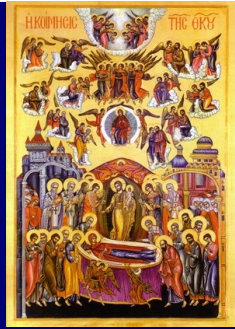


CHURCH STAFF

- Parish Priest: Very Reverend Archimandrite Christodoulos Margellos
- Parish Council President: Christy Chappell Belkin
- Philoptochos President: Maria Molzahn
- Sunday School Directors: Susu Saba
- Greek School: Ilektra Kolokouri
- Choir Director: George Tzougros

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Wonder Worker

APRIL 2025

OUR JOURNEY THROUGH HOLY WEEK; FROM THE CROSS TO THE EMPTY TOMB

Great and Holy Week stands as the spiritual summit of the Orthodox Christian year. It is far more than a historical remembrance; it is a profound journey we undertake together, walking alongside our Lord Jesus Christ through the final, pivotal days of His earthly ministry – from His moments of earthly triumph and agonizing betrayal, through His voluntary Passion and life-giving death, culminating in His glorious Resurrection. The services of this week are not mere commemorations of past events; they are liturgical enactments that bring these saving realities into our present experience, inviting us to participate directly in the mystery of our salvation.

The spiritual path of Holy Week guides us through a powerful progression of emotions and theological themes. We begin with anticipation and joy, witnessing Christ's power over death and His triumphant entry into Jerusalem. This gives way to solemn watchfulness and a call to repentance during the first days of the week. The journey then descends into the depths of sorrow and mourning as we contemplate the Lord's Passion, Crucifixion, and Burial. Holy Saturday becomes a day of profound, watchful expectation, a unique state the Church calls *charmolypti* – joyful sorrow – where grief mingles with the unshakeable hope of the Resurrection. Finally, this intense pilgrimage erupts into the unparalleled, uncontainable joy of Pascha, the Resurrection of our Lord. The very structure of these services is designed to guide us through this transformative experience, mirroring the disciples' own path from fear and confusion to the radiant certainty of the empty tomb. Holy Week serves as the heart of our liturgical year, the lens through which we understand the entirety of our faith and Christian life, centering everything on the Paschal Mystery of Christ's death and resurrection. Let us, therefore, enter this sacred time with reverence and open hearts, ready to follow Christ and share in His life-giving Passion and glorious victory over death.

Entering the Path: Lazarus Saturday and Palm Sunday

Our journey into Holy Week begins not with sorrow, but with two days of profound anticipation and paradoxical joy, revealing both Christ's divine power and the path He chooses towards His voluntary Passion.

Saturday of Lazarus

On the Saturday before Palm Sunday, the Church commemorates one of Christ's most stunning miracles: the raising of Lazarus from the dead after his body had already lain in the tomb for four days (John 11). Mary and Martha, Lazarus' sisters, had sent word to Jesus when their brother was ill, but He deliberately delayed His arrival. When He finally reached Bethany, He encountered their grief and the stark reality of death – the decay and separation that sin brought into God's creation. The Gospel records that

Continued on next page

"Jesus wept" (John 11:35), showing His deep human empathy and sorrow for His friend and for the state of fallen humanity.

Yet, in the face of death, Jesus declared, "I am the Resurrection and the Life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die" (John 11:25-26). Calling Lazarus forth from the tomb, Christ demonstrated His absolute authority and power over death itself. This miracle served as a powerful reassurance to His disciples and to us: though He Himself would soon suffer and die, He is the Lord and Victor. The raising of Lazarus is a prophecy in action, confirming the future universal resurrection of all mankind and vividly foreshadowing Christ's own Resurrection just eight days later. It is a "little Pascha," a foretaste of the great victory to come. However, this display of divine power also tragically solidified the determination of the religious authorities to have Jesus killed. Thus, the very event that reveals Christ as the Lord of Life propels Him further along the path to Golgotha, highlighting that His kingdom is achieved through sacrifice, not earthly might.

