



A Practical Guide
to Holy Week
and Pascha





Now that we have finished the forty-day fast of Lent, we pray that we may see the Holy Week of Your Passion, O Lover of humanity, so that during it we may glorify Your great works and Your ineffable plan for our salvation, and that with one heart we may sing: Glory to You, O Lord!
(Presanctified Liturgy, last day of Great Lent)

We have now completed the “forty days which profit our souls” and we look forward to Christ’s Holy Passion and Holy Resurrection. Great Lent is behind us, but our ascetical efforts are not yet finished. Indeed, we increase them even more during these blessed and holy days, and we especially increase our service attendance, with beautiful services morning and night.

There are a lot of guides to Holy Week out there that go into detail about the commemorations of each day and the services offered. This will not be one of them! We encourage you to find such a guide and read it to gain a fuller understanding of this most blessed week. Our goal here is to offer very practical information to supplement those guides. We encourage you to feast on the Liturgical richness of this period and hope that these tips will be helpful!

NOT QUITE HOLY WEEK:
LAZARUS SATURDAY &
PALM SUNDAY

On **Lazarus Saturday**, we commemorate the raising of the friend of Christ, the holy and righteous Lazarus who was four days dead. On **Palm Sunday** we celebrate one of the 12 Great Feasts of the Church – Christ’s triumphant entry into Jerusalem. This **two-day interlude** between Great Lent and Holy Week is festive in nature: there is no strict fasting and fish is permitted on Palm Sunday; in some traditions, caviar is also permitted on Lazarus Saturday.

LAZARUS SATURDAY MORNING: ORTHROS AND LITURGY



You may notice that the services today are very similar to Sunday – this is the only Saturday of the year that is resurrectional in nature. Lazarus Saturday is also one of the traditional baptismal days and so the Trisagion Hymn in the Divine Liturgy is replaced with the baptismal verse from Galatians: “As many as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ, Alleluia.” (Gal 3.27) Join fellow parishioners after the Lazarus Saturday Divine Liturgy to do a deep cleaning of the nave, narthex, and altar; brunch will be provided!

LAZARUS SATURDAY EVENING: GREAT VESPERS

Tonight's Vespers service features the chanting of many hymns about Christ's Triumphant Entry into Jerusalem. You may notice that unlike most Saturday Vespers of the year, there are no resurrectional hymns for Sunday.

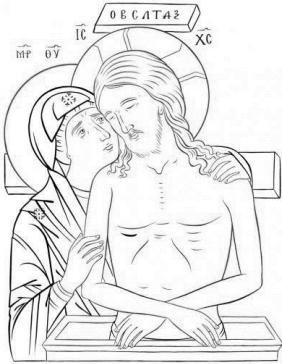
PALM SUNDAY MORNING: ORTHROS & DIVINE LITURGY



Like last night, again, the hymns this morning are not resurrectional, but rather focus on the feast itself. You may also notice that unlike during Great Lent, the Liturgy of St John Chrysostom is celebrated this morning. The palm crosses will be blessed and distributed toward the end of Orthros on Palm Sunday morning – show

up before Liturgy begins in order to be sure not to miss it! Take your palm home with you and place it in your prayer corner in your car, or dispose of it respectfully (burn it, bury it, or place it under a bush).

GREAT AND HOLY WEEK



During Great and Holy Week, the services in most churches are turned a bit upside down from their normal schedule, which allows us to attend the key services while maintaining our daily obligations more easily. Orthros, which is the morning service, is served in anticipation of each day on the evening prior. (So, Sunday night's service commemorates the events of Holy Monday; Holy Monday night, the events of Holy Tuesday, etc.) Vespers and Presanctified Liturgy and Vesperal Liturgy are more properly evening services, but are served in the morning.

Take note also that the Six Psalms that are read at the beginning of every Orthros service each evening this week are traditionally a very solemn time, such that we stand at attention and do not move at all, not even to cross ourselves or bow, and we avoid entering and exiting the church during this time if possible. This is actually the case all throughout the whole year!

