the pious faithful it is known as the *Mikri Anastasis*-- the Small Resurrection.



**ARISE, O GOD, AND JUDGE THE EARTH, FOR YOU SHALL INHERIT ALL THE NATIONS**

The Joyous and Paschal nature of this Liturgy cannot be missed. The Priest wears gold vestments and the readings and hymns which permeate the liturgy are very joyful in character. Additionally, this liturgy is one in which new Christians were baptized and received into the Church since we still have vestiges of the baptismal Trisagion, Epistle and Gospel. No where do we observe the sorrow that has been prevalent during Great Week. The Hymn of the Three Youths, sung in refrain, declare the praise of the entire cosmos to God---

***PRAISE THE LORD AND EXALT HIM TO ALL AGES!***

Further instead of the usual Trisagion- *Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal, have mercy on us* we hear the baptismal hymn-- *As many of you as have been baptized in Christ have put on Christ. Alleluia.*

Following the reading of the Baptismal Epistle. Instead of the Usual Alleluia. The Priest takes laurel leaves or flowers and scatters them throughout out the Church as a sign of the Victory over Death by Christ, singing:  
**ARISE, O GOD, AND JUDGE THE EARTH, FOR YOU SHALL INHERIT ALL THE NATIONS!**

The Gospel Reading According to St. Matthew (28:1-20) also declares the Resurrection of Christ by the Angel of the Lord to the Myrrh-bearing women and concludes with the command heard in the Gospel read at Baptisms to "*Go and make disciples of all nations baptising them in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit*".

At the conclusion of the Liturgy the Apolysis- Dismissal is the Usual Resurrectional One: "*May Christ our true God Who rose from the dead....*"

**Greek Tradition:** Special candles made for Easter are called "labatha" (lah-BAH-thah) and are often given as gifts to children from their parents or God-parents. These candles can be lavishly decorated with favorite children's heroes or storybook characters, and may be as much as three feet tall, but the candle itself is usually white. These candles are only used for one Easter midnight service.

**Antiochian Tradition:** Many people in the Middle East get their light for Pascha directly from the Holy Light given at Christ's Tomb in Jerusalem. In respect to this many Antiochian Orthodox Christians in the United States make a special effort to take the Holy Fire from the Pasch service home using seven-day candles. This Holy Fire is kept in the Icon Corner and all candles lit in the home during Bright Week and the Lampada is kindled with this fire and kept lit throughout the year.

## THE ORTHROS AND LITURGY OF PASCHA (Celebrated on Saturday Midnight)

CHRIST IS RISEN FROM THE DEAD, BY DEATH TRAMPLING UPON DEATH AND TO THOSE IN THE TOMBS HE HAS BESTOWED LIFE!

According to prevailing practice in the Antiochian Archdiocese, the faithful gather in the Church around 11:00 PM on Great Saturday Night for the Rush Service also known as the Paschal Vigil. During the Rush the Church is kept dimly lit and in accordance with ancient customs, the candles and lamps are extinguished. The only lamp left burning is the "Sleepless Lamp" in the sanctuary before the Holy Tabernacle where the reserved sacrament is kept. After the apolysis of the Rush Service. The Intermediate Service- The Ceremony of the Light begins. Taking his Paschal Candle, the Priest lights it from the Sleepless Lamp and intones:



*Come and Receive the Light from the Unwaning Light, and Glorify Christ Who is Risen from the dead.*

The Holy Gate opens and the light is distributed to the faithful. When all have lit their candles the service proceeds to the outside of the Church (or if not possible to the Narthex of the Church) and the Gospel According to St. Mark is read (16:1-8). At the conclusion of the Gospel, the Priest begins the Paschal Orthros by intoning the Doxology:

**GLORY TO THE HOLY, CONSUBSTANTIAL, LIFE-GIVING AND UNDIVIDED TRINITY, NOW AND FOREVER AND UNTO THE AGES OF AGES.**

Lifting his candle in the air the Priest declares:

**CHRIST IS RISEN FROM THE DEAD, BY DEATH TRAMPLING UPON DEATH AND TO THOSE IN THE TOMBS HE HAS GIVEN LIFE!**

Upon returning into the Church the Paschal Orthros Continues.