The services on Lazarus Saturday reflect this resurrectional theme. Bright vestments, often green or gold, are worn. The Divine Liturgy includes joyous hymns like the Apolytikion, "By raising Lazarus from the dead before Your Passion, You confirmed the universal resurrection, O Christ God!" and the Kontakion, "Christ - the Joy, the Truth, and the Light of All... has appeared... He has become the Image of our resurrection...". Significantly, the usual Trisagion ("Holy God...") is replaced by the baptismal hymn, "As many as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. Alleluia!" (Galatians 3:27). This liturgical choice powerfully connects Lazarus's rising, and the promise of universal resurrection it confirms, to our own personal experience of dying and rising with Christ in the waters of Baptism. It affirms that Christ's victory over death is not just His own, but is offered to each of us.

Palm Sunday

Following the raising of Lazarus, word of Jesus spread, and anticipation grew as He approached Jerusalem for the Passover feast. On the Sunday before Pascha, we celebrate His Triumphal Entry into the Holy City. Fulfilling the prophecy of Zechariah (9:9), Jesus entered not as a conquering general, but humbly, riding on a donkey's colt. The crowds, ecstatic after witnessing or hearing of the raising of Lazarus, went out to meet Him, spreading their cloaks and waving palm branches – symbols of victory and joy. They shouted, "Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord! The King of Israel!" (John 12:13). Hosanna, meaning "Save, we pray!" was a messianic acclamation.

On this day, the Church joyously receives Christ as King and Lord, just as the crowds did. We, too, are given palms, blessed during the Orthros service, as tokens of Christ's victory over sin and death. The services are bright and festive, using the same Apolytikion as Lazarus Saturday or the alternate hymn, "As by baptism we were buried with Thee..." linking our baptismal rising to Christ's coming glory. The Kontakion proclaims, "Sitting on Your throne in heaven, carried on a foal on earth, O Christ God! Accept the praise of angels and the songs of children who sing: Blessed is He that comes to recall Adam!". The liturgical color remains bright, typically green or gold. Key scriptural readings include Philippians 4:4-9 and John 12:1-18.

Palm Sunday marks the official beginning of Holy Week. Yet, there is a profound solemnity beneath the joyous celebration. We remember that the same crowds shouting "Hosanna" would, only days later, cry "Crucify Him!". Their understanding of kingship was earthly and political; they failed to grasp that Christ's Kingdom was "not of this world" (John 18:36) and that His path to glory led through suffering and the Cross. Palm Sunday thus summons us not only to acclaim our King but also to prepare to follow Him, the Suffering Servant, on the path of sacrifice. The joy of this day is real, but it is tempered by the knowledge of the impending Passion.

Preparing for the Passion: Holy Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday

The first three days of Holy Week form a distinct liturgical unit, guiding us deeper into the solemn atmosphere of preparation for the Lord's Passion. The evening services on Palm Sunday, Holy Monday, and Holy Tuesday are known as the Bridegroom Services, setting the tone for these days of watchful expectation.

The Bridegroom Services (Nymphios)

These services, technically the Matins (Orthros) of the following day celebrated in anticipation, derive their name from the Parable of the Ten Virgins (Matthew 25:1-13). In this parable, Christ is depicted as the Bridegroom (Nymphios in Greek) coming in the middle of the night for the wedding feast. The Church is His Bride, and the Kingdom of God is likened to a bridal chamber. This imagery emphasizes the intimacy of Christ's love for us, but also carries a strong warning. The Bridegroom's arrival relates to Christ's Second Coming (Parousia) and the final judgment.

The central hymn of these services, chanted solemnly, captures this theme: "Behold, the Bridegroom comes in the middle of the night, and blessed is the servant whom He shall find watching; and again unworthy is he whom He shall find heedless. Beware, therefore, O my soul, lest thou be borne down with sleep... lest thou be shut out from the Kingdom...". This hymn, along with the Exapostilarion "Thy bridal chamber I see adorned, O my Savior, but have no wedding garment that I may enter..." , urges us to spiritual vigilance, repentance, and readiness to meet the Lord. The atmosphere is somber, often reflected in dark purple or black vestments. On Palm Sunday evening, the service begins with a procession where the priest carries the icon of Christ the Bridegroom, placing it for veneration. These services, focusing on judgment and the need for preparedness, create a spiritual urgency that naturally leads us toward repentance and the desire for the healing offered later in the week.

