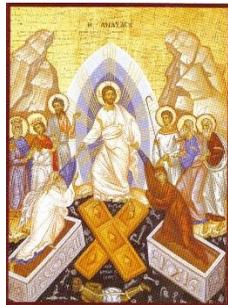


Great and Holy Pascha begins at **11:00 PM Saturday night** with the Paschal Matins service sung entirely by the chanters. The Altar is vested in white, the empty cross of Christ is wrapped with the burial shroud Jesus no longer needs (brilliantly mocking the Devil!), and the faithful gather with a palpable sense of anticipation.



Just before midnight, the lights in the Church are extinguished entirely, the doors to the Church are secured, and the Paschal Candle is lit from the vigil lamp on the Altar as the initial proclamation rings out; ***“Christ is Risen from the dead, trampling down death by death, and to those in the Tombs He has granted Life!”***

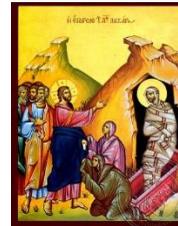
The myrrh bearers receive the Light of Christ from the priest and carry it to the faithful who hold their own Paschal candles. Soon, the Church is ablaze in the golden light of the Resurrection as the clergy and acolytes proceed to the center of the Church for the reading of the Resurrection Gospel of St. Mark and to sing out with great joy the Paschal hymn *“Christ is Risen!”*

The Paschal homily of St. John Chrysostom is read which taunts the dark realm for its stunning defeat at the hands of the One Whom death could not hold. The Epistle and Gospel readings reset to “page one” in this service as well. And red eggs, recalling the miracle of St. Mary Magdalene’s witness to Caesar who remarked upon hearing of Jesus’ Resurrection “a man could no more rise from the dead than these eggs could turn red.” The faithful share the joyous message of Jesus’ victory over death by attempting to crack each other’s eggs!

Finally, Sunday afternoon at **1:00 PM** witnesses the **Agape Vespers service**, a very brief service where the Gospel passages of the Resurrection are read by the faithful in as many languages as possible. (And we are always eager to find new readers!) The joyous news of Jesus’ Resurrection and the New Life He offers every human soul must be shared with all of humanity! This service reminds us of the Great Commission to bear witness to the Life-Giving events of Holy Week and Pascha!

Bridegroom Matins Services -	Sunday through Wednesday evenings at 7:00 pm
Presanctified Divine Liturgies -	Monday through Wednesday mornings at 9:00 AM
Holy Unction Service -	Wednesday afternoon at 4:00 PM
St. Basil’s Vespers Liturgy -	Thursday morning at 9:00 AM
The Passion Gospels Service -	Thursday evening at 7:00 PM
Holy Friday Services -	9:00 AM Hours - 3:00 PM Vespers - 7:00 PM Lamentations
Proti-Anastasi Liturgy -	Saturday morning at 9:00 AM; - Paschal Matins - 11:00 PM
Paschal Divine Liturgy -	Sunday Midnight; Agape Vespers - 1:00 PM Sunday

A GUIDE TO GREAT & HOLY WEEK IN THE ORTHODOX CHURCH



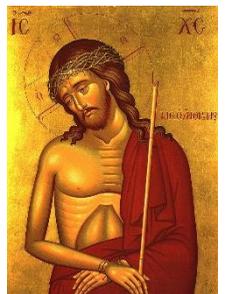
Holy Week in the Orthodox Church begins with the **Saturday of Lazarus** services on Palm Sunday weekend. In the Gospel of John, we read how Jesus raised his friend Lazarus of Bethany from the grave four days after he had died and been buried. Jesus demonstrates His mastery over death as God and it is this miracle which swells the crowds who will greet Him in Jerusalem on Palm Sunday.

We enjoy a pancake breakfast together on the Community Center patio as we tie the palm crosses to be distributed to the faithful at the Palm Sunday Liturgy. We also decorate the Cathedral with the palm fronds and change the festal colors in the Church from the Lenten purple to green to acknowledge the New Life in Jesus Christ

On **Palm Sunday** we remember the Triumphal Entry of Jesus into Jerusalem as the week of His Passion begins. The children run before Jesus throwing their garments before Him and shouting out “Hosanna to the Son of David!” to the dismay of the religious leaders who are already plotting Jesus’ murder with Judas Iscariot.

Presanctified Divine Liturgies are offered as spiritual food for the faithful on Monday through Wednesday mornings at **9:00 AM**. The Church in Her wisdom understands that we need to supplement our diet with spiritual food in this the most rigorous and eventful week of the year.

The **Bridegroom Matins services**, so called for their reference to the Parable of the Bridegroom, (Matthew 25) begin Palm Sunday evening at **7:00 PM**. The principle hymn proclaims *“Behold the Bridegroom comes in the midst of the night and blessed is the servant whom He shall find watching...”* We are reminded by the themes which appear in each Bridegroom service to be watchful for our salvation, to keep the lamps of our souls filled with oil and burning brightly with zeal and love for God.



