




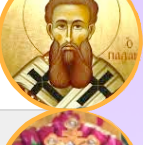
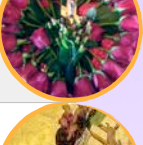

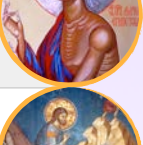





OUR JOURNEY TO PASCHA! 2025

Created by Fr. Jonathan Bannon (ACROD)

SUNDAYS	THEMES / GOSPEL READING	HOW TO PARTICIPATE:
Fast - Free Week FEBRUARY 9th	 <i>TRIODION WEEKS</i> Publican and the Pharisee Epistle: 2 Timothy 3:10-15 Gospel: Luke 18:10-14	Show compassion on the poor and distressed. Trust in God, not yourself and ask for His help before every task this week.
Normal Fast Week FEBRUARY 16th	 The Prodigal Son Returns! Epistle: 1 Corinthians 6:12-20 Gospel: Luke 15:11-32	Schedule a Confession. Every morning say, "Today I will be humble." Use up/freeze meats this week.
Meatfare FEBRUARY 23rd FAREWELL TO MEAT TODAY	 The Last Judgement Epistle: 1 Corinthians 8:8-9:2 Gospel: Matthew 25:31-46	Pray facing East this week. Christ is returning from the East and we wait for Him! Use up/freeze dairy this week.
Cheesefare MARCH 2nd FAREWELL TO CHEESE TODAY	 Adam and Eve are cast from Paradise! <i>FORGIVENESS SUNDAY</i> Epistle: Romans 13:11-14:4 Gospel: Matthew 6:14-21	Ask each other for forgiveness each evening this week before bed.
1st Sunday of Lent MARCH 9th	 <i>GREAT LENT BEGINS WITH FORGIVENESS VESPERS</i> SUNDAY of ORTHODOXY Epistle: Hebrews 11:24-26, 32-12:2 Gospel: John 1:43-51	Bring an icon to church for a procession.
2nd Sunday of Lent MARCH 16th	 ST GREGORY PALAMAS Epistle: Hebrews 1:10-2:3 Gospel: Mark 2:1-12	Bring a prayer rope to be blessed today! Use it and pray the Jesus Prayer each day this week.
3rd Sunday of Lent MARCH 23rd	 VENERATION OF THE HOLY CROSS <i>HALF WAY TO PASCHA!</i> Epistle: Hebrews 4:14-5:6 Gospel: Mark 8:34-9:1	Wear your cross to church and kiss the cross each morning with a bow!
4th Sunday of Lent MARCH 30th	 ST JOHN of the LADDER Epistle: Hebrews 6:13-20 Gospel: Mark 9:17-31	Every time you climb stairs this week ask St. John to help you reach Paradise with the sign of the cross!
5th Sunday of Lent APRIL 6th	 ST MARY of EGYPT Epistle: Hebrews 9:11-14 Gospel: Mark 10:32-45	Ask the Theotokos to offer you and the world pure thoughts and ideas this week.
FLOWERY (PALM) SUNDAY! APRIL 13th GREAT WEEK BEGINS	 <i>GREAT AND HOLY WEEK</i> ENTRY OF OUR LORD INTO JERUSALEM Epistle: Philippians 4:4-9 Gospel: John 12:1-18	Place your palm branches and pussywillows behind an icon at home and in your car!
GREAT AND HOLY FRIDAY APRIL 18th	 GREAT AND HOLY FRIDAY <i>JESUS DIES ON THE CROSS</i> CHECK WITH YOUR PARISH FOR ROYAL HOURS AND VESPERS SCHEDULE	Refrain from TV, Internet & Phones to honor Christ's Death.
FEAST OF FEASTS! APRIL 20th NO FASTING!	 <i>BRIGHT WEEK</i> HOLY PASCHA! (CHRIST IS RISEN!) Epistle: Acts 1:1-8 Gospel: John 1:1-17	Greet everyone with "CHRIST IS RISEN!" & say it before good morning and goodnight!