During the mornings of Holy Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday, the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts is often celebrated. This service, consisting of Vespers combined with the distribution of Holy Communion consecrated the previous Sunday, allows the faithful to receive the Eucharist during these days of intensified fasting and prayer.

Holy Monday

The Bridegroom service focuses on two main themes. First, the commemoration of the Old Testament Patriarch Joseph. Joseph, beloved by his father, betrayed by his brothers, sold into slavery, falsely accused, yet ultimately rising to power and forgiving those who wronged him, serves as a powerful prefigurement, or "type," of Christ. His suffering and faithfulness foreshadow Christ's own rejection, betrayal, suffering, and ultimate victory and forgiveness.

The second theme is the Cursing of the Barren Fig Tree (Matthew 21:18-43). Finding a fig tree full of leaves but bearing no fruit, Jesus cursed it, and it withered instantly. This fig tree symbolizes those who hear God's word but fail to produce the "fruits of repentance" – a life of active faith, love, and good deeds. While initially a judgment against the hypocrisy of some religious leaders of His time, it serves as a timeless warning to all believers about the necessity of genuine, fruitful faith. The Matins Gospel reading covers this event and related parables.

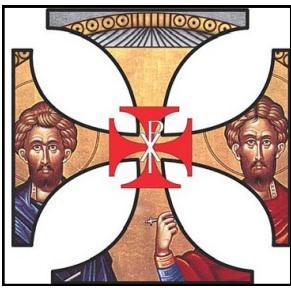
Holy Tuesday

The theme of vigilance continues, highlighted by two parables related to the Second Coming. The primary focus is the Parable of the Ten Virgins (Matthew 25:1-13). Five virgins were wise, bringing extra oil for their lamps while waiting for the bridegroom; five were foolish and unprepared. When the bridegroom arrived unexpectedly, only the wise were ready to enter the feast; the door was shut to the foolish. This parable powerfully underscores the need for constant spiritual readiness, as we do not know the hour of the Lord's return or the end of our own lives. The "oil" can be understood as the grace of the Holy Spirit acquired through a life of virtue and good deeds.

The second parable is that of the Talents (Matthew 25:14-30), which emphasizes faithful stewardship of the gifts God has given us and accountability at the final judgment. We are called to actively use and increase the spiritual "talents" entrusted to us. The Matins Gospel readings delve into Christ's confrontations with the Pharisees and His teachings about the end times.

Holy Wednesday

Holy Wednesday centers on two contrasting figures and the critical theme of repentance. We commemorate the sinful woman (traditionally, though not exclusively, identified by some hymnographers like St. Kassia-



FOCUS ON PHILOPTOCHOS HELP US TO HELP OTHERS

AGAPE FORWARD, April News

We are truly blessed to be part of a vibrant community that works hard to support our Philoptochos mission of promoting charity, benevolence, and philanthropic outreach; preserving life and family; and perpetuating and promoting our Orthodox faith and traditions (National Philoptochos). This past month in collaboration with our Greek School, we hosted our annual March 25th dinner and raffle. Thank you to Beth and Leda for chairing the event, and thank you to everyone who helped! The money raised from this event will go to support the needy in Greece and Cyprus.

During our regular meeting in March, we planned for the egg dying for Pascha week, happening on 4/17. We also discussed the visitations to our shut-ins, one of the most important of our ministries. Further, we reported out one of our newer activities, making a meal for the families at the Ronald McDonald House in Madison. We also allocated resources to the Madison Reading Project (madisonreadingproject.com) which provides books to needy children in the Madison area. These activities continue to help us work on the Metropolis goal of "sharing our talents."