The Gospel readings assigned to each service follow Jesus as He prepares His Disciples for His betrayal, trial, brutal scourging, crucifixion, death, burial, and glorious resurrection. These services draw us into the life-giving acts of God on our behalf as eye-witnesses as we walk with Jesus from Bethany to the empty garden tomb.

Holy Unction is given to the faithful on Wednesday afternoon at **4:00 PM** where prayers are offered for the healing of soul and body. *Please note that as a holy mystery of the Orthodox Church, unction is given only to Orthodox Christians and that only the clergy may take holy unction to the home-bound.* For those unable to attend the Wednesday afternoon services, holy unction is offered during the **Wednesday evening Bridegroom service** at **7:00 PM** while the chanters are singing the hymns of the

service. The theme of this service is the Mystical Supper first shared between Jesus and His Disciples on the eve of His Passion. For the first time we read the words of institution “Receive, eat, this is my body broken for you for the remission of sins.” (Luke 22)

Holy Thursday morning begins with the **Vesperal Divine Liturgy of St. Basil the Great** in commemoration of the Mystical Supper. The reserve sacrament in the ark (*Artoforion*) kept on the Altar table since last year’s Holy Thursday liturgy is consumed by the celebrant at the end of the service and a new reserve Lamb is consecrated to be placed in the Ark on Holy Friday morning.



The earth stands still, and creation holds its breath on **Holy Thursday evening at the Passion Gospels Matins service** at **7:00 PM**. Twelve synoptic Gospels are read throughout the service which chronicle the events of the Passion from the Lord’s Supper, Crucifixion, Death and Burial. Lit only by candlelight, the faithful are invited to witness their salvation as the Cross of Christ is processed around the nave while the hymn rings out;

“Today is suspended upon the tree He Who suspended the land above the waters. A crown of thorns crowns Him Who is the King of the angels, He is wrapped about in the purple of mockery Who wrapped the heavens with

clouds. He receives smittings Who freed Adam in the Jordan. He is transfixed with nails Who is the Son of the Virgin. He is pierced with a spear Who is the Bridegroom of the Church. We worship Thy Passion, O Christ; show us also Thy Glorious Resurrection.”

The Cross is placed on the Solea for the faithful to venerate where it is kept until the Friday afternoon Vespers service. It is customary for this period between Holy Thursday evening to consume as little food as possible. This is a sacred time when vain pursuits should be avoided as the faithful reflect upon the mystery of God’s love for the world. It is encouraged that school children be pulled from their classes (contact the Church office for a letter from Fr. Apostolos for your child) on this holy day.

The **Royal Hours of Holy Friday** begin at **9:00 AM** which revisit the events of the previous evening and which includes prophetic readings from the Old Testament foretelling the role of the “Suffering Servant” as Isaiah records in startling detail in chapter 53. The faithful gather on Holy Friday morning to decorate the Tomb of Christ (*Kouvouloukion*) with flowers as we anticipate the Resurrection.

The **Vespers service of the Taking Down from the Cross** begins at **3:00 PM**. As the title denotes, it is here that the icon of Jesus is removed from the Cross and wrapped in new clean linen and placed on the Altar as the pure and holy sacrifice. The funeral procession with the *Epitaphion* is made around the Church and this burial shroud is then placed in the large wooden *Kouvouloukion* which is bedecked with flowers. The tone of the services shifts at this point as the hymns already begin to focus on the coming Resurrection of Christ and as the faithful are invited to venerate the *Epitaphion*.



The Lamentations service of Holy Friday evening at **7:00 PM** is among the most anticipated of the Church year. Here, we sing the very ancient and familiar refrains which glorify Jesus Christ. The heavy wooden *Kouvouloukion* which represents the Tomb of Christ is taken up by our stout Cathedral men and processed with the clergy, chanters, choir members, acolytes, and myrrh bearers with all the faithful.

Singing the Thrice-Holy hymn together, we light up the desert night with our candles and with our hearts as we trace the steps of that little knot of faithful women with St. John to the garden tomb. The faithful are invited to re-enter the Church by walking beneath the suspended *Kouvouloukion* while the clergy await in the narthex with the joyous proclamation “*Kali Anastasi!*” or “A Blessed Resurrection!”



Holy Saturday morning begins with the glorious and beautiful “**Proti-Anastasi**” or **First Resurrection service** at **9:00 AM**. The flowers, stripped from the *Kouvouloukion* the night before, are mixed with bay leaves and joyously strewn around the Church as the celebrant and chanters proclaim “*Arise, O God, and judge Thou the earth for Thou shall take all nations to Thine inheritance!*”

The Great Entrance of the holy gifts processes to the *Kouvouloukion* placed on the Solea and it is here that the Gifts are consecrated, and the Divine Liturgy takes place as Life bursts forth from the tomb which could not hold the King of Glory. This service recalls the descent of the Deathless One into the realm of Hades where He smashed the gates, broke the locks, and snapped the chains which bound the souls of men. It is at this service, too, when new Orthodox believers are brought into the Church.