A note about fasting:

The week before Pascha, Holy Week, is a special time of fasting separate from Great Lent. Like Clean Week (the first week of Lent), a strict fast is kept. Some people will eat very little, perhaps only one meal per day. All of us do our best to keep a stricter fast this week as we walk with Christ to His Holy Passion. Holy Friday especially is a day of fasting from food. **For specifics, please consult your spiritual father, or ask Fr. John!**

Special considerations for families with children:

Holy Week is a marathon, not a sprint, so pace yourself and do what you can. At the same time, don't underestimate what your children (and all of us!) gain from being in the services and the great *joy* they will feel celebrating Pascha at the end of the week. Some ideas to consider if you have younger children:

- coming late and/or leaving early;
- bringing younger children to evening services in pajamas with a small pillow and blanket to rest on the floor;
- a mid-service break (or two, or three, or four...) for a walk outside or downstairs (the audio of the services are sent to speakers downstairs) and maybe a drink or small snack;
- a mandatory nap for everyone on Holy Saturday afternoon, etc.

Children especially enjoy hearing the bells of the hand censer – the *katzion* – which is used at the very beginning of the Bridegroom Orthros and 12 Gospels services as well as during the Royal Hours. Reach out to other parents and find out what has worked for them – we all have different tricks up our sleeves to share with one another.

Remember that the faithful typically hold candles during the services on Friday night and Saturday night and a battery-powered option (found at most craft stores, and the mission has a small number available as well) works great for keeping the younger crowd safe from burnt hair or worse.

***PALM SUNDAY EVENING: BRIDEGROOM ORTHROS OF
HOLY MONDAY (1 ½ HOURS)***

On Sunday evening, we begin the half-day shift of services, wherein morning services are on the preceding night and evening services are in the morning. Read more about Bridegroom Orthros below.

On Holy Monday, the Orthros of which is celebrated Sunday evening, we commemorate the blessed Joseph the All-Comely and we remember how the fig tree was cursed and withered by the Lord. We enter into Great and Holy Week this evening with this first Bridegroom Orthros service. This beautiful service leads us to Jerusalem with Christ, journeying to His Passion together. During the first chanting of “Behold! The Bridegroom...” the priest processes from the altar, holding the icon of Christ the Bridegroom while all the faithful kneel. The priest then places the icon on the stand in the center of the church; veneration of the Bridegroom will take place at the end of the service. We read the account of the withering of the fig tree in the Gospel, Matthew 21:18-43.

GREAT AND HOLY MONDAY AND TUESDAY



The services for the first three days of Holy Week are similar to one another: on the evening before each of these days, *Bridegroom Orthros* is served, and then in the morning on each of these days, *Presanctified Liturgy* is served. Several of the hymns at each of these three Presanctified Liturgies are repeated from the Bridegroom Orthros the night before – so if you have to miss one of the services, you will hear the hymns in the other one. Although Lent has finished, the prayer of St Ephraim is still said during these first three days of Holy Week and then finally for the last time during the Presanctified Liturgy on Holy Wednesday.

During the first three days of Holy Week, the typicon of the Church prescribes that the entire Four Gospels be read straight through at the Hours up to the point in each where the passion of Christ begins. Although this is not usually possible in parish churches, an attempt is sometimes made to read at least one complete Gospel, privately or in common, before Holy Thursday. Others keep the private practice of reading all four of the Gospels straight through, a few chapters each day, from Clean Monday until Holy Thursday.

In addition, the services are full of Scripture readings: Old Testament readings, Epistles, and Gospels, and many of the Gospel readings are much lengthier than

your typical Sunday Liturgy Gospel. Be prepared to stand for a while during these long Gospels!

WHAT IS BRIDEGROOM ORTHROS?

The Bridegroom service follows the order of a normal daily Lenten Orthros service: it begins with the Imperial Entrance (normally omitted outside of Lent) and the Six Psalms, then the Great Litany; then the Alleluia is solemnly chanted three times interspersed with verses. After this the apolytikion of Bridegroom Orthros is solemnly chanted three times:

Behold, the Bridegroom cometh in the middle of the night, and blessed is that servant whom He shall find watching; and again unworthy is he whom He shall find heedless. Beware, therefore, O my soul, lest thou be borne down with sleep, lest thou be given up to death, and be shut out from the Kingdom. But rather rouse thyself and cry: Holy, Holy, Holy art Thou, O our God...[On Sunday night, the hymn concludes with:]...By the intercessions of the Bodiless Hosts, have mercy on us.

