

Holy Week Guidelines

Saturday of Lazarus/Service of the Proskomide-Father Stavros has received the blessings of Metropolitan Alexios to celebrate the service of the Proskomide on the solea once a year, on the Saturday of Lazarus. The Proskomide is the service where the bread and wine are prepared to be offered at the Divine Liturgy. On Saturday, April 27, Father Stavros will celebrate this service at 9:30 a.m., on the solea at St. John and will explain the service to those who are in attendance. He will also pray for everyone in attendance and offer a piece of bread on each person's behalf in the preparation of the Holy Communion. Please plan to come to this service to see this important aspect of the Liturgy which is not usually witnessed by the congregation. If you've never seen this service, it is really something you should do at least once in your lifetime.

Making Palm Crosses-Following Divine Liturgy on Saturday, April 27, we will be preparing the palm crosses for Palm Sunday, the following day. Please plan to stay for a while to decorate our church and make the palms as we do every year. No experience necessary. Come and we'll be happy to teach you. Breakfast will also be served.

Earlier Starting Time for the Evening Services of Holy Week-Please note that the Holy Week services this year will begin at 6:30 p.m. (with the exception of Good Friday Night which will still begin at 7:00 p.m.) It is hoped with the earlier starting time, more people will attend the services, especially early in the week. Palm Sunday evening, Holy Monday evening and Holy Tuesday evening should be over by 8:00 p.m.

Nymphios (Bridegroom) Services-The Bridegroom services are actually Orthros (Matins) or morning services, celebrated the evening before by anticipation, i.e. the Orthros of Holy Monday is celebrated Palm Sunday evening by anticipation. The name of this service comes from the central figure in the well-known parable of the ten maidens (Mt. 25:1-13). The Kingdom of God is compared to the bridal feast and the Christ of the Passion is the Divine Bridegroom of the Church. The title Bridegroom also suggests the Parousia or Second Coming. The central hymn of these services is "Behold the Bridegroom comes in the middle of the night. . ." and is a reminder to all of us that we must be vigilant in our faith. On Palm Sunday evening, we have the procession of the icon of the Nymphios. The Nymphios service is also celebrated on Holy Monday in the evening and Holy Tuesday in the evening, and the choir will also sing the Hymn of Kassiane during the service Holy Tuesday evening.

Why are the services at night during Holy Week called Matins Services, even though they are taking place during the evening hours? Traditionally, the morning service in the Orthodox Church is called the Matins, or Orthros service with the evening service known as the Vespers Service. Traditionally, the Matins or Orthros is done in the early morning hours, ending with the sunrise, when the Great Doxology (Glory to God who has shown us the light) is sung or read. The Orthros or Matins Services of Holy Week are VERY long—The Orthros of Good Friday lasts almost three and a half hours. Same thing with the Orthros of Holy Saturday. During the Middle Ages, the services were transposed ahead several hours, from the early morning hours to the evening of the preceding night. Thus, the Orthros of Good Friday was moved to Holy Thursday evening, and is the service we are familiar with, the 12 Gospels and the Procession of the Crucified Christ. The Lamentations, which is the Orthros of Holy Saturday, was moved from Saturday morning to Friday night. Thus, the Vespers services, like the Vespers Liturgy of Holy Thursday morning (which commemorates the Last Supper), was moved from Holy Thursday evening to Holy Thursday morning, where it currently is celebrated. Thus, our services commemorate events about 12 hours before they happened in real time, with the Last Supper Holy Thursday morning, the Crucifixion Holy Thursday evening, etc. The Descent from the Cross on Friday afternoon remains at its proper time, as a Vespers service, but the interval between the Vespers of Friday afternoon and the Orthros of Holy Saturday, which normally would be 12-15 hours, is only about 3 hours. Easter takes place at the proper time. The schedule of transposing services begins Palm Sunday with we celebrate Orthros and Liturgy in the morning, as we usually do, and celebrate the Orthros of Holy Monday on Palm Sunday evening. There is a vespers on Palm Sunday, which has been suppressed in modern usage.