The Synaxarion:

*On the Holy and Great Lord's Day of Pascha, we celebrate life-giving Resurrection of our Lord, God and Savior Jesus Christ.*

*Descending alone to grapple with Hades, Christ emerged with many spoils of victory.*

*To Him be the dominion to the ages of ages Amen.*

EXAPOSTELARION:

*Though you slept as a mortal, You rose in three days as King and Lord, raising Adam from corruption and annulling death. O Pascha of Immortality, salvation of the world!*

DOXASTIKON:

*It is the Day of Resurrection; let us make ourselves resplendent for the festival and embrace one another. Let us say, brethren, even to those who hate us: "Let us all be forgiven in the Resurrection, and so exclaim: Christ is risen from the dead, trampling death by death and to those in the tombs bestowing life!"*

The Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom is celebrated with full Resurrectional splendor.

The Gospel Reading is According to St. John 1:1-17

Instead of a sermon, by tradition, the Paschal Homily of St. John Chrysostom is read. The Lenten Fast is broken in our parish with a Paschal Pot Luck when we gather with the faithful of the parish to exchange the joy of the Lord's Resurrection, to crack the red colored eggs with child-like joy and happiness with the words spoken throughout the world-

**Christos Anesti! Alithos Anesti! (Greek)**    **Christ Is Risen! Indeed He Is Risen! (English)**  
**Christos Voskrese! Vaistinu Voskrese! (Slavonic)**    **Al Massi eh Kam! Hakkan Kam! (Arabic)**

Krystos Voskres! Voistynu Voskres (Ukrainian)    Hristus A Inviat! Adevarat A Inviat! (Romanian)

Christus Surrexerit! Vere Surrexerit! (Latin)    Kristos Vaskrese! Vo-istenu Vaskrese (Serbian)

Kristo Ame Fu Fuka! Kweli Ame Fu Fuka! (Swahili)    Jesu Kristi Ebiliwo! Ezia O Biliwo! (Nigerian)

Ua Ala Hou 'O Kristo! Ua Ala 'I 'O No 'Oia (Hawaiian)

Ha Ri Su To' Su Fuc Katsu! Jitsu Ni Fuc Katsu (Japanese)

Christo Ha Resucitado! En Verdad Ha Resucitado (Spanish)

Christus Ar Uppstaden! Han Ar Verkligen Uppstaden (Swedish)

**Resources:**

GREAT WEEK AND PASCHA IN THE GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH by Fr. A.C. Calivas' Book . Holy Cross Press  
The Services of Holy Week and Easter, Fathers Spencer Kezios and Leonidas Contos Narthex Press  
Holy Week and Easter Fr. George Papadeas, Patmos Press

*The Parish Council of St John the Forerunner Antiochian  
Orthodox Church wishes you a blessed Pascha:*

**ΧΡΙΣΤΟΣ ΑΝΕΣΤΗ!**  
**CHRIST IS RISEN!**

*Father Aidan Wilcoxson    Patty Lewis    Josie Long  
Fr. Dn. Basil Long    Rdr. Randall Mark Trainer    Vera Poe  
Tim & Melinda Treckman    Rob Thurner    John Dunn  
Stephen Bodnarchuk    Will Hampton    Baker Galloway*

*From the  
Pastor's Desk*

ΧΡΙΣΤΟΣ ΑΝΕΣΤΗ!  
CHRIST IS RISEN!