Later on in the service, the Bridegroom Orthros exapostilarion is chanted, solemnly and with compunction. (In some traditions, the faithful kneel during this hymn.)

Thy bridal chamber, O my Savior, do I behold all adorned; and a garment I have not that I may enter therein. Illumine the garment of my soul, O Light-bestower, and save me.

These two solemn hymns – the apolytikion and the exapostilarion – are repeated at each of the three Bridegroom Orthros services.

Good to know:

The church will be dark and the service will be solemn and long (about two hours long). If you have young children, you will probably want to target being there on time (especially on Palm Sunday evening so that you



can be present for the procession and veneration at the start of the service as described below), and then staying as long as you are able, and ideally until after the chanting of the exapostilarion if possible. It is appropriate to venerate the

Bridegroom icon before and/or after services with full prostrations.

HOLY MONDAY MORNING: PRESANCTIFIED LITURGY (1 ¾ HOURS)

The hymns include many repeats from last night – a second chance to hear them if you couldn't make it to the first Bridegroom Orthros. This morning's Gospel is Matthew 24:3-35. Make an effort to read it privately if you miss the service.

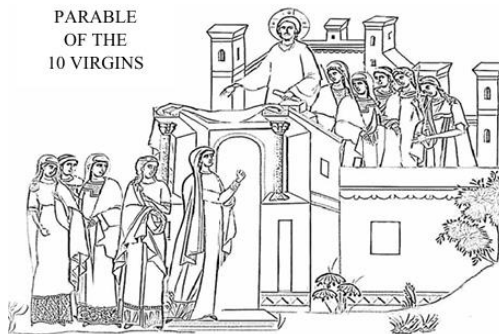
HOLY MONDAY EVENING: BRIDEGROOM ORTHROS OF HOLY TUESDAY (1 ½ HOURS)

The second Bridegroom Orthros is quite similar to the first, with several of the hymns being the same, but with a new theme: on Holy Tuesday we remember the Parable of the Ten Virgins. The Gospel reading in this service is a very long one – Matthew 22:15-23:39. Remember it is not considered appropriate to sit during the reading of the Gospel – we should stand but may kneel if necessary (a good option for young kids!).

***HOLY TUESDAY MORNING: PRESANCTIFIED LITURGY (1
¾ HOURS)***

The hymns this morning again include many repeats from last night – a second chance to hear them if you couldn't make it to the second Bridegroom Orthros. This morning's Gospel is quite long: Matthew 24:36 - 26:2. Make an effort to read it privately if you miss the service. In it we hear the Parable of the Ten Virgins (Matthew 25:1-13) – today's commemoration. *Please note that it has been the tradition in our community for many years to share this service with the sisters at the monastery.*

***HOLY TUESDAY EVENING: BRIDEGROOM ORTHROS OF
HOLY WEDNESDAY (1 ½ HOURS)***



On Holy Wednesday we remember the anointing of the Lord with Myrrh by the sinful woman. A highlight tonight is the

long and beautiful “Hymn of Kassiani” – a hymn about the sinful woman composed by St Kassiani the Hymnographer which is chanted toward the very end of the service as the Doxastikon of the Aposticha verses. Tonight's Gospel reading is John 12:17-50.

GREAT AND HOLY WEDNESDAY

HOLY WEDNESDAY MORNING: THE LAST PRESANCTIFIED LITURGY! (1 ¾ HOURS)

This morning's hymns include many repeats from last night, including the beloved "Hymn of Kassiani" – if you had to leave early last night, come hear it this morning. The Gospel reading gives us the account of the sinful woman who anointed Christ – Matthew 26:6-16. Make an effort to read it privately if you miss the service. In addition, as mentioned before, this service is when we say the very last Prayer of Saint Ephraim until next year!