Holy Unction-The Mystery of Holy Unction is established upon the words and actions of our Lord Jesus Christ. This is a sacrament of healing and transformation from a bruised and hurt world to the deliverance from sin and corruption. Holy Unction is a sacrament of the church. All sacraments of the church are administered by the priests of the church. In fact, the primary role and identity of the priests of the church is to be the celebrant of the sacraments. Because of this, **Holy Unction may not be taken home**. Father Stavros will anoint people who are unable to attend services on Holy Wednesday evening on Holy Thursday and Good Friday after each service, and will make such announcements at each of these services. For those unable to come to church, Father will be happy to come to your home and anoint those who are home-bound. And as for use throughout the year, Holy Unction is kept in the church year-round. If there is ever a time when you would like to be anointed, or have a loved one anointed, all you have to do is ask. TWO Holy Unction services will be held this year, on Wednesday, May 1, one at 3:00 p.m. for those with young children, and one at 6:30 p.m. for everyone else.

Bridegroom Service for Last Supper-There is actually a Bridegroom Service which is traditionally celebrated on Holy Wednesday evening. However, this service has been suppressed in most parishes because of the Sacrament of Holy Unction. This service, however, is important because it contains the Gospel lesson of the Last Supper. So, if you are not going to attend church on Holy Thursday morning, and would like to have a complete narrative of Holy Week, please plan to attend this brief service at 5:45 p.m. on Holy Wednesday, which will be celebrated before the evening's Holy Unction Service.

Holy Thursday Evening-The Service of the Passion-The service of the 12 Gospels and procession of the crucified Lord is the longest service of the Church year. On Holy Thursday, light and darkness, joy and sorrow are mixed. At the "upper room" and in Gethsemane the light of the kingdom and the darkness of hell come together. The way of life and the way of death converge. In many parishes this service is not very well attended. **However, one cannot truly celebrate the Resurrection if he/she has not stood at the foot of the cross of Christ.** As one prayer of the Sunday Orthros states, "Through the Cross, joy has come to all the world." Without the Crucifixion, there could be no Resurrection. Thus, after the Resurrection Service on Holy Saturday Night, one could argue that Holy Thursday evening is the next most-important service of Holy Week. *If you are unable to attend the entire service, then please come from 7:30-8:30 p.m., witness the Procession of the Crucified Lord, venerate His precious Body on the Cross and leave early. But*

please do not abandon the Lord as He hangs on the Cross. **HOLY THURSDAY EVENING, AS YOU EXPERIENCED LAST YEAR FOR THOSE WHO ATTENDED IS THE MOST POWERFUL SERVICE OF THE ENTIRE HOLY WEEK, AND OF THE ENTIRE CHURCH YEAR.**

An All-Night Vigil at the Cross of Christ—For several years, there have been requests about having an all-night vigil at the Cross of Christ, which would begin following the Thursday evening service and conclude with the Royal Hours on Good Friday (we might even continue until the afternoon service). It will consist of taking shifts reading Psalms at the foot of the Cross, possibly some singing and maybe even reflections on the meaning of the Crucifixion. We just decided to have this and we are still developing what will happen. Charlie Hambos, our seminarian, will be leading this event. More information will follow so please consult the weekly bulletin. If you are interested in being part of the all-night vigil at the Cross of Christ, please contact either Fr. Stavros (frstav@gmail.com) or Charlie Hambos at charlie.hambos@gmail.com.

Good Friday—Decoration of the Epitaphios will be done in church following the Royal Hours on Good Friday (about 10:30 am) All are invited to come and help decorate the tomb of Christ. Please, however, work quietly—this job is meant to be solemn not social.

Sunday School Retreat—We will again be having a retreat for our Sunday School children (please see enclosed flyer) from 9:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. The church will also be open throughout the day for those who wish to sit and pray.

Apokathelosis—The Service of Apokathelosis (literally, the Un-Nailing) re-enacts the narrative of Christ descending from the Cross. The figure of Christ is removed from the cross and wrapped in a new linen cloth, carried into the sanctuary and placed on the altar table. In the same service, a procession with the Epitaphios (embroidery of the dead Christ) is made around the interior of the church, and the Epitaphios is placed in the Kouvouklion (tomb of Christ). This year, we will celebrate the Apokathelosis at 3:00 p.m.

