

mane, His trial by Jewish religious leaders and Roman authorities, His beatings and mocking, and crucifixion and death on the Cross. This service is long, with twelve readings from the Gospels recounting the events, but its content is dramatic and moving.

After the reading of the fifth Gospel comes the procession with the icon of the Crucified Christ around the church.

**HOLY OR “GOOD” FRIDAY**

In the morning, the four “Royal Hours” are read. These services consist of hymns, psalms, and readings from the Old and New Testaments, all related prophetically and ethically to the Person of Christ.

Usually in mid-afternoon, Great Vespers is chanted. During this service, we hear the story of the Crucifixion, but with attention paid to the death of Christ, the work of Joseph of Arimathea to secure the body of Christ from Pilate, His removal from the cross, and His burial.

At one point in the reading, the Body of Christ is removed the cross, wrapped in a white cloth and is brought into the sanctuary. Following the reading, the priest carries the icon of the Epitaphios through the church and places it in the Sepulchre (the kouvouklion), which has been decorated with flowers.

**GOOD FRIDAY EVENING - THE LAMENTATIONS**

On Holy Friday evening, we sing the Orthros of Holy Saturday, consisting of psalms, hymns and readings, dealing with the death of Christ. During the Orthros, the congregation will join in chanting the Lamentations, hymns of praise to the Lord and relating His ultimate triumph over death. During this service the Epitaphios icon is carried in procession around the church. In some parishes the entire flower-bedecked Sepulcher, symbolizing the Tomb, is carried in the procession.

**GREAT HOLY SATURDAY MORNING**

On Holy Saturday morning, the Vespersal Divine Liturgy is celebrated. In this Liturgy, the Resurrection of Christ is celebrated and the triumph over death is proclaimed in the hymns and the readings from the Old and New Testament. There is a strong theme of baptism in this liturgy, because in the ancient Church, the catechumens would be baptized in this evening vigil of Pascha.

At midnight Saturday, the life-giving Resurrection of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is celebrated. Before midnight, the Odes of Lamentation of the previous day are repeated. The Orthros of the Resurrection begins in complete darkness. The priest takes light from the vigil light and gives it to the faithful, who are holding candles. The priest sings, “Come, receive light from the unwaning light, and glorify Christ, who arose from the dead.” Just a short while later, the priest reads the resurrection story from the Gospel of Mark (16:1-8) and leads the congregation in singing the Resurrection Hymn, Christ is risen from the dead, trampling death by death, and to those in the tombs bestowing life.” Following, the Orthros service continues and leads into the celebration of the Divine Liturgy.

**THE AGAPE VESPERS**

At some point on Sunday afternoon the faithful gather once more for Great Vespers, With lighted candles they sing, “Christ is risen.” The people greet one another with the salutation, “Christ is Risen”, which is answered, “Truly He is Risen”. In the Great Vespers, the Gospel according to John (20:19-25) is read in various languages, proclaiming the Good News of Resurrection all over the universe without discrimination. The fruit of faith in the Resurrection of the Lord is love in His Name; therefore, this day is called “Sunday of Agape.”

For the next forty days, the Orthodox Church commemorates the Resurrection of Christ.



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**2. LENT AND EASTER**

Faith and Life is a new pamphlet series that provides an introduction to a wide range of spiritual and theological issues. Drawing from the beauty and wisdom of Orthodox Christianity, the series addresses the challenges of contemporary life and offers guidance to help you grow in your relationship with God and in your commitment to His will for your life. The series is a collaborative effort of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese Departments of Church and Society, Communications, Internet Ministries, Outreach and Evangelism, Religious Education, and Youth and Young Adult Ministries.

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*Provides an overview on the Biblical roots, practice, and theological significance of fasting in the Church and how it is an important part of our growth in the Orthodox Christian faith.*

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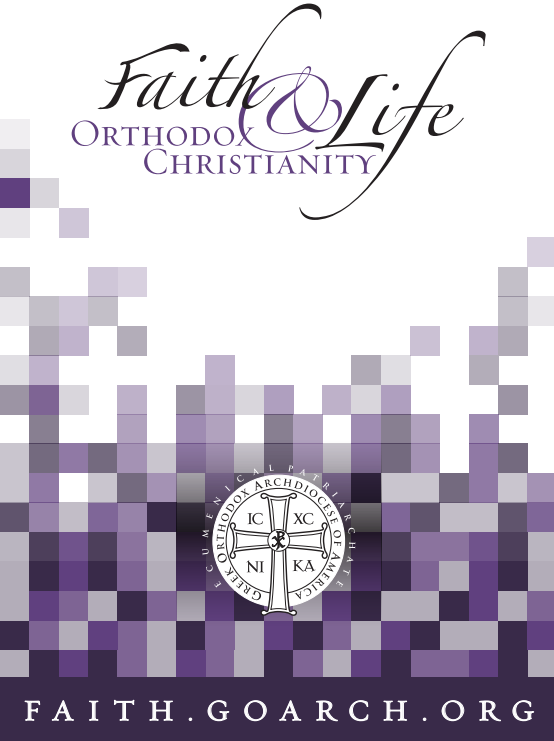


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**Holy Week**



## Holy Week

### SATURDAY OF LAZARUS

An interlude between Great Lent and Holy Week, the Church names this day the “Saturday of Lazarus” in remembrance of the resurrection of Lazarus told in the Gospel of John (11:1-45) and its promise of universal resurrection for all men. The Church connects this celebration, by anticipation, with the Entrance of Christ into Jerusalem.

