

# Guide to Holy Week and Pascha 2026

## Holy Week Service Schedule

|  |  |
|--|--|
| Saturday, April 4th<br><u><a href="#">Lazarus Saturday</a></u>     | 9:00 AM- <a href="#">Orthros</a><br>10:00 AM- <a href="#">Divine Liturgy</a><br>6:30 PM- <a href="#">Great Vespers</a>   |
| Sunday, April 5th<br><u><a href="#">Palm Sunday</a></u>            | 9:00 AM- <a href="#">Orthros</a><br>10:00 AM- <a href="#">Divine Liturgy</a><br>6:30 PM- <a href="#">Bridegroom Orthros</a>  |
| Monday, April 6th<br><u><a href="#">Holy Monday</a></u>            | 6:30 AM- <a href="#">Presanctified Divine Liturgy</a><br>6:30 PM- <a href="#">Bridegroom Orthros</a>   |
| Tuesday, April 7th<br><u><a href="#">Holy Tuesday</a></u>          | 6:30 AM- <a href="#">Presanctified Divine Liturgy</a><br>6:30 PM- <a href="#">Bridegroom Orthros</a>   |
| Wednesday, April 8th<br><u><a href="#">Holy Wednesday</a></u>      | 6:30 AM- <a href="#">Presanctified Divine Liturgy</a><br>6:30 PM- <a href="#">The Sacrament of Holy Unction</a>  |
| Thursday, April 9th<br><u><a href="#">Holy Thursday</a></u>        | 8:00 AM- <a href="#">Orthros of Holy Thursday</a><br>9:00 AM- <a href="#">Vesperal Divine Liturgy for the Institution of the Mystical Supper</a><br>7:00 PM- <a href="#">Orthros of Holy Friday (12 Passion Gospels)</a>   |
| Friday, April 10th<br><u><a href="#">Holy Friday</a></u>           | 9:00 AM- <a href="#">The Great (Royal) Hours</a><br>4:00 PM- <a href="#">Great Vespers of Holy Friday (Taking Down of Christ from the Cross)</a><br>7:00 PM- <a href="#">Orthros of Holy Saturday (Lamentations at the Tomb)</a>   |
| Saturday, April 11th<br><u><a href="#">Holy Saturday</a></u>       | 9:00 AM- <a href="#">Vesperal Divine Liturgy of St. Basil the Great (Proto-Anastasi), with Baptisms/Chrismations</a><br>11:30 PM- <a href="#">The Vigil of Holy Pascha (Midnight Office, Resurrection Service, Orthros, Divine Liturgy)</a><br>2:30 AM- Blessing of Pascha Baskets and Pascha Celebration (Breaking of the Fast) |
| Sunday, April 12th<br><u><a href="#">Great and Holy Pascha</a></u> | 1:00 PM- <a href="#">Agape Vespers</a><br>2:30 PM- Agape Picnic at William Springs Park, Mt. Pleasant.   |

## Saturday, April 4th — Lazarus Saturday



### *Meaning/Significance*

Lazarus Saturday is the first day of Holy Week. On this day, we celebrate the rising from the dead of St. Lazarus, the righteous friend of Christ, who had been dead for four days. As we chant in the Apolytikion of the Feast, the raising of Lazarus is seen as a confirmation of the universal resurrection. This miracle led many to faith, but it also led to the chief priest's and Pharisees' decision to put Christ to death.

### *Liturgical Practice*

On the morning of Lazarus Saturday, we celebrate Orthros and Divine Liturgy. Liturgically, the commemoration of the raising of Lazarus and the Entry of Christ into Jerusalem are a double feast, celebrated on Lazarus Saturday and Palm Sunday. During this feast, we also chant the para-liturgical hymn “Rejoice O Bethany”, a beautiful hymn which tells the story of the raising of Lazarus as is unique to the Antiochian tradition.