One of the unique things we Orthodox have to contend with is 'Post-Pascha Let-Down'. Great Lent is a really intense time of activity and striving, and, in our community, a lot of folks take it very, very seriously. However, after Pascha, it is always a challenge to retain the blessings that we experience during the lead-up to the feast. But this year, we have a number of wonderful opportunities that will enable us to build on the blessings that we receive during Great Lent and Pascha. Here is a brief run-down of just some of the things that will be going on in our parish:

Frederica Matthews-Greene- That's right! One of the premier Orthodox apologists is returning to St John. She was last with us when Christ The Light-giver Bookstore opened, and, as a result of that event, several people were received into the Church. Khouria Frederica will be speaking at 7pm on the evening of Thomas Sunday, April 30. Please get the word out among your Orthodox friends and be sure and invite all those who need to learn more about the ancient Faith of the Church.

Our Capital Campaign- The theme for our campaign is "Make Firm the Foundations of this House, O Lord!" A great deal of work has already gone into this project, but the whole thing will officially kick-off on The Sunday of the Myrrhbearers, May 7. We are going to be raising \$500,000 for the new addition to our current facility, and what we are going to be striving for throughout the process is "not equal gifts, but equal sacrifice". The campaign will climax on Pentecost Sunday, June 11, but please begin even now to prayerfully consider what our Lord and Master would have you contribute to this exciting and important project.

The Parish Life Conference- This year the event is being sponsored by St George parish in El Paso, and it runs from Thursday, June 15<sup>th</sup> through Sunday, June 18. The parish life conference is a great time to get together with friends from around the diocese; the conference also includes wonderful workshops and beautiful services. For more information, check out this address: [plcinfo@st.george-elpaso.org](mailto:plcinfo@st.george-elpaso.org).

Our Parish Feast Day- Our beloved archpastor, Bishop BASIL will be joining us this year as we celebrate the Nativity of our Patron and Protector, St John. The festal services will begin with Great Vespers at 7pm on Friday, June 23; festal orthros and Hierarchical Divine Liturgy will be served at 8am and 10am on Saturday, June 24. Following Great Vespers at 5pm on Saturday evening, there will be a parish banquet at 7pm, and then Bishop BASIL will also join us for liturgy on Sunday morning. It will be a wonderful time with our Father in Christ, so please mark your calendars and be ready to make your reservations for the banquet (of course, as is always the case in our community, money should never, ever be an issue; even if you are worried that you might not be able to afford the banquet, just let me know, and plan on coming anyway; we will take care of the ticket price, because we want absolutely everyone to be able to have dinner with our bishop).

As you can see, the Paschal season is going to be full of opportunities to build on the blessings of Great Lent and the Feast of Feasts. Instead of Post-Pascha Let-Down, this year we will go from excitement to excitement, from glory to glory!

an unworthy priest  
Aidan +



## *Food For The Kingdom*



Here are some recipes to help you to have a traditional Pascha Celebration in your home. May you have a Blessed Pascha!

### **Red Pascha Eggs**

#### **Ingredients:**

- Uncooked eggs
- Water
- 3/4 cup Vinegar
- Red food dye or coloring
- Vegetable oil
- A few cotton balls

#### **Directions:**

1. Carefully wash and dry each egg.
2. Set a large pot of water to boil.
3. Add a red dye or food coloring and 3/4 cup of vinegar to the water, and boil for a few minutes.
4. Slowly lower the eggs into the pot, and when the water comes to a boil, lower the heat.
5. Let eggs simmer for 15 min., then remove them carefully from the pot. If you plan to cook more eggs, add an additional 2 tbs. vinegar to the water.
6. Wipe cooked eggs with an oil-soaked cotton ball, then wipe each egg with a clean dry cloth.



## **Sweet Greek Easter Bread (Tsourekia)**

Tsourekia is a special sweet bread that is prepared at Pascha. It is usually decorated with a red egg or eggs. These red eggs symbolize the blood of Christ redeeming the world. The bread is braided and a red egg is added. You can use several red eggs and braid the dough in a round pan or in a single braided straight loaf as shown on the left.