**Prayer of
St. Ephraim the Syrian**



**O Lord and Master of
my life!**

**Take from me the spirit
of sloth, despair, lust of
power, and idle talk.**

**But give rather the
spirit of chastity,
humility, patience, and
love to Your servant.**

**Yes, O Lord and King!
Grant me to see my
own errors and not to
judge my brother, for
You are blessed unto
ages of ages.**

Amen.

The Meaning of the Prayer of St. Ephraim the Syrian

by Fr. Alexander Men

Every day of Great Lent, with the exception of Saturdays and Sundays, the prayer “O Lord and Master of my life” is read. According to tradition, this prayer was written in Syria in the fourth century by the ascetic Mar Afrem or, as we have grown accustomed to calling him, Ephraim the Syrian. He was a monk, poet, and theologian, one of the most eminent sons of the Syrian Church, who entered world literature as a remarkable writer.

The words of the prayer, which were quite accurately transmitted by Pushkin [1], sound as follows when translated from the Syrian: “O Lord and Master of my life,” that is: Ruler of my life, Who gave me life, Who is the center and focal point of my life. “Give me not a spirit of idleness,” that is, laziness, which is, according to the old adage, the mother of all vices. Laziness seems like an innocent thing, but it engenders much that is dark and black.

Lenten Prayer of St. Ephrem (St. Ephraim the Syrian)

O Lord and Master of my life, take from me the spirit of sloth, despair, lust of power, and idle talk.

But give rather the spirit of chastity, humility, patience, and love to Thy servant.

Yea, O Lord and King, grant me to see my own transgressions, and not to judge my brother, for blessed art Thou, unto ages of ages. Amen.

“**Despondency** (Despair).” Christianity is a joyful doctrine; joyful, too, is he who is despondent – for it will leave him. St. Seraphim of Sarov, the great Russian saint of the nineteenth century, said: “We have no ways to be despondent, for Christ has saved everyone.”

“**Ambition** (Lust for power).” This means love of authority. Everyone has it; do not think that the cult of personality exists only in politics: it can also be present in the family or in any small community. Everyone has in himself the seeds of the aspiration to crush the will of others, to strangle and subdue it.

“**Idle talking**.” I exempt children: they have the right to chatter, but only until the age of fifteen or sixteen. When children chatter they are learning to communicate and are practicing their language; but when these “children” are already twenty, or sometimes older than forty – this means they are being pitiless towards their own lives. Let us consider (and let us be honest with ourselves): how much longer do we have to live? Not much longer at all. Therefore, I repeat, we should value life and love the gift that God has given us, remembering that we will carry into eternity only that which we have in our hearts. Idle talk and blathering are frightful words, for they involve killing time.

“**Spirit of chastity**.” Further on the prayer says: “a spirit of chastity... patience, and love bestow upon me Thy servant.” Chastity is purity of relations with the world and with people, wholeness of soul, without duality, and without the passions gaining possession over you.

“**Humble-mindedness** (Humility).” This means the wisdom of the healthy person. Humility here, in the given context, means knowing where you stand against the backdrop of eternity. Do not inflate yourself like the frog in Krylov’s fable– it burst [2]. There is no need to exaggerate, but one should know one’s worth. The wisdom of modesty is extraordinary and

“ The wisdom of modesty is extraordinary and beautiful.

beautiful. The wisdom of modesty is not abasement beyond pride, but healthiness of soul. Here is an example for you. When someone begins to imagine himself as something that he is not, he is only a few steps from megalomania. Megalomania is a pathological state of pride. One person announces that he is the chairman of the Council of Ministers or Napoleon, and he is placed in a psychiatric hospital; another makes no such pronouncement, for which reason he is not in the hospital, but in his soul he thinks he is superior to everyone else.

“**Patience, and love.**” What is patience? I will put it briefly so that you will remember. Patience is not the state of cattle, which tolerate everything. It is not humiliation – not at all. It is not a compromise with evil – under no circumstances. Patience is the ability to maintain equanimity of spirit in circumstances that impede such equanimity. Patience is the ability to achieve one’s goals when encountering various obstacles along the way. Patience is the ability to maintain a joyful spirit even when there is an excess of grief. Patience is a victory and an overcoming; patience is a form of courage. This is what real patience is.