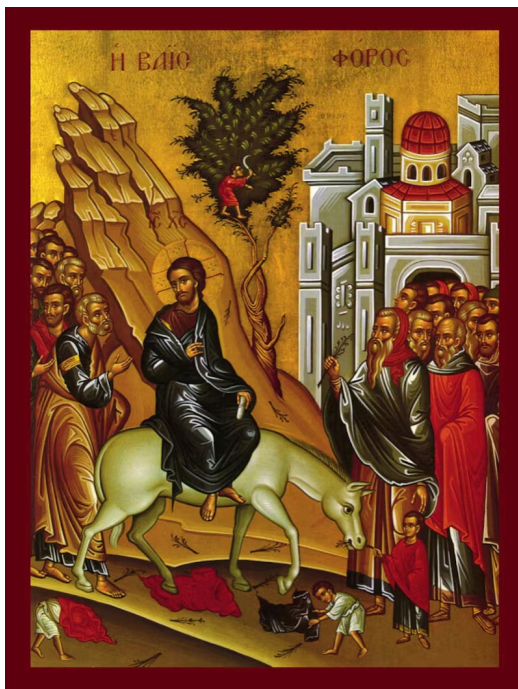
## ***Practical Notes/Reminders***

The fast of Great Lent ends on Lazarus Saturday, but we begin the separate week-long Holy Week fast. We continue with the strict fast until Pascha, but fish is permitted on Palm Sunday.

## ***Events***

A tradition for Lazarus Saturday is the preparation of Lazarakia, sweet bread in the shape of man wrapped in grave clothes. If you would like to make some to bring to Church, here are instructions for how to prepare them: [Lazarakia Bread](#)

## **Sunday, April 5th — Palm Sunday**



## ***Meaning/Significance***

Palm Sunday celebrates the glorious feast of the Entrance of Christ into Jerusalem. 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 Savior, but with the definite declaration that His Kingdom was not of this world. The news that Christ was in Bethany provoked a general enthusiasm of acceptance, but also of indignation among the High Priests, who had decided to kill Christ. 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.*"

While many greeted Christ as a king coming to take up an earthly throne, Christ was actually entering the Holy City in preparation to be enthroned upon the Cross.

### ***Liturgical Practice***

On Palm Sunday, we celebrate Orthros and Divine Liturgy in the morning and we decorate the Church with palm branches. Palm branches are also blessed and distributed to the faithful. At the end of Divine Liturgy we make a procession outdoors carrying the "palms of victory."

### ***Practical Notes/Reminders***

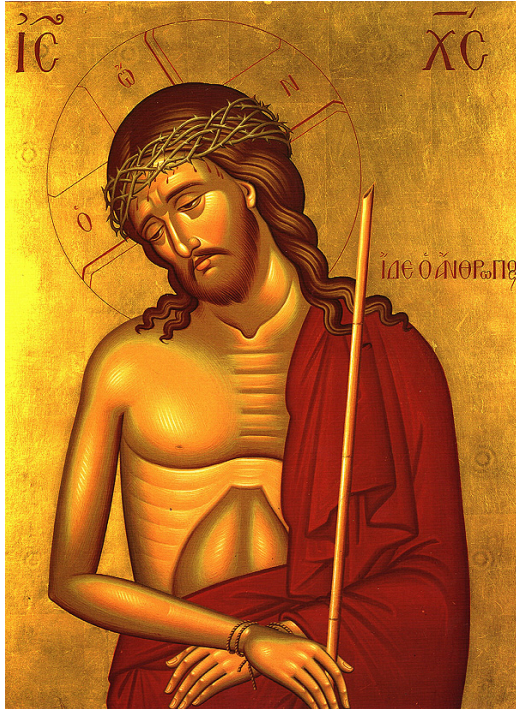
During the procession, the clergy will go first followed by the choir and the faithful. We will sing the Trisagion Hymn and festal hymns while we process. Please do not shout out Hosanna during/after the procession, as this is not a normative practice within our tradition.

Please remember that the palm branches have been blessed, so please keep them or put them somewhere outside, but do not dispose of them in the trash.

Fish is permitted on Palm Sunday.

We return to Church on Sunday evening for the first of the Bridegroom Orthros services, celebrated in anticipation for Holy Monday.

## Monday, April 6th — Holy Monday



### *Meaning/Significance*

Most of the services of Holy Week are celebrated in anticipation, meaning each service is rotated ahead twelve hours. The evening service, therefore, is actually the service of the next morning, while the morning services of Holy Thursday and Holy Saturday are actually the services of the coming evening.

Therefore, the services of Holy Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday are celebrated on the evening prior to the day. These services are known as the Bridegroom or Nymphios Orthros Services. We behold Christ as the Bridegroom of the Church, bearing the marks of His suffering, yet preparing a marriage Feast for us in God's Kingdom.

Each of these Bridegroom Orthros services has a particular theme. On Holy Monday, the Blessed Joseph, the son of Jacob the Patriarch, is commemorated. Joseph is often seen as a Type of Christ. Joseph was betrayed by his brothers, thrown into a pit, and sold into slavery by them. In the same way, our Lord was

rejected, betrayed by His own, and sold into the slavery of death. The Gospel reading for the day is about the barren fig tree, which Christ cursed and withered because it bore no fruit. The fig tree is a parable of those who have heard God's word, but who fail to bear the fruit of obedience. Originally the withering of the fig tree was a testimony against those Jews who rejected God's word and His Messiah. However, it is also a warning to all people, in all times, of the importance of not only hearing God's word, but putting it into action.