Along with the church services and activities planned for Pascha there will be a few more important happenings in April and May. As shared by Father Christodoulos, on Friday, April 25, his Eminence, Metropolitan Nathanael will be celebrating Divine Liturgy at the St. Iakovos Retreat Center in celebration of ζωοδόχος Πηγή (The Life Giving Spring or Fountain). More information will be forthcoming but The Hellenic Foundation will assist with bus transportation if we can fill the bus! More information will be coming out soon!

Our next meeting will be via Zoom, on Tuesday, 4/22. An email will be sent out closer to the date of the meeting.

As always feel free to reach out to me at philomadison@gmail.com



Order Form for Greek Easter Breads (Tsourekia)

The price is \$12 for each 1-pound Round Bread

Orders are due by Sunday, April 6



Your Name _____

Email Address and/or Phone Number _____

Number of Breads Ordered _____ X \$12 = \$ _____

Payment Options:

- 1) The link below will take you to our secure payment processor for Credit/Debit Card Payments.

[Click here to pay electronically](#) or scan the QR code below to be taken to payment page.

- 2) You can mail your order form with a check (made out to *Philoptochos with Easter Bread* in the memo section) to the Philoptochos Treasurer.

Beth Fatsis
1215 E. Johnson St
Madison WI 53703

- 3) You can put your order form and your payment of cash or a check (made out to *Philoptochos with Easter Bread* in the memo section) in an envelope and place the envelope in the Philoptochos philanthropy basket in the church's exo-narthex.

All Easter Breads (Tsourekia) ordered can be picked up from Holy Friday (April 18) through Easter (April 20).

Your order will be labeled with your name, and it will be placed on a table near the choir practice area in the church's lower-level fellowship hall.

Please email Maria Papas Heide at maria.heide@wisc.edu or call her at (608) 772-5545 with any questions.

Scan QR code with your phone camera to be taken to payment link.



YOUTH CORNER



April



Hope you are all having a great lenten season,
Below are events happening for this month:

On **Saturday April 6th**, the older students from grades 5th -12th graders will have Confession with Father after Sunday school during coffee hour. Students who aren't able to attend and would still like to have confession, please reach out to Father to set up a time that best works for you.

On **Saturday April 12th**, we will have our **Lazarus Retreat**, starting at 11:00am-1:30pm. There will be liturgy that day, orthos starting at 8:30 am and liturgy starting at 9:30am. After liturgy, in the church hall:

- There will be a potluck, so families please bring with you a lenten dish to share after liturgy.
- There will be fun games and activities that go along with Holy Week.
- Families will help make palm crosses for Palm Sunday.
- Children will decorate their own candle that they can use during services on Holy Thursday, Good Friday, and Holy Saturday.

During the time of the retreat the church will have their annual church cleaning. Cleaning the church is a beautiful way to come together as a family to help make our church clean and ready for Pascha!

On **Sunday April 13th** and **Sunday April 20th** there will be no Sunday school for Palm Sunday and Easter. Classes will resume on Sunday May 6th.

From all the teachers, we want to wish you all a strong end to the Lenten period and a blessed Pascha!

Susu Akkawi

COMMUNITY NEWS

PARISH COUNCIL MEETING: Will be held on Tuesday, April 8th at 7:00 p.m.

PHILOPTOCHOS MEETING: The Next meeting will be on Tuesday, April 22nd 7:00 p.m. via Zoom.

ADULT RELIGIOUS EDUCATION CLASS: We have begun A.R.E. classes. We will be starting "Spiritual Counsels" Classes are on Wednesday's at 11:00 a.m. and Thursday at 6:30 p.m. via Zoom. Everyone is welcome to join us.

WOMEN'S SPIRITUAL MEETING: Women's spiritual zoom meetings will be on Thursday, April 10th at 7:00 p.m. If you are interested in participating and you haven't signed in yet please contact Peli Galiti at pegaliti@gmail.com You will get the zoom link in your email.