HOLY WEDNESDAY AFTERNOON: SACRAMENT OF HOLY UNCTION (2 HOURS)

Holy Unction is a longer service that includes seven sets of Epistle readings, Gospel readings, and prayers. As such, it can be a difficult one for children! Help them to track the progress of the seven sets by watching the seven candles being lit one by one. Holy Unction is not part of the normal cycle of services for Holy Week, but has traditionally been added on Holy Wednesday in our Greek and Antiochian tradition as a remembrance of the sinful woman who anointed Christ and for our health of soul and body during this holy time.



The anointing with Holy Unction happens at the very end of the sacrament. Orthodox Christians come forward to be anointed by the priest on their faces (typically cheeks, forehead, and chin) as well as on both sides of both hands. We kiss the priest's hand after he finishes anointing us. If you can only come for part of the service, come late rather than leaving early. *Please note that Catechumens and Inquirers are welcome and encouraged to attend, but because Holy Unction is a sacrament, they may not receive the anointing with the Unction oil; however, after the service is over, Fr. John will anoint any catechumens or inquirers present with myrrh from the myrrh-streaming Iveron icon of the Theotokos.*

HOLY WEDNESDAY EVENING: MYSTICAL SUPPER ORTHROS OF HOLY THURSDAY

This service is very similar to the Bridegroom Orthros, as it is also a Lenten Orthros in structure. The hymns now focus on the events of Holy Thursday. We no longer chant the apolytikion of the Bridegroom and instead chant a new apolytikion for Holy Thursday. The exapostilarion still remains that of the Bridegroom "Thy bridal chamber." This is the last time we hear this compunctionate hymn that warns us to be vigilant. From now on we enter fully into the Passion of Christ. We read the Gospel passage Luke 22:1-39 wherein we hear the account of the Last Supper. *Please note that our mission does not currently chant this service during Holy Week, but it will be chanted at the monastery.*

GREAT AND HOLY THURSDAY



On Holy Thursday we commemorate the Mystical Supper – the institution of the Eucharist. Although it is a strict fast day, in our tradition, wine and oil are permitted in remembrance of the Last Supper. We also remember the sacred washing of the

feet of the disciples by Christ and the betrayal of Christ by Judas in the Garden of Gethsemane. The services for Holy Thursday include **Mystical Supper Orthros** that is typically served on Holy Wednesday in the evening or evening, and the **Vesperal Divine Liturgy** that is served on Holy Thursday in the morning. Today is also the day when it is customary in many Orthodox cultures to dye the red Pascha eggs.

HOLY THURSDAY MORNING: VESPERAL DIVINE LITURGY (2 HOURS)

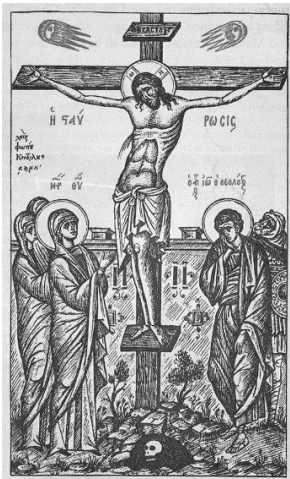
Vesperal Liturgy, as the name indicates, is a combination of Vespers and Liturgy. The service starts off like the beginning of a Vespers service and then transitions into Liturgy with the reading of the Epistle and Gospel after the three Old Testament readings of Vespers. Many of the hymns this morning are repeated from last night's Mystical Supper Orthros. Note that the Gospel reading is a long composite reading recounting events of the day including the Washing of the Feet, the Last Supper, the Betrayal, and the Sentencing of Christ

(Matthew 26:2-20, John 13:3-17, Matthew 26:21-39, Luke 22:43-45, and Matthew 26:40-27:2).



Listen and notice how the words of the prayer we always read before Holy Communion “Receive me today, O Son of God, as a partaker of Your mystical supper” replace both the Cherubic Hymn and the Communion Hymn at the Liturgy. Many Orthodox Christians worldwide make a great effort to prepare to receive Holy Communion on this day, the day when we commemorate the Institution of the Eucharist. This is the Liturgy of St. Basil the Great, not of St. John Chrysostom.