☞ **patience is a form of courage**

Finally, love. **Love** is the utmost happiness of man; it is the ability of our souls to be open, immanent (as the philosophers say), inwardly open to the other person. When you are riding the escalatory in the subway, test yourself to see if you are able to love or not. When you look at the people riding on the other side and you find it repulsive to look at their faces, it means that all the pores of your soul are clogged and that your feeling of love is in an embryonic state.

But the power of Christ’s grace is capable of rebuilding a person in such a way that he sees people in an entirely different manner; so that his first reaction will be benevolence; so that he will immediately see the beautiful in both women and men, in an inspired manner, even where no one else notices it; so that when seeing a suffering face he will feel compassion; so that he will be open. Such a person is always happy, because he is united with people and lives lovingly.

At the end of the prayer it says: “Yea, O Lord and King, grant me to see my failings and not condemn my brother.” You understand this. The greatest cure from condemnation is the ability to criticize oneself. We are extremely careful – I would say observant and even psychologically sophisticated – when we are considering the sins of our neighbors or the sins of other people. Here we display maximum knowledge of all moral laws in all their subtleties. Here we act like strict judges, although we have no right to do so, since we ourselves are guilty of the very things of which we condemn others.

☞ **The greatest cure from condemnation is the ability to criticize oneself.**

You ask me: perhaps this is appeasement and compromise with evil? Under no circumstances. Never. We must call evil by its name. But we must have compassion for the person who falls into this sin.

This is the essence of this prayer read daily with prostrations during Great Lent.

From the lecture “Great Lent,” delivered on April 1, 1989. (Translated from Russian.)

Translator’s notes

[1] The poem is “Desert Fathers and Immaculate Women,” written in 1836.

[2] The fable is “The Frog and the Ox,” which originated with Aesop and was adapted by Krylov (among several others fabulists).

An Explanation of the Holy Week Services

by Rev. Demetrios George Kalaris

The most important holy day of our Church is the commemoration of the Resurrection of our Lord and Savior. The Resurrection is known as the “feast of feasts.” Its dogmatic significance is the foundation of the Christian religion. In one of his epistles, St. Paul emphasizes that our faith is meaningless without the Resurrection of Christ. The early Church, recognizing this important fact, prescribed that Sunday be set aside in remembrance of our Lord’s Resurrection. Adhering to the historical account of the Savior’s last moments on earth, as depicted in the Holy Scriptures, our Church has set aside the week prior to this great feast as a period of recognition of His supreme sacrifice for our redemption.

These events are projected before us in various stirring and solemn services during Holy Week. The source of much of the material found in the hymnology and the readings of these services is the passion plays of the early Byzantine period. As we are informed by a Vatican manuscript of the 14th century, these ecclesiastical dramas had as their theme the events of Holy Week. They depicted the resurrection of Lazarus, the events of Palm Sunday, the Last Supper, the washing of the Disciples’ feet by Jesus and the betrayal by Judas, Peter’s renunciation of Christ, the disgrace of Herod, the Crucifixion and the Resurrection were included in the ritual of the Church. A vivid reenactment of these religious plays is performed in the services of Holy Thursday and Good Friday.

Holy Monday

Comparison of Joseph of the Old Testament with Christ.

A close comparison can be drawn between the life of Joseph and that of Jesus, for as Joseph was rejected by his brothers, so Christ was scorned by his own people.

As Joseph was sold for 30 pieces of silver by his brothers to Potiphar, in like manner Judas, a disciple of Christ, betrayed our Lord for an equal sum. As Joseph was left to die in an open pit, so Jesus was buried, and as Joseph rose from slavery to become a powerful ruler in Egypt, so Christ became victorious over death by His Resurrection.