## ***Liturgical Practice***

The Bridegroom Orthros follows the typical structure of Orthros with some expectations. For example, instead of signing “God is the Lord” as we do outside of the Lenten cycle, we sing the “Alleluia” interspersed by the prescribed verses. At the first service of Palm Sunday evening, the priest carries the icon of Christ the Bridegroom in procession as we sing “Behold the Bridegroom comes in the middle of the night...”

On the morning of Holy Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday, we will also celebrate the Presanctified Divine Liturgy in the early morning, at 6:30am, hopefully allowing some to attend before going to work.

## ***Practical Notes/Reminders***

While the basic structure of the Bridegroom services is the same for all three days, the hymns and readings are different according to the theme of the day. Please make an effort to be at as many of these services as possible.

## **Tuesday, April 7th — Holy Tuesday**



## ***Meaning/Significance***

The theme of Holy Tuesday focuses on The Parable of the Ten Virgins, which is read on this day. It tells the story of the five virgins who filled their lamps in preparation for receiving the bridegroom while the other five allowed their lamps to go out, and hence were shut out of the marriage feast. This parable is a warning that we must always be prepared to receive our Lord when He comes again. The theme of the day is reinforced by the expostelation hymn we sing: "I see Thy Bridal Chamber adorned, O my Savior, but have no wedding garment that I may enter. O Giver of Light, enlighten the vesture of my soul, and save me."

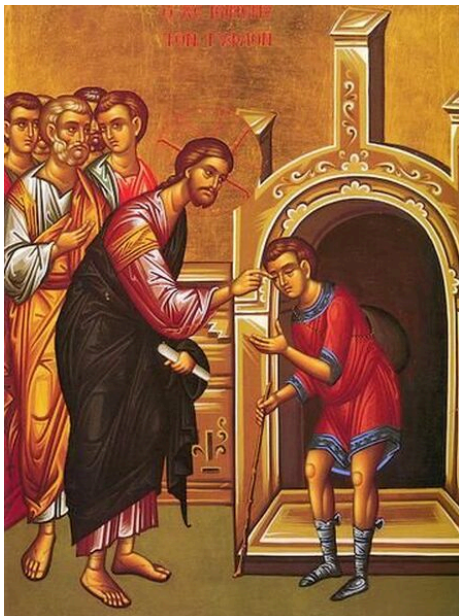
## ***Liturgical Practice***

The Bridegroom Orthros of Holy Tuesday is celebrated on Monday evening. Once again, we will also have Presanctified Divine Liturgy on Tuesday morning.

## ***Practical Notes/Reminders***

While the basic structure of the Bridegroom services is the same for all three days, the hymns and readings are different according to the theme of the day. Please make an effort to be at as many of these services as possible.

## **Wednesday, April 8th — Holy Wednesday**



## ***Meaning/Significance***

The theme of Holy Wednesday is repentance and forgiveness. We remember the sinful woman who anointed our Lord in anticipation of His death.

Her repentance and love of Christ is the theme of the beautiful "Hymn of Kassiani" which is chanted on this night, reminding us one more time, before "it is too late," that we too may be forgiven if we repent.

On Wednesday evening, we celebrate the Sacrament of Holy Unction. While the celebration of Holy Unction was a later addition to Holy Week, it is included now the "healing of soul and body" as we approach the celebration of the resurrection.

## ***Liturgical Practice***

The Bridegroom Orthros of Holy Wednesday is celebrated on Tuesday evening. Once again, we will also have Presanctified Divine Liturgy on Wednesday morning.

In the evening on Holy Wednesday, we celebrate the Sacrament of Holy Unction. In this Mystery, the faithful are anointed with oil which is consecrated during this service. The service consists of seven Epistle and Gospel readings.

## ***Practical Notes/Reminders***

Holy Unction is a Sacrament of the Church, therefore only Orthodox Christians are able to receive the anointing of Holy Unction. Everyone is welcome to attend the service.

For those who are anointed with Holy Unction, remember to not shower or wash off the oil of Holy Unction the evening after the service.

## Thursday, April 9th — Holy Thursday



### ***Meaning/Significance***

On Holy Thursday we turn to the last events of our Lord and His Passion. Thursday morning begins with a Vespereal Divine Liturgy commemorating the Mystical Supper. This is actually Holy Thursday evening's service celebrated in the morning in anticipation.