***HOLY THURSDAY EVENING: 12 GOSPELS SERVICE /
ORTHROS OF HOLY FRIDAY (2 ¾ HRS)***



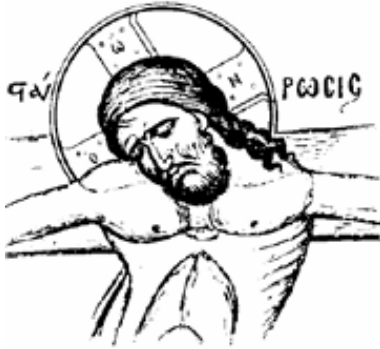
More properly called the “Passion Service,” we often refer to it as the “12 Gospels Service” due to the 12 passages from the Gospels about the Passion of Christ that are read during this Orthros service. Like the Orthros services earlier this week, the Lenten “Alleluia” is sung at the start of the service with the apolytikia. The Gospel readings are inserted throughout the Orthros and followed by hymns called Antiphons. The Scripture readings and hymns allow us to accompany Christ as He is placed on trial, is

scourged, is crowned with thorns, bears His cross and is crucified. This is a long service, and probably the most difficult one for small children given the length, time of day, and amount of reading. The first Gospel reading in particular is very long (John 13:31 - 18:1!).

Remember again that it is *never* considered appropriate to sit during a Gospel reading unless there is great need, so this service involves a lot of standing! Kneeling is an option for younger ones who can't be easily held. At the reading of each Gospel we chant "Glory to Thy long-suffering, O Lord!"

Pay attention to the numbering of the Gospel readings and Antiphons to track where you are in the service – the 12 candles will help you! Following the reading of the 5th Gospel, at the 15th Antiphon "Today He is suspended on a Tree Who suspended the earth over the waters," the priest carries the Cross out from the altar in procession while all present kneel; he places the Cross in the center of the nave, and the places the icon of the Body of Christ on it. As with the Bridegroom icon, the veneration of the Cross of Christ will take place at the end of the service. It is appropriate to do full prostrations when venerating the Cross, and to kiss Christ's feet. If you need to come late or leave early or step out of the nave with your children, be sure to not miss this portion of the service.

GREAT AND HOLY FRIDAY



On this day we commemorate the holy and saving Passion of our Lord and God and Savior Jesus Christ, Who willingly suffered the spittings, the slaps, the insults, the mockings, the purple robe, the reed, the sponge, the vinegar, the nails, the spear, and above all, the Cross and death. We also remember the robber on his right, who when crucified with Him, asked Him, “Remember me, O Lord, in Your Kingdom.”

Holy Friday is kept as the strictest fast day of the year. A common custom is to keep a complete fast from all food and water while Christ is hanging on the Cross – from the 12 Gospels service on Holy Thursday night until the end of the Vespers of the Taking Down off the Cross on Holy Friday. Others will keep a complete fast until after the Vespereal Divine Liturgy on Holy Saturday morning. It is customary to avoid secular obligations and to take the day off from work and school if possible. Above all, we keep our hearts and minds focused on the solemnity of the day and prioritize attendance at church services.

HOLY FRIDAY MORNING: ROYAL HOURS AND TYPIKA OF HOLY FRIDAY (1 ¾ HOURS)

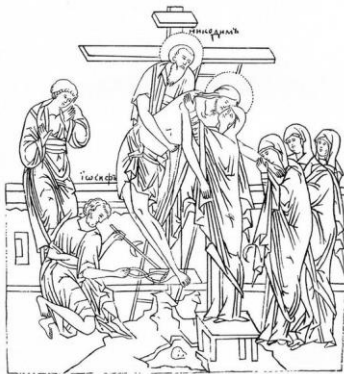
This service is actually a combination of five smaller services served back-to-back: 1st Hour, 3rd Hour, 6th Hour, 9th Hour, and Typika. Each service lasts around 20 minutes and then immediately segues into the next

service. Each includes readings from the Psalms, Old Testament, Epistles, and Gospels interspersed with hymns about the Passion of Christ, all read and chanted in the presence of Christ hanging upon the Cross in the center of the church.