Also, we commemorate the fig-tree which was cursed by the Lord and withered. After His triumphal entry into the city of Jerusalem, Jesus journeyed into the surrounding towns of Bethany, and tired and hungry, saw from a distance a large fig-tree with bright green leaves. When he approached the tree, He found that it bore no fruit although it was time for the harvest. The fig-tree represents the synagogue of the Jews which had only in part acquired the divine truth, refusing to accept the complete revelation of God through Jesus Christ. Christ compares the fig with sin — as the fig is sweet and tasty, so is sin appealing and greatly desired.

The service of Holy Monday is chanted on the evening of Palm Sunday as a matins ritual. It is sung in the evening because the church day begins at sundown. This practice was taken from the Hebraic religion. The service consists of the customary psalms of David which are read at every matins service. After the recitation of these psalms, that is, the 3rd, the 37th, the 62nd, the 87th, the 102nd and the 142nd which were a part of the Hebrew worship and have been carried over into the Christian service, we hear the *Great Ectenis* (the familiar supplications and responses which are heard at the beginning of the Divine Liturgy). Following the *ectenis* certain prophetic verses from the

psalms of David regarding the adversaries of Christ are chanted with the thrice-sung Alleluia. After this, the litany of the *Nymphios* takes place, while the following hymn is chanted:

“Behold the Bridegroom cometh in the midst of the night, and blessed is the servant whom He shall find watching; and again unworthy is he 3 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 lest thou be shut out from the Kingdom. Wherefore rouse thyself and cry: Holy, Holy, art Thou, O God; through the protection of the Heavenly Hosts, save us.”

The priest, holding the icon of Christ, proceeds to the narthex of the church where he places the icon for the veneration of the faithful until the morning of Holy Thursday. There are two interpretations of this part of the Holy Monday services: one symbolizes the condemned Christ on His way to Golgotha, the other the coming of Christ as a judge. The hymn chanted at this time admonishes all to prepare for His coming and is followed by several *troparia* illustrating the passion of Christ. Then the Gospel lesson of the day is read which is taken from Matthew, Ch. 21, verses 18-43.

This selection tells us of the events that took place after His entrance into the city of Jerusalem, including the episode of the fig tree and the instructive parables pertaining to the workers of the vineyard. The 51st psalm of David is read, followed by the three groups of odes which call the sinners to penitence, and the stanza of the particular feast day is read. The supplications and responses as well as the following hymn are chanted.

“I see Thy bridal hall adorned, O my Savior, and I have no wedding garment that I may enter therein; O giver of Light, make radiant the vesture of my soul and save me.”

Then we have the praises, which are selected verses of the psalms of David, chanted with certain *troparia* pertaining to the passion of our Lord. The doxology, which is an early Christian composition, is read rather than chanted, as a sign of mourning. The matin supplications are chanted, followed by the recitatives, and the service is completed by the recitation of the Lord’s Prayer, the dismissal hymn and the benediction by the priest.

Each morning during the first three days of Holy Week, the Liturgy of the Presanctified, one of the most picturesque and solemn services of our Church, is celebrated.

The Church, wishing its faithful to partake of the Holy Eucharist more frequently during Lent, instructed that the Presanctified Liturgy be celebrated every Wednesday and Friday, the first three days of Holy Week and on certain feast days. At the Liturgy of the Presanctified, the Holy Gifts — that is, the Host that has been consecrated at a previous Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom or St. Basil the Great, usually celebrated on Saturday or Sunday — are brought from the *prothesis* (the table of offerings) to the Holy Altar.

The transfer of the Sacred Hosts is a solemn rite in the Presanctified Liturgy. While the procession takes place everyone kneels and all is silent except for the celebrant who inaudibly recites, “Through the prayers of our Holy Fathers have mercy upon us, O Lord Jesus Christ.”

After the presanctified Holy Gifts have been placed on the Holy Altar, the liturgy of the catchumens initiates. This part of the liturgy has been preserved in the Presanctified although not read audibly in the Liturgy of St. John and St. Basil.

The prayers for Holy Communion are recited by the priest and the Communion follows, after the prayers of the catechumens have been said and the Lord’s Prayer read.