The Lamentations and the Epitaphios Procession—The Lamentations are short, poetic verses lamenting the Passion, Death and Burial of Christ. Interspersed with the Lamentations are Psalm verses from Psalm 119, the same verses we sing at a funeral service, which is appropriate, as the Lamentations are the funeral service for the Lord. The service starts with the Canon, and after the Canon is complete, the priest opens the Royal Doors, the lights are turned up, and the Lamentations begin. Everyone is invited to sing together. Books will be provided for your use. The outdoor procession of the tomb of our Lord will take place, weather permitting, at the Service of the Lamentations. We invite all the faithful to participate in this procession by proceeding in an order, quiet and dignified manner befitting the solemnity of this occasion. Please, refrain from conversing with others or acting in a way which will bring attention to you instead of the dead Lord. Please sing along with the choir—don't check your cell phone for messages. This is a time to pray, not to text message! Everyone will pass under the Epitaphios, symbolizing the passing from death to life, re-enter the church quietly and await the resumption of the service. Finally, everyone will be given a flower from the Epitaphios as a blessing at the end of the service.

Anastasis Service—The service of the Anastasis will begin at 11:00 p.m. on Holy Saturday evening, with the chanting of the Canon. Shortly before midnight, the light of the Resurrected Christ will be given to all the faithful. We will then go outside, weather permitting, to read the Easter Gospel and sing the Christos Anesti for the first time. Please proceed outside in an orderly manner so that we can complete this service in a timely manner. We will then proceed back into the church for the celebration of the Divine Liturgy. **Please plan to stay for the entirety of the Divine Liturgy on Easter. Please don't leave early. Plan from now to stay for the entire Liturgy, the most joyous Liturgy of the year, and to receive Holy Communion. After all, we don't break our fast with meatballs and cheese, but with Holy Communion.** There will be a reception following the Divine Liturgy for all in attendance, in the Kourmolis Center. After making the journey through Holy Week together, what better way to continue our celebration than to sit down as a family and break bread together on the greatest feast day of the church year.

Blessing of Baskets of Food—It is the Orthodox Tradition on Easter that we do not only bless eggs but other types of food that will go on the table for the Easter Banquet. Though this practice has become sort of dormant in the Greek Orthodox Church, it is very much alive in other Orthodox jurisdictions. Therefore, if anyone wishes to bring a basket of food to be blessed on Easter night, they may come and place it beneath or around the table on the Solea where the basket of Easter eggs will be.

Reading of the Resurrection Gospel at the Agape Vespers—Those interested in participating in the beautiful Easter Vespers of Agape on Easter Sunday morning at 11:00 a.m. by reading the Gospel of the Resurrection in a foreign language are encouraged to see Father Stavros or call the church office, PRIOR TO HOLY WEEK. DON'T JUST SHOW UP EXPECTING TO READ. WE NEED TO CAREFULLY PLAN THE SERVICES SO THEY ARE DONE PROPERLY. Please contact Fr. Stavros or the church office if you are interested in reading. Please come to the Agape service by 10:45 a.m. to find out where you will stand for the reading of the Gospel. The reading is from the Gospel of St. John 20: 19-25. You may read it in any language you wish, the more the better.

Holy Communion to be given only in context of the Divine Liturgy—There are eight opportunities to receive Holy Communion during Holy Week—Saturday of Lazarus, Palm Sunday, Holy Monday morning, Holy Tuesday morning, Holy Wednesday morning, Holy Thursday morning, Holy Saturday morning, and of course, at the Paschal Divine Liturgy on Easter (and a ninth opportunity on Easter Monday with the feast of St. George). Please plan to receive Holy Communion through prayer and fasting at as many of these services as possible. Incidentally, a person may receive Holy Communion each time it is offered. For instance, you can receive Holy Communion on both Holy Saturday morning and at the Anastasis. For those who have kept the entire Lenten fast, you can receive Holy Communion conceivably, all eight times during Holy Week. Since there are so many opportunities to receive Holy Communion during the Divine Liturgies of Holy Week, **Holy Communion will only be given in the context of the Divine Liturgy, not before or after.** (no drive through Communion) Also, even if we receive Holy Communion on Holy Thursday or Holy Saturday, we should not break the fast until the conclusion of the Easter Liturgy. When receiving Holy Communion, it is important and necessary to have celebrated the entire Liturgy. Please no phone calls about what time is Communion, so you can duck in and out quickly. Come for the entire service. Be there for the invitation to enter the Kingdom, be there for the reading of the Gospel, the reciting of the Creed. And

after Communion, don't just take your Communion and run, as many people will do on Holy Saturday morning, stay the remaining minutes of the services and pray the prayers of Thanksgiving in the back of the Liturgy book.