The hymns are largely repeated from the 12 Gospels Service last night. If you had to leave early or could not attend, you will have a chance to hear these hymns again, including the much-beloved 15th Antiphon, which is chanted during the 9th Hour. Before and after this service are good opportunities to again venerate Christ upon the Cross, doing full prostrations.

HOLY FRIDAY AFTERNOON: “UN-NAILING” VESPERS (1 ½ HOURS)

Come early to this service for one last opportunity to venerate Christ upon the Cross in the center of the church. This Vespers service is one of the shorter services of Holy Week and is much like most Vespers services, but also includes Epistle and Gospel readings inserted after the three Old Testament readings. At the end of the reading of the Gospel, all present kneel. The body of Christ is removed from the Cross, wrapped in a white cloth, and taken into the altar.



Vespers continues and then, during the chanting of the first sticheron of the Aposticha, the faithful kneel and the priest processes out from the altar with the epitaphios (the Holy Shroud – a large fabric icon of the reposed Christ), which is placed

upon the bier, which represents the tomb of Christ, in the middle of the church and is decked with flowers. If you have to step out of this one with your younger children, try to be in the nave from the point of the Gospel reading (immediately follows the three OT readings and the Epistle) through the end.

It is appropriate to venerate the epitaphios at the end of the service, doing full prostrations and kissing the Gospel book and the epitaphios.

***HOLY FRIDAY NIGHT: LAMENTATIONS SERVICE /
ORTHROS OF HOLY SATURDAY (3 ½ HOURS)***

Tonight's service, though funeral-like in nature, is also full of anticipation of the rising of the Savior. The faithful hold candles and the church is dark. Notice that the Lenten "Alleluia" is now replaced with the standard singing of "God is the Lord" before the apolytikia. A large portion of this service is the chanting of the Lamentations – three sets of hymns chanted while the clergy stand in front of the epitaphios. For many years, we have shared this service with the sisters at the monastery, and the chanting of the Lamentations is shared between several choirs: the clergy, two choirs of the nuns, and two choirs of the faithful, in both English and Greek.



Toward the end of the third set of hymns we chant the verse: “Myrrh-bearers came and sprinkled sweet myrrh upon Your tomb, Lord, at early dawn they come now.” This verse is repeated as Gerondissa sprinkles the tomb and the people with rose water, joyfully announcing “Kalo Pascha” meaning “Good

Pascha!” After the end of these sorrowful hymns, we transition into joy of the anticipated arising of Christ with the chanting of the Resurrectional Evlogitaria which are normally chanted at every Sunday Orthros service, followed by the chanting of the exapostilarion “Holy is the Lord our God” which is also normally chanted at Sunday Orthros.

Orthros continues with the chanting of the Canon and the Praises hymns, and finally the Great Doxology. At the very end of the Great Doxology we begin our procession: the choirs and clergy process out of the church carrying the epitaphios and all the faithful follow, chanting the Trisagion Hymn “Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal have mercy on us.” The procession will pause at each of the sides of the temple for a litany.



As we process back into the church, the epitaphios is lifted up so that we may all reverently pass beneath it, venerate the Gospel book,

icons, and crosses held by the clergy, and then return to our places in the nave. Once all the faithful have entered, the epitaphios is taken into the nave and placed upon the Holy Altar, where it will remain for 40 days, until the celebration of Christ's Ascension into Heaven. The service then concludes with an Old Testament reading, an Epistle, and Gospel.

If you cannot stay for the entire service, note that the Lamentations are sung very early in the service, soon after the reading of the Six Psalms, and the procession is towards the end, immediately after the chanting of the Great Doxology.

GREAT AND HOLY SATURDAY

On this day, we commemorate the Burial of the Divine Body and the descent into Hades of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. This is a solemn day, yet it is also filled with anticipatory joy – Christ is harrowing Hades! The services reflect this contemplative mixture of mourning and celebration. Holy Saturday is also the only Saturday in the entire year when oil is not permitted.