Holy Tuesday

The matins service is chanted on the evening of Holy Monday.

On this day we commemorate the parable of the five wise virgins and the five foolish virgins, which contains the instructive teaching of our Lord before the Crucifixion, regarding the Second Coming and the Last Judgment. It teaches that we should always be prepared to receive Him. We are urged to this readiness by the parable of the wise virgins who had their lanterns filled with oil and waited with anticipation for the bridegroom (that is, Christ who is depicted as a bridegroom on Judgment Day), while the foolish virgins were not prepared and left their lanterns empty.

We are asked to emulate the example of the wise virgins in this parable, to examine ourselves and to see where we stand before the mirror of judgment. Are we prepared to receive the bridegroom? Christ, in this parable, praised those who awaited Him coming and prepared for His advent with the lighted lamps of faith and good works. The remainder of the service is the same as that of the previous evening. In the *troparia* of Holy Tuesday we are asked to use our talents for the performance of good deeds and works, fully preparing ourselves for the advent of our - Savior and the inheritance of eternal blessedness.

Holy Wednesday

On Tuesday evening the matins service of Holy Wednesday is chanted.

In this service the Church remembers the act of love of the sinful woman who anointed Jesus with precious oil. This act took place in the home of Simon the Leper in Bethany two days before the Passover. Although the woman was not aware of it, symbolically, she was preparing Christ for His burial. Jesus knew, without a spoken word from her, that she was repenting for her many sins and He said to her, "Thy sins are forgiven." Judas, whose greed later led him to betray His Master, complained that this precious oil could have been sold for 300 dinars, instead of being wasted, as it was in this act of contrition. This third *nymphios* ritual is similar to the services of the two previous evenings. All the readings and chants warn us to beware of greed and love of money, which could corrupt even a disciple of Christ. If we allow greed and selfishness to dominate our lives, we, too, shall be betrayers of Christ as Judas was. On the other hand, if we repent with humility and contrition, as the sinful woman in today's lesson, we shall be forgiven.

The principal *troparion* of the evening, the *doxastikon* known as the *Troparion of Cassiane*, which is a solemn discourse on the sinful woman mentioned above, was written by the nun Cassiane in the year 859. Many misleading beliefs have been accepted by Christians regarding the life and works of this nun, especially concerning her personal relationship with the Emperor Theophilus about which we have no authentic information.

It is said that the *troparion* was a penitent hymn written by Cassiane because she considered herself as the sinful woman mentioned in the Scriptures. This is not true. Cassiane wrote the hymn after she had read the account of the sinful woman.

This *troparion* is dedicated to the woman whose example of repentance we are asked to follow. We are incited by the service of Holy Wednesday to seek forgiveness of our sins and to reconcile ourselves with God from whose grace and favor we have fallen because of our disobedience and sinful life.

The Church instills this message in us especially during Holy Week so that we may carefully prepare ourselves for Holy Communion after self-examination, meditation and contrition, confessing our sins in the Sacrament of Holy Penance, changing our attitude toward life and receiving absolution.

On the morning of Holy Wednesday, the Liturgy of the Presanctified is celebrated for the last time during Lent. On the evening of Holy Wednesday, the Sacrament of Holy Unction, which has its origin in the pre-Christian era, is performed and administered.

During the age of mythology, oil was used as an antiseptic at various public baths to cure sores, heal wounds and for other body therapy.

Homer in his famous *Odyssey* tells us that the heroes of his time anointed themselves with oil. The renowned philosopher Plato stated that oil was a “help to alleviate pain.” In the Old Testament, we find that Isaiah lists oil among the important medicines.

The prophet Ezekiel mentions that when a Jew was born he was anointed with oil.

In the New Testament we see the good Samaritan carrying in his “first aid kit” oil and wine, as temporary medicines in an emergency. Our Lord and Savior instructed His apostles to anoint the sick and afflicted with oil. St. James in his epistle instructs the Christians to perform the Sacrament of Holy Unction, which Christ apparently instituted since it was known to be practiced by the apostles and the first Christians.