On this day just before His Passion, Christ instituted the Mystical Supper, giving the disciples bread and wine and His Body and Blood.

Everyone who is able should make an effort to receive Holy Communion at this service as it was at the Mystical Supper that our Lord instituted the Holy Eucharist. At this Liturgy a second Host is consecrated and kept in the Tabernacle. It is from this Host that Holy Communion is distributed to the shut-ins and the sick throughout the coming year.

### ***Liturgical Practice***

We begin Thursday morning with the Orthros of Holy Thursday. This is followed by the Vespers Divine Liturgy of St. Basil the Great.

Everyone who is able should make an effort to receive Holy Communion at this service as it was at the Mystical Supper that our Lord instituted the Holy Eucharist. At this Liturgy, a second Lamb is consecrated and kept in the Tabernacle, used throughout the year when Holy Communion is distributed to the shut-ins and the sick.

### ***Practical Notes/Reminders***

On the evening of Holy Thursday, we celebrate the Orthros of Holy Friday, with the reading of the Twelve Passion Gospels. This is one of the services to prioritize attending.

## **Friday, April 10th — Great and Holy Friday**



## ***Meaning/Significance***

Great and Holy Friday commemorates the holy and saving Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ. We commemorate Christ willingly enduring the spitting, scourging, mocking, the Cross, and death for our sakes. We also remember the confession of the good and penitent thief.

## ***Liturgical Practice***

The commemoration of Holy Friday begins on Thursday evening with the Orthros of Holy Friday, known as the Service of the Twelve Passion Gospels. This is a lengthy service, but one of the most moving of the liturgical year. In the Orthros service the Church is mostly darkened and we read the Gospels relating to the Passion of Christ. After the reading of the fifth Gospel, the Church is fully darkened and the priest processes carrying the large Cross. The people prostrate as the priest processes and chants the 15th Antiphon, "Today is hung upon the Tree..." After the Cross is carried through the Church, it is placed at the front on the icon of the Body and Christ is placed upon the Cross. When the service is concluded, the faithful will reverently come forward prostrating and venerating Christ upon the Cross.

On Friday morning, we celebrate the Great (Royal) Hours. These solemn hours are observed as we read the various accounts and hymns concerning the crucifixion. In the afternoon we celebrate the Vespers service of the taking down of Christ's body from the Cross. During the Gospel reading, our Lord's body is taken off the cross and wrapped in a white linen sheet. This act commemorates the removal of Christ's body from the cross by Joseph of Arimathea (John 19:38-42). Later in the service, the Epitaphios, with Christ's body on it is carried in procession and placed in the decorated tomb.

The evening service on Holy Friday is the Orthros of Holy Saturday and includes the Lamentations at the Tomb.

## ***Practical Notes/Reminders***

Holy Friday is the strictest fasting day of the year. It is traditional to eat nothing at all on this day, but as little as possible should be eaten. It is also the only day in the entire year that no Divine Liturgy of any kind can be celebrated.

On Holy Friday, Orthodox Christians should stop their daily cares and attend the divine services. If possible, the day should be taken off of work/school. We should also avoid watching television or spending time on our phones and social media. Our homes should have a subdued atmosphere and our focus should be on our reverence for this holy day.

### ***Events***

Some help will be needed on Holy Friday with the decorating of the bier with flowers and the preparation the bay leaves for Holy Saturday. More information will be shared about this soon.

We will also have an opportunity for the children of the parish to decorate Pascha candles on Holy Friday after the morning Royal Hours service, around 11am. These candles will be used at the Paschal Vigil on Saturday night. If your children plan to participate in the decorating or Pascha candles, please email Presvytera Elisabeth: [presvyteraelisabethk@gmail.com](mailto:presvyteraelisabethk@gmail.com)

## **Saturday, April 11th — Holy Saturday**



## ***Meaning/Significance***

Holy Saturday is a day of quiet, hope, and waiting in anticipation. It commemorates the Holy Sabbath, which the incarnate Son of God now keeps in the flesh, resting in the tomb.

Theologically, it is the day in which the Harrowing of Hades takes place, and Adam and Eve representing all mankind are pulled up from their tombs by Christ.

## ***Liturgical Practice***

The celebration of Holy Saturday begins with the Orthros service on Friday evening. This service is most well known for its inclusion of the Lamentations at the Tomb, beautiful hymns that are sung before the tomb of Christ. Small candles will be available for the faithful to light and carry during the Lamentations and for the procession. The hymns slowly transition from that of mourning to a dawning hope of the resurrection. Toward the end of the Lamentations, the priest sprinkles the tomb and the entire Church with rose water. The entire bier is then carried in procession outside as we sing the Trisagion Hymn.