HOLY SATURDAY MORNING: VESPERAL DIVINE LITURGY, "THE HARROWING OF HELL" (3 HOURS)

With today's Vespereal Liturgy begins our transformation from darkness to light: the altar cloths and vestments become bright, the hymns become resurrectional. The Old Testament readings foretell Christ's Resurrection and we chant with the Three Holy Youths "Praise the Lord, and supremely exalt Him, unto all the ages."

At the beginning of the service, the lamps are all left unlit; after the opening Psalm of Vespers, and the Great Litany, all kneel while the priest extinguishes the Holy Fire that was lit the previous year and has been carefully maintained all year long. The priest then reads the Prayer of the Holy Fire and lights the Holy Fire for this year; the altar servers then take that light from the altar, during the chanting of Lord I Call, and light all of the lamps and candles in the temple. Some people piously bring that light to their homes and try to maintain the Holy Fire in their own homes throughout the year. In our tradition, during the 40 days of Pascha, the lamps in the temple are all lit from the Holy Fire in the altar; during the rest of the year, the Holy Fire is kept on the Holy Table and the Proskomedi (table of preparation).



Like Lazarus Saturday, today is a Baptismal Day, so in lieu of the Trisagion Hymn we chant “As many as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. Alleluia.” and the Epistle reading for the day is the same Epistle read at the Sacrament of Baptism (Romans 6:3-11). Following the Epistle, instead of the normal “Alleluia” we triumphantly

chant the verse “Arise, O God, judge the earth; for You shall have an inheritance among all the nations.” In our tradition, during the chanting of this verse, the colors of the vestments are changed from dark to bright, and the priest throws bay leaves throughout the nave and the children make a bit of a racket in the narthex to symbolize the harrowing of Hades. Feel free to participate!

The Liturgy continues as the Liturgy of St Basil the Great, and instead of the Cherubic Hymn we chant the solemnly beautiful ancient hymn “Let all mortal flesh keep silence.” The Communion Hymn is “The Lord awoke as one who sleeps and is risen, saving us. Alleluia.” (Psalm 77:65) and after the Communion of the faithful instead of “We Have Seen the True Light” we chant “Remember us also, O Compassionate One, even as You remembered the thief in the kingdom of Heaven.”

PASCHA: THE FEAST OF FEASTS

On this day, the sacred and great Pascha, the Holy Church commemorates the life-bearing Resurrection of our Lord and God and Savior Jesus Christ.

HOLY SATURDAY NIGHT: RESURRECTION SERVICE! (3 HOURS)



Actually several services in one: the Midnight Office, the Rush service, Orthros, and Divine Liturgy! We begin by entering the dark nave with our unlit candles, listening to the chanting of the Midnight Office, in which we repeat the Orthros canon of Holy Saturday. (Either bring a candle from home – decorated or plain – or procure one at church. For Pascha we use candles with white drip cups.) At the end of the Midnight Office, all lights are extinguished except for the Holy Fire on the Holy Table. The clergy, servers, and male chanters chant the Resurrectional Apolytikion inside the altar:

When Thou didst submit Thyself unto death, O Thou deathless and immortal One, then Thou didst destroy hell with Thy Godly power. And when Thou didst raise the dead from beneath the earth, all the powers of heaven did cry aloud unto Thee, “O Christ, Thou Giver of life, glory to Thee!”

Wait for the moment when the priest comes out of the altar with the Holy Light, chanting “Come, take light from the Light that is never overtaken by night; come

glorify Christ, Who is risen from the dead.” All the faithful come forward to light their candles from the Holy Light; multiple people can light their candles from Father’s Paschal candle at one time. (In lighting the candles be careful to hold the already lit candle upright as your neighbor tilts his or her unlit candle into your flame. This helps to keep wax from dripping onto the floor and hair from catching fire. And watch the kids!)

The clergy and faithful then process out of the church, where all gather together to hear the reading of the account of the Resurrection from the Holy Gospel (Mark 16:1-8). And finally, after the reading of the Gospel, Paschal Orthros begins and we hear the long-awaited first chanting of the Paschal hymn: “Christ is Risen from the dead, by death trampling down upon death and to those in the tombs He has granted life.” The first time it is chanted by the priest, and then everyone joins in.