“Is any sick among you? Let him call the presbyters of the church; and let them pray over him, anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord: And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him.”

(St. James 5, 14-15)

This sacred tradition is practiced by our Church today, not only for the sick, but for all Christians who need to be strengthened bodily, morally and spiritually. In the passage from the epistle of St. James, we see clearly that the purpose of the Sacrament of Holy Unction is primarily to remedy our ills and at the same time to absolve our sins.

The Roman Catholics call this sacrament Extreme Unction. They perform and administer it only as a last rite to those who are on their death bed. It is evident from studying the Holy Scriptures and Holy Tradition that this is in antithesis to the teaching of the Scriptures and the practice of the Church. This practice of administering the sacrament as a last rite is an innovation of the Roman Church introduced in the 12th century.

In the beginning, the sacrament was simple in form. One prayer was read invoking the consecration of the oil and water. In the 9th century, Archbishop of Corfu Arsenios wrote a series of *troparia* for the sacrament. The Patriarch of Constantinople Nikephoros II, in the 13th century, instructed that it be performed by seven priests as it was an ancient tradition. About this time, seven prayers, seven epistles and seven gospel readings were put in the service and the sacrament was conducted as it is today.

Its purpose is twofold. Primarily, Holy Unction remedies the infirmities of our body and, secondly, it cures our spiritual ills.

Through the most comforting Sacrament of Holy Unction, we receive the blessing, the power, the peace and serenity that accompanies us along life’s path so that we may be regenerated and alleviated from the trials and tribulations of life.

Holy Thursday

The matins service this day is usually chanted late in the evening on Holy Wednesday or early Thursday morning.

The services commemorate the washing of the disciples' feet, the Last Supper, Christ praying in the garden of Gethsemane and His betrayal by Judas. The readings and chants dwell on Judas' betrayal — on the “dark night that settled in his soul.” We pray that we may keep ourselves from greed and deceit and be made pure by partaking of the Holy Mysteries of Christ's precious body and blood. The *troparion* after the mournful alleluia speaks of this.

“When Thy glorious disciples were enlightened at the washing of their feet before the Supper, then the impious Judas was darkened with the disease of avarice, and to lawless judges he delivered Thee, the Just Judge. Behold O lover of money, this man through avarice was brought to the gibbet. Flee from the insatiable desire, which dared such things against the Master. O Lord, Who dealest righteously with all, glory to Thee. “

The solemn vespers and liturgy of St. Basil are celebrated in the morning of Holy Thursday. This particular service has as its main theme the institution of the Holy Eucharist at the Last Supper. Before the great entrance, instead of the Cherubic hymn, a special *troparion* is chanted.

“Receive me today, O Son of God, as a partaker of Thy Mystic Feast; for I will not speak of the Mystery to Thine enemies; I will not kiss Thee as did Judas, but as the thief I will confess Thee. Lord, remember me when Thou comest in Thy Kingdom.”

It is a custom with all Greek Orthodox to receive Easter Holy Communion at the Liturgy of St. Basil on Holy Thursday morning. One of the most impressive rituals of this liturgy is the consecration of the perpetual Host — that is, the body of Christ which is preserved throughout the year for the Holy Communion of the ill and as a last rite.

Another ritual of great significance performed only in the Patriarchate of Jerusalem and in the Cathedrals of the autocephalous churches is the stirring service of the *Niptir*, commemorating Jesus' washing of His, disciples' feet. The prelate of the church, after the recitation of the Biblical account of the act, comes forth to the center of the church and washes the feet of twelve priests representing the disciples at the Last Supper. The deacon, in the meantime, is reciting the supplications and the petition that the Lord may bless this washing, cleansing us of our transgressions.

At the Ecumenical Patriarchate, on Holy Thursday, another impressive ceremony takes place every fourth year — the consecration of the Holy Myron that is used in the Sacrament of Holy Chrismation (confirmation) which is administered at the Baptism, bestowing the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Holy Thursday Evening

The reenactment of the Crucifixion is performed in the service of The Twelve Gospels.