### PALM SUNDAY

Palm Sunday celebrates the glorious and brilliant feast of the Entrance of Jesus into Jerusalem (John 12:1-18). Zechariah had prophesied the entrance of the Messiah into Jerusalem, saying: “Rejoice greatly ... O daughter of Jerusalem; behold, the King comes unto Thee; he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass”, Zech. 9:9. The contemporary Jews associated this prophecy with the expected Messiah. This action of Christ testifies to His nature as Messiah, but with the definite declaration that His Kingdom was not of this world. The main road leading to Jerusalem was covered with palm trees. The multitudes, with palm branches in their hands, spread their cloaks on the road as a show of respect, crying out “Hosanna to the Son of David. Blessed is He that comes in the name of the Lord.” A custom of distributing branches of palms to the people in the Church prevails to this day.

During the remainder of Holy Week, the Church advances its liturgical life by about twelve hours, celebrating morning services the night before, and evening services in the morning.

On Palm Sunday evening, the Church celebrates the Orthros (Matins) of Holy Monday, in the

**For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. Then he appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time...**

1 Corinthians 15:3-6

first of four “Bridegroom Services.” Christ is called the “Bridegroom” because in His Passion, He gives His life for His Bride, the people of God, the Church, just as a husband will sacrifice everything for his wife and family.

From Holy Monday to Holy Wednesday, some parishes will celebrate the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts in the morning. This very ancient Divine Liturgy is a Vespers Service, with the Holy Communion given from the sanctified gifts from the Liturgy on the previous Sunday. This Liturgy is very solemn, and reflects the grandeur and simplicity of the early Church.

In the Orthros of Holy Monday, the Church remembers the blessed and noble Joseph and the fig tree which was cursed and withered by the Lord.

In the Orthros of Holy Tuesday, celebrated Holy Monday evening, the Church remembers the parable

of the Ten Virgins (Matthew 25:1-13), who were waiting for the arrival of the Bridegroom at a wedding feast.

In the Orthros of Holy Wednesday, the Church remembers the anointing of Christ with myrrh by the woman in the house of Simon, the leper, in Bethany. This woman demonstrated her repentance and her warm faith toward our Lord. On this evening we hear the beautiful “Hymn of Kassiane, which is a hymnological reflection on the repentance of this woman.

### HOLY WEDNESDAY

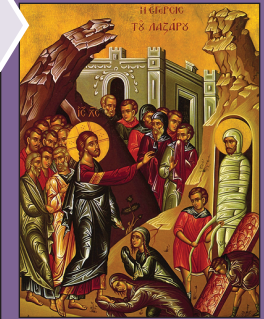
The Sacrament of Holy Unction takes place on Holy Wednesday. The Sacrament is for the healing of body and soul. In Orthodox thought, healing is connected to repentance, confession, and the remission of sins by the Lord. Holy Unction is the for cleansing sins and renewing the body and the spirit of the faithful. Holy Unction is one of the seven Sacraments of the Church, and it has its origin in the practice of the early Church as recorded in the Epistle of James (5:14-15). At the end of the service, the priest anoints the people with Holy Oil.

In the Orthros of Holy Thursday, the Church remembers the washing of the disciples’ feet, the institution of the Holy Eucharist, the Prayer of Christ at the Last Supper as recorded in the Gospel of John, and the betrayal.” Some parishes will not celebrate this service, and replace it with the Sacrament of Holy Unction.

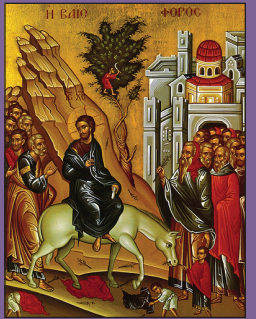
### HOLY THURSDAY

In the morning, the Vespereal Divine Liturgy of St. Basil the Great is celebrated. At this Divine Liturgy, the Church commemorates the institution of the Holy Eucharist by the Lord at His Last Supper with His disciples. Here, Christ presented bread and wine as His body and blood, which form the core of the new covenant between God and His people, the Church.

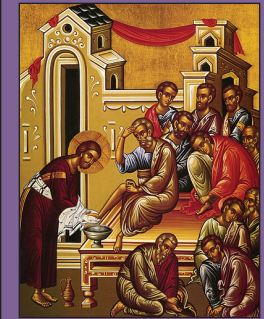
In the evening, in the Orthros of Holy Friday, the Church recalls the Passion of the Lord, from His betrayal by Judas Iscariot, His agony and arrest at Gethse-



Saturday of Lazarus



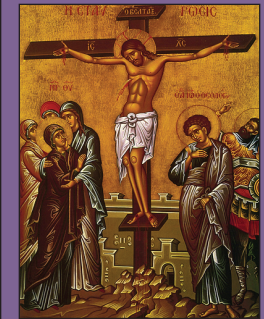
Palm Sunday



Holy Wednesday



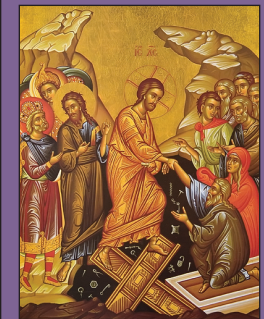
Holy Thursday



Holy Friday



Holy Friday  
The Lamentations



Holy Saturday



The Agape Vespers