After the Great Litany, the priest stands before the closed door of the temple and pounds on the door, saying, “Lift up your gates, O ye princes, and be ye lifted up ye everlasting gates, and the King of glory shall enter in!” A voice from inside demands to know, “Who is this King of glory?” The priest responds, “The Lord strong and might, the Lord mighty in war!” This dialog is repeated and finally the doors are thrown open wide and the priest leads the procession back into the temple, which is now brightly lit.

The faithful process back into the church with the chanting of the Paschal Canon. Throughout the Orthros the clergy cense the nave and call out the Paschal greeting “Christ is risen!” in multiple languages and we reply “Truly He is risen!”



From Orthros we continue into the Paschal Liturgy, with much singing of “Christ is Risen” and much joy. And then finally, after we have received Holy Communion and completed the Liturgy, a special prayer is read by the priest to bless the red eggs and they are distributed together with the antidoron. (Sometimes the dye rubs off

and it can stain clothes so it’s a good idea to take the eggs from younger children and wrap them in a napkin or similar to keep their clothes clean.)

Tonight we also hear the reading of the much-beloved Paschal homily of St John Chrysostom which encourages us all to join in the Paschal joy. When we hear the words “Hades was embittered” we repeat “It was embittered!” and when we hear the words “Christ is risen” we repeat “Christ is risen!” After the service we joyously break our long fast in celebration of the Resurrection of Christ! Enjoy your blessed red egg and bring your favorite finger foods to share at the potluck. A common Paschal folk custom is to greet one another with “Christ is Risen! Truly He is Risen” and knock eggs together to see whose egg cracks first.

PASCHA SUNDAY AFTERNOON: AGAPE VESPERS (1 HOUR)

The Paschal “Agape Vespers” is a bright and short afternoon service, including the reading of the Gospel passage John 20: 19-25 in many languages, and many opportunities to join in chanting the Paschal hymn, “Christ is Risen.” If you were unable to come to the midnight service, come and join the celebration now!

After Agape Vespers, it is our local tradition to gather together at the cemetery with our departed loved ones, and sing the Paschal Trisagion to them, as well as many other Paschal hymns.

BRIGHT WEEK



There is nothing more beautiful and joyful than a Bright Week Liturgy. There are many changes to the services that are unique to this week of celebration. During Orthros, we chant “Christ is Risen” instead of reading the traditional Six Psalms, and the Canon of Pascha instead of “More honorable than the Cherubim” during the ninth ode. We chant:

Shine, shine, O new Jerusalem! For the glory of the Lord hath arisen upon thee; dance now and be glad, O Sion, and do thou exult, O pure Theotokos, in the arising of Him Whom thou didst bear!

The Divine Liturgy also begins with “Christ is Risen” being chanted while the priest censens around the altar and the iconostasis. There is no fasting during Bright Week. Also during this week, the Hours of the day, Compline, the prayers before and after Communion, and our usual morning and evening prayers are replaced by the Paschal Hours.

PASCHALTIDE: 40 DAYS FROM
PASCHA TO ASCENSION!



For 40 days after Pascha, the Church continues to celebrate the Paschal season. We chant “Christ is risen” as part of our morning and evening prayers and at meal times. Joy and thanksgiving are the fulfillment of our Lenten journey. We also greet one another with the Paschal greeting:

Christ is risen! Truly He is risen!

Christos Anesti! Alithos Anesti! (Greek)

Khristos voskrese! Voistinu voskrese! (Slavonic)

al-Masīḥ qām! Ḥaqqan qām! (Arabic)

***Christus ist auferstanden! Sicherlich ist er
auferstanden! (German)***

***¡Cristo ha resucitado! ¡En verdad ha resucitado!
(Spanish)***

Kristo Amefufukka! Kweli Amefufukka! (Swahili)

Xris-tusaq Ung-uixtuq! Iluumun Ung-uixtuq!

(Yupik)