During this service, which is the matins of Good Friday, the entire story of our Lord's Passion is told in the reading of the twelve selected Gospel lessons. This is one of the most solemn services of Holy Week. After the customary psalms and supplications, the mournful Alleluia is chanted for the last time. The hymns chanted throughout the entire service between the Gospel readings have as their theme the Last Supper, Christ's vigil in the gardens, the betrayal, how He was seized and led

away to the court of the High Priest, Peter's denial and grief, the High Priest's mocking, the wearing of the crown of thorns, the trial before Pilate climaxed by His Crucifixion.

The first Gospel deals with Jesus' farewell talk and prayer at the Last Supper. The other eleven Gospels depict the entire story of our Lord's last moments on earth until His burial by Joseph of Arimathea. The most stirring part of this service is the reenactment of the Crucifixion. After the fifth Gospel lesson, the priest takes the large Crucifix, which is adorned with a floral wreath and lighted candles, and in solemn litany proceeds from the sanctuary to circle the church while chanting the hymn of the Crucifixion —

“Today is hung upon the tree, He who did hang the land in the midst of the waters. A crown of thorns crowns Him Who is the King of Angels. He is wrapped about with the purple of mockery, Who wrapped the Heavens with clouds. He received buffetings, Who freed Adam in the Jordan.

He was transfixed with nails, Who is the Bride- groom of the Church. He was pierced with a spear, Who is the Son of the Virgin. We worship Thy Passion, O Christ. Show also unto us Thy glorious Resurrection.”

After the litany, the Crucifix is placed in the center of the church to be venerated by the worshippers.

Good Friday

There is no liturgy on Good Friday

for we commemorate the supreme sacrifice offered on this day by Christ. Good Friday is a day of mourning and strict fast. In place of the liturgy, the service of the Solemn Hours is read.

This service comprises the Messianic psalms of David, prophecies from the Old Testament, Epistle and Gospel lessons having as their main theme the Passion and Crucifixion of our Lord.

On the afternoon of Holy Friday, we have the vesper service of the unnauling of Christ from the Cross and His burial. At this service, the body of Christ is removed from the large Crucifix, which has been standing in the center of the church, since Thursday evening, and is wrapped in a clean, white shroud and placed upon the altar, while the priest reads the account of Joseph of Arimathea who was given permission to bury Christ. After the Gospel, certain select readings from the Book of Exodus and the Book of Job and from the prophecies of Isaiah are read. The regular vesper supplications are chanted by the priest, as well as the hymns depicting our Lord's burial by Joseph of Arimathea. As these hymns are chanted, the priest prepares for the litany the icon of the *epitaphion*, which represents the death of Jesus and symbolizes the entombment of our Lord. After the litany, the icon is placed in the bier which is adorned with flowers.

In the evening, the service of Holy Saturday matins is chanted. Primarily, this represents the burial of our Lord, but it also commemorates His descent into Hades where He preached His Gospel to all those who had died before His coming and had not had the opportunity to hear His sermon of a new life free from sin.

This is known as the service of the Lamentations.

The worshippers hold lighted candles as the choir chants the series of lamentations which express the sorrow of the Christians that the Lord has died, the belief that He has descended to Hades to abolish the power of Satan and to trample upon death, and the expectation of His speedy and life-given Resurrection.

After the Lamentations, a procession is formed and as the choir chants the Thrice Holy hymn, the priest removes the icon of the *epitaphion* from the bier and circles the church, pausing at intervals to ask the blessing of our Lord upon all Christians who worship Him and who are commemorating the great sacrifice of Jesus for the redemption of mankind. At the end of this service, the embroidered icon of the *epitaphion* is placed upon the Holy Altar. The flowers adorning the bier are given to the worshippers who preserve them as sacred talismans.

Holy Saturday

On the morning of Holy Saturday, the vespers and the Liturgy of St. Basil are celebrated.