### **Ingredients:**

- 3 packages (or 2ozs. of fresh yeast) yeast
- 1/2 cup warm water
- 1 c milk
- 10-11 c flour
- 7 cups eggs
- 1 1/2 cups sugar
- 1 cup (melted) butter
- 1 tablespoon Vanilla
- lemon rind
- 1 or more red dyed eggs

### **Directions:**

1. Dissolve yeast in warm water. Add milk, 1 teaspoon sugar, 1 tablespoon of vanilla, and 2 cups of flour. Stir batter, cover and set in a warm place for about 1 hour.
2. Beat 6 eggs, sugar and lemon rind over hot water.
3. Stir mixture into batter. Add remaining flour.
4. Put dough on floured pastry board and knead, adding the butter, until smooth and elastic.
5. Place in a large buttered bowl and brush surface lightly with melted butter.
6. Cover with a cloth and let it rise in a warm place until it has doubled its size, about 2 hours.
7. Shape dough into long ropes 3/4 to 1 inch diameter and cut into 12 inch lengths.
8. Braid together loosely 3 ropes on a greased baking sheet.
9. Let it rise, covered, until doubled-about 1 hour. Brush with beaten egg and bake in moderate oven 25 to 30 minutes.
10. Note: You may also press into the braids one or more dyed eggs. In addition, you may also sprinkle the breads with sesame seeds and/or shredded almonds.

The Pascha Breads are best with sweet (unsalted butter) or spread with the Pashka sweet cheese. It may be served toasted for breakfast as well as eaten with the Pashka as a dessert for the festal meal.

### A Simple Pashka Cheese.

This easy and delicious sweet Pashka Cheese requires a short preparation time of 25 minutes plus a chilling overnight making it a nice sweet cheese done at the last minute. On the header for this article shows this Pashka decorated. It serves 8.

#### Ingredients:

- 1lb cream cheese
- ¼ cup white granulated sugar
- 1/2tsp pure vanilla extract
- 1/3 cup whipping cream
- ¼ cup blanched almonds, chopped
- ¼ cup golden raisins
- ¼ cup candied fruits, chopped
- 1 piece preserved ginger, chopped glace fruit, angelica, almonds to decorate.

#### Directions:

1. Line a 3 cup mixing bowl with a double thickness of scalded muslin.
2. Beat cheese, sugar and vanilla together until smooth.
3. Lightly whip cream and fold into cheese mixture with almonds, fruit and ginger.
4. Spoon into prepared bowl and fold cloth over. Cover with a saucer and place a weight on top. Chill overnight.
5. Remove weight and plate, unfold cloth and invert the Pascha Cheese on to a serving plate. Peel off muslin.
6. Decorate with glace fruit and nuts. Some people decorate the cheese with fresh spring flowers.



### Russian Easter Bread KULITCH

A cross between brioche and challah, this bread (called *kulich*) is a lightly sweetened, egg-glazed cylinder, often baked in a coffee can to make a tall loaf, then drizzles with a white icing. Sometimes the Russian letters XB or a three bar orthodox cross will be done in icing or colorful candies or candied fruit. The *kulich* would sit proudly in the center of the family Easter basket, surrounded by meats, cheeses, butter, and eggs. It's a central part of the Easter meal, served with sweet Pashka cheese and unsalted butter.