In the morning we celebrate a Vespers Divine Liturgy which is called the First Resurrection (Proto-Anastasi). It is traditional that baptisms/chrisinations take place during this service. The liturgical colors are changed to white as we anticipate Christ's Resurrection. As the choir chants "Arise O God and Judge the earth...", bay (laurel) leaves are strewn throughout the church during the service, because in the ancient world laurel leaves were a sign of victory. There are numerous readings from the Old Testament during this service, showing the preparation in all things before for the coming of Christ.

## ***Practical Notes/Reminders***

Holy Saturday is still a fasting day. We do not break the fast until after the midnight Vigil on Saturday night. Pascha baskets are blessed after the Paschal Vigil and not after the Saturday morning service. This should be a day of quiet and rest in preparation for the celebration of Pascha on Saturday night.

This year, the Columbia Mule Day parade is on the morning of Holy Saturday. Please plan accordingly when attending services on Saturday morning.

## **Sunday, April 12th — Great and Holy Pascha**



### ***Meaning/Significance***

On Great and Holy Pascha, we celebrate the life-giving Resurrection of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. This is the Great feast of feasts, the festival of festivals. It is the most important day of the entire liturgical year.

### ***Liturgical Practice***

Our celebration of Great and Holy Pascha takes place late on Saturday night with the Vigil of Holy Pascha. We arrive at the Church at 11:30 PM and begin the services of Pascha. Candles will be available in the back as you enter the Church. The Vigil begins with the Midnight Office. At this point, the Church is darkened except for the candles and vigil lamps. We sing the odes of the Canon of Holy Saturday, building with anticipation of the coming proclamation of the resurrection.

After the conclusion of the Midnight Office, all the candles/vigil lamps are extinguished and the Church is fully darkened. The priest then comes out of the Sanctuary, carrying the Paschal candle and chanting “Come receive the light...” The faithful then come forward and light their candles from the Paschal candle. The flame is then passed throughout the Church, illuminating all the candles. We then make a procession outside, singing “Thy resurrection, O Christ our Savior...” Once we arrive to the front of the Church we remain outside and the Gospel of the resurrection is read. After this we finally chant the Paschal troparion, “Christ is risen from the dead, trampling down death by death, and upon those in the tombs bestowing life.”

The priest then knocks on the door of the Church, proclaiming the verses from the Psalms, “Lift up your gates O ye princes...” The doors are then opened and the priest gives the Paschal greeting of “Christ is risen”, to which the faithful respond “Truly, He is risen.” We then enter the Church and all the lights are illuminated. We sing the Paschal canon as we begin the Orthros of Holy Pascha. We festively rejoice and repeatedly sign the troparion of Pascha and proclaim Christ is risen.

After the conclusion of the Orthros of Pascha, we celebrate the Divine Liturgy which includes the Paschal Homily of St. John Chrysostom.

After the Divine Liturgy, traditional red eggs are distributed to the faithful. The Pascha baskets are blessed and we celebrate by breaking the fast together.

On Sunday afternoon, we will celebrate Agape Vespers. During Agape Vespers, we read the Gospel in as many languages as possible.

### ***Practical Notes/Reminders***

The services for Holy Pascha are on Saturday night at the Paschal Vigil. Please do not think that Holy Saturday morning or Agape Vespers on Sunday afternoon suffice as a substitute for the Paschal Vigil.

We will bless the Pascha baskets after the Paschal Vigil. Please leave all baskets in the fellowship/coffee hour area and do not bring them into the nave. Everyone is welcome to stay and break the fast together and you are encouraged to bring food in your baskets for yourselves and to share. For information on how to put together a Pascha basket, look at this resource: [Pascha Basket Guide](#)

## ***Events***

We need some volunteers to help prepare the red hardboiled eggs to distribute on Pascha. Please find more information and sign-up here: [Pascha Red Eggs](#)

As we do not have enough space for everyone to sit at tables in the fellowship area, we could use some extra tables/chairs during the celebration after the Paschal Vigil. As long as weather permits, we will plan to set up extra tables and chairs outside on the concrete area in front of the Church.

If you are able to read the Gospel in a language besides English for Agape Vespers, please reach out to Fr. Gabriel. The Gospel reading for the day is John 20:19-25

If you have not yet put in your RSVP for the Agape Picnic, please do so here: [Agape Picnic RSVP](#)