It begins as the regular vesper service with the recitation of the 103rd psalm of David, the supplication (*Great Ectenis*) and the *troparia* of the First Tone pre-announcing the forthcoming Resurrection and depicting the events that took place in Hades upon the descent of our Lord. The *small entrance*, as in the regular liturgy, is the procession of the priest with the Holy Gospel and the evening hymn, *Gladsome Light*, is chanted after the proclamation of *sophia orthe*. This hymn, which is chanted at every vesper service, is believed to have been composed by the Christians of the 1st century. After the *small entrance*, the reading from 15 chosen books of the Old Testament takes place. They tell of the most striking symbolic events and prophecies, and prototypes of the salvation of mankind by the death of the Son of God.

These selections are from the Books of Genesis, Isaiah, Exodus, Job, Joshua the Prophet Zephaniah, II Book of Books, IV Book of Kings, the Prophet Jeremiah and the Prophet Daniel.

The story of Israel's crossing the Red Sea and Moses' Song of Victory over Pharaoh are chanted with the refrain "for He hath triumphed gloriously." The readings culminate with the account of the three youths in the fiery furnace of Babylon and their song of praise is chanted with the refrain "Sing unto the Lord and exalt Him unto ages of ages."

The lesson from the Epistle tells us that through Baptism we are entombed with Christ, that we may rise with Him. Before the Gospel lesson, the chanter instead of the customary Alleluia, sings the *prokeimenon* — "Arise, O God, and judge the earth, for thine is the inheritance of all nations," while the priest wearing brightly colored vestments, disperses bright colored flower petals in a procession through the entire church. This act is the first heralding of the joyful advent of the Resurrection. The Gospel lesson tells Christ's Resurrection. Instead of the customary Cherubic hymn, the 9th Ode of the Matins Canon is sung: "Let all human flesh keep silence nor think in itself of aught earthly." Then the liturgy of St. Basil continues in regular order.

Easter Service

In the service prior to the proclamation of the Resurrection, the Church laments the Crucifixion of Christ and His descent into Hades by repeating the canon of Holy Saturday.

At midnight, all the lights in the church are extinguished and the hymn, "Behold the dawn and rise of day," is chanted in total darkness. This matins *troparion* speaks of the myrrh-bearing women who first discovered the empty tomb early that first Easter morn.

After this hymn, the Royal Gates of the Iconostasion are opened and the priest comes forth with lighted candles in hand, chanting: "Come ye, take light from the light that never wanes. Come, glorify the Christ, risen from the dead."

At this point, the light is distributed to the congregation's candles. After this takes place, the priest carrying the Gospel and the Labaron (Banner) of the Resurrection, goes forth in solemn litany to the narthex of the church chanting, "Thy Resurrection, O Savior, angels sing in the heavens; make us also on earth worthy to glorify Thee with pure hearts."

In the center of the narthex, the priest begins the matins service. The Gospel, relating the story of the myrrh-bearing women, is read and the *troparion Christos Anesti* is chanted many times, accompanied by appropriate verses of the Old Testament. After the triumphant hymn of the *Christos Anesti*, the beautiful and stirring hymns of the Resurrection written by St. John of Damascus are chanted.

The Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom follows, at the close of which the eloquent Easter sermon of St. John Chrysostom is read by the celebrant. The Gospel lesson from St. John the Divine does not tell of the Resurrection but of the pre-eternal birth of Christ from God the Father and of

His divinity, manifested by His Resurrection.

Easter Sunday

At this time the Vesper Service of Love is celebrated.

The vespers consist only of paschal hymns. The entrance is done, with the Gospel and the chanting of the ancient apostolic hymn "Gladsome Light." The Gospel lesson is from St. John and tells of the Resurrection, Jesus' appearance before His disciples, the greeting of peace, the institution of the Sacrament of Penance and Confession and of Thomas' disbelief. As a manifestation that Christ's teaching has spread to the ends of the earth, the Gospel is read in several languages.

The week beginning with Easter Sunday is considered a glorious holiday and is called by the church "Diakainesimos" meaning, "A Renewal of Life." It is commonly called the "Week of Radiance."