A note on Kneeling and Sitting—It is the tradition of the church that we kneel or stand for the majority of the services. In fact, in many old churches, there were not even pews, the people did not sit at all. However, by dispensation, we now have pews in the church and the faithful are allowed to sit at certain points in the services. Because of the long lines for Communion and because the length of the services, and because many of our congregation are elderly and not in good health, **PLEASE DO NOT HESITATE TO SIT** as you need to during Holy Week, especially during Holy Communion. Also, for those with bad knees, just sit with your head bowed during times we are kneeling, do not attempt to kneel. Our church never seeks our physical hurt in worship, nor do we want people passing out or becoming sick, which will only make us nervous and anxious.

The same thing goes for fasting—if you are on medication, are sick, are pregnant or nursing, you do not need to fast before Holy Communion—follow the directions of your doctor. Again, fasting is designed for our spiritual benefit, not as a threat to our health.

Holy Week Books are available for sale in the church bookstore. The Holy Week Book contains the words and hymns of all the Holy Week services and will serve not only as an aid to worship but as a complete theology book, for the services of Holy Week contain all the theology of the Orthodox Church. These books are well made and will last forever, so get yours today and get more out of your Holy Week experience.

Pascha versus Easter—In every language except English and German, the feast of the Resurrection is identified with a word whose root is “Pasch.” For instance, in Spanish, the word is “Pasqual.” “Pascha” comes from the Hebrew for “Passover.” The first Passover occurred in the Old Testament book of Exodus. The last of the 10 plagues on the Egyptians was the death of the first born son. The Hebrews were told to slaughter an unblemished lamb outside the city wall on a Friday, to not break any of its bones, and to spread its blood over their doorways. Those who had the blood of the lamb on their homes would be spared. The angel of death then came to the Egyptians and killed the first-born son in each home. Passover was a holiday celebrating the deliverance of the Hebrews from the bondage of Pharaoh and his taskmasters. The Crucifixion occurred at the Passover—the Lamb of God was killed outside the city wall on a Friday, none of His bones were broken, and by His blood we are set free from the bondage of sin and death. “Easter” comes from the word “Oestre” and was actually a Pagan holiday each spring. That’s why in the Orthodox Church, and in my personal life, I try to use the word “Pascha” to describe the feast of the Resurrection, rather than Easter.

No Kneeling until Pentecost—It is actually the Tradition in the Orthodox Church that we not kneel on Sundays in honor of the Resurrection of Christ (exceptions being if you are receiving the sacrament of confession on a Sunday, or are present at an ordination on a Sunday). Because we do not worship on a daily basis in our church communities, priests have encouraged people to kneel on Sundays, the thought being that if we do not kneel on Sundays, that we’ll never kneel in church. It is a Tradition, that for 50 days after Pascha, we do not kneel in honor of the Resurrection. The next time we will kneel after May 4 is on the Feast of Pentecost, after the liturgy, at the Vespers of the Descent of the Holy Spirit, when the priest says “Again and again on bended knees let us pray to the Lord.” Until you hear that petition, do not kneel from May 5-June 23.

Fast Free the week after Pascha—Having kept a fast for almost 8 weeks, including the week before Lent, Lent and Holy Week, the church gives us a “week off” from fasting the week after Pascha. During Bright Week, or Renewal Week, as that week is called each day is like a Sunday. Hence, there is no fasting during this celebratory week. Who, then, may receive Communion? Whoever wishes to, providing that they abstain from food the morning they are receiving. So, the Sunday after Pascha, everyone in the congregation may receive, provided you abstain from food on Sunday morning. There is no fasting on Wednesday or Friday of renewal week, or any other day of that week either.

Feast of St. George—to be celebrated May 6 this year—St. George the “Trophy Bearer” is one of the most famous saints of our church. He lived in the third century. He was a soldier, famously memorialized in icons as slaying a dragon. Symbolically, he “slayed” the “dragons” that opposed Christianity and was martyred for his faith. His relics were placed in the altar of our church when it was consecrated in 1986. St. George’s feast day is celebrated on April 23 (or the Monday after Pascha if Pascha falls on or after April 23). Thus, this year, we will celebrate his feastday on Bright Monday, May 6.

Feast of the Life-Giving Fountain—Friday after Pascha—Commemorates the consecration of a Chapel dedicated to the Virgin Mary, which was built over a spring in Constantinople, that emitted water with healing powers. Hundreds of miracles and healings have occurred at this spring. This feast day of “Zodochos Peghe”, the Feast of the life-giving Fountain, is always celebrated on the Friday of Bright (Renewal) week, the week after Pascha, May 9 this year.