#### Ingredients:

- ¾ cup milk
- ½ cup sugar
- 1 Tbsp. Sugar
- 2 eggs, beaten

- ½ tsp. Salt
- ¼ cup water
- 4 cups sifted flour
- 1 tsp. grated lemon peel
- ½ cup seedless raisins
- 2 Tbsp. chopped citron
- 2 Tbsp. grated orange peel
- 1 pkg. or cake yeast, active dry or compressed
- 2 Tbsp. fine bread crumbs
- ½ cup soft butter

**Directions:**

1. Scald milk, and stir in 1 Tbsp. sugar and ½ tsp. salt.
2. Pour into a large mixing bowl, and stir in 1 cup flour. Add yeast dissolved in water (use warm, not hot, water for active dry yeast, lukewarm water for compressed yeast). Cover, and let rise in a warm place, free from draft for about 45 minutes.
3. Meanwhile, cream the butter and ½ cup sugar, and blend in beaten eggs (setting aside 1 Tbsp. beaten egg to glaze bread later).
4. Stir in remaining 3 cups flour, raisins, citron, orange peel, and lemon peel, and combine with yeast mixture. Turn out onto a floured board, and knead until dough is smooth and elastic.
5. Divide dough into 4 equal parts, and round into balls. Place each ball of dough in a separate well-greased 1-lb. can, such as an empty baked bean, corned beef hash, or coffee can. (Dough should fill each can about ½ full).
6. Cover, and let rise in a warm place, free from draft, until doubled in bulk. Brush top of each with reserved beaten egg, and sprinkle lightly with breadcrumbs.
7. Arrange cans on cookie sheet. Bake in a moderately hot oven (400°F.) for 15 minutes.
8. Reduce heat to moderate (350°F.) and bake 35 to 40 minutes longer.
9. Remove bread from cans and cool on wire racks.
10. Decorate while still warm with confectioner's sugar icing, and sprinkle with chopped nuts.

Recipe makes 4 loaves.

## ST. JOHN'S COMMUNITY NEWS

See Holy Week Calendar on the front of the Newsletter.

***PARISH ACTIVITIES:***

April 30 -Frederica Matthews-Greene Visit- Khouria Frederica will be speaking at 7pm on the evening of Thomas Sunday, April 30.

June 15 - June 18The Parish Life Conference- The parish life conference is in El Paso . this conference includes wonderful workshops and beautiful services and makes a great family vacation.

June 23-25 His Grace Bishop Basil's Annual Visit and our Parish Feast Day- Our beloved archpastor , Bishop BASIL will be joining us this year as we celebrate the Nativity of our Patron and Protector, St John

***PARISH PRAYER LIST:***

**Pray for the Catechumenate:** Carol Lockett, Yvonne Hyma, Katrina Barnard, William Barnard, Rebekah Johns, Robert Mahoney, and Beth Mahoney

**Pray for the Health of Body and Soul** of those who have requested your prayers: Archpriest Stephen Rhudy, Nun Seraphima, Robert John, Landon Lockett, Jasten Morris, Nadia Onjanow, Teresa Anna Sisko, and those who serve in the Armed Forces

# Orthodox Kid's Page



## **Beloved children,**

Today is the most glorious day of the year. Did you see the large candle that father held? Did you hear, over and over, *Christ is Risen! Indeed, He is Risen!* It is a new day—joy is everywhere! Why?

At the beginning of the world, Adam and Eve disobeyed God. Sin and death entered the world. Death and darkness ended every life. We were slaves of death. Today, everything changed. Christ was put to death, but that was not the end of His life! Christ is Risen! Light has overcome the darkness!

Christ appeared to the disciples after His death. He told us that He would be with us, even until the end of the world. Now we can live godly lives knowing that when we die, Christ will give us new life with Him.

We have just celebrated Great and Holy Friday, the day Christ was crucified. On Holy Saturday, while the tomb was closed, Christ went into the realm of the dead and brought back to life those who lived godly lives.

The icon of the Resurrection teaches us that truth. In the icon we see Christ trampling, or stomping,

on the doors of Hades, the place of the dead. Hades is represented by the darkness. The icon shows us that Christ is the winner, or victor, in the battle with darkness, evil, and death. At the Gospel, listen for the words,

*The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.*

Who is Christ raising from the dead? He is grasping the wrists of Adam and Eve. They represent all the godly people who died before Christ.

We also see the godly kings, and the prophets who died before Christ.