STEWARDSHIP 2025 APPEAL: At our Stewardship meeting, we have discussed the changes at Assumption. The church is in constant transition, and our aim is to anticipate the time, talent, and treasure needs of our community. We need to combine the Strengths of our heritage, our Orthodox Tradition, and our faith in God to encourage what we do now & toward the future. The Church needs the involvement of you and me, & with the Help of God, to shape our programs to meet the needs of our community & to reach out to others, outside of our community. Please volunteer this year your time and talents, for the good of the church. Nearly every committee has need of the talents and time of leaders & contributors.

ALTAR BOY WORKSHOP SATURDAY, APRIL 12th: We are hosting a workshop for our current Altar Boy & for anyone wanting to join the ranks. We will be going over proper procedure and order for services and processions. Anyone who would like to join the Altar boys is Welcome but must be at least 8 years old. It will be following Liturgy on Saturday, 12th during the Saturday of Lazarus Retreat. Come join our blessed tradition of serving God.

CHURCH CLEANING FOR PASCHA: As we do every year in preparation for Holy Week & Pascha we will be asking all parishioners to come join us on Saturday, April 12th beginning at 11:00 a.m. to help us clean the church and polish our Holy items. Come help us beautify our church.

GIRLS NEEDED FOR MYRRH-BEARERS: We are in need of girls to serve as Myrrh-Bearing women on Holy Friday evening and Saturday evening Anastasi Service. If your daughters are interested, please see Fr. Christodoulos or Susu Akkawi. God Bless

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED FOR HOLY FRIDAY MORNING EPITAPHIOS SET UP: As every year Margo leads a group of dedicated people in setting up the Epitaphios with the beautiful flowers in anticipation of the Lamentation Service.

She is always looking for more people to train and help. It is important that we keep this glorious tradition alive so we can continue to have the tomb of our Lord in Splendor.

If you would like to help, please come on Friday, May 3rd at 9:00 a.m. Any help is greatly appreciated.

PALM SUNDAY LUNCHEON: On Sunday, April 13th our Parish Council is hosting our Annual Palm Sunday Luncheon. We will have a traditional Palm Sunday Meal of baked fish with sides, a salad and fresh bread. Dessert will also be provided.

The Cost of the meal is \$15. Please R.S.V.P. after liturgies or scanning QR Code on the flier or you can email - christy.chappell@gmail.com

Please reserve by Sunday April 9th, 2025.

BRIGHT FRIDAY: Believe it or not, Bright Friday is rapidly approaching. Once again, His Eminence, Metropolitan Nathanael will be celebrating Divine Liturgy at the St. Iakovos Retreat Center on Friday, April 25, 2025 in celebration of ζωοδοχος Πηγη. If you are interested in going please see Maria Molzhan.

PLEASE REMEMBER THE CHURCH IN YOUR WILL OR ESTATE PLANNING: As we begin this new year, please consider making a Planned Gift to the Church. A Planned Gift is an opportunity to leave a legacy that strengthens the Church and supports its vital ministries and will leave an impact that will be felt for years to come. It may also give you substantial current tax benefits as well as estate tax benefits. If you are interested in finding out more about the many ways that the Church can be included in your will or estate planning, please contact a Parish Council Member.

Palm Sunday Luncheon

APRIL 13, 2025

All are welcome!

Join us in the social hall following Liturgy.

MENU

Lemon Baked Cod
Roasted Red Potatoes
Green Beans
Dinner roll
Salad

\$15 per person

RSVP by Wednesday, April 9.
Scan the QR code below or email
[christy.chappell@gmail.com.](mailto:christy.chappell@gmail.com)





APRIL EVENTS

LENT PERIOD LEADING UP TO PASCHA

APR 06 5TH-12TH GRADE CONFESSION
AFTER SUNDAY SCHOOL

APR 11-13 KING OF KINGS MOVIE
CHECK YOUR NEAREST THEATER

APR 12 LAZARUS RETREAT
11:30 AM - 1:30 PM

APR 13 & 20 NO SUNDAY SCHOOL
PALM SUNDAY & PASCHA

JULY 11-13

Assumption Greek Orthodox Church
11 N. Seventh St., Madison, WI 53704

ICONOGRAPHY WORKSHOP \$270 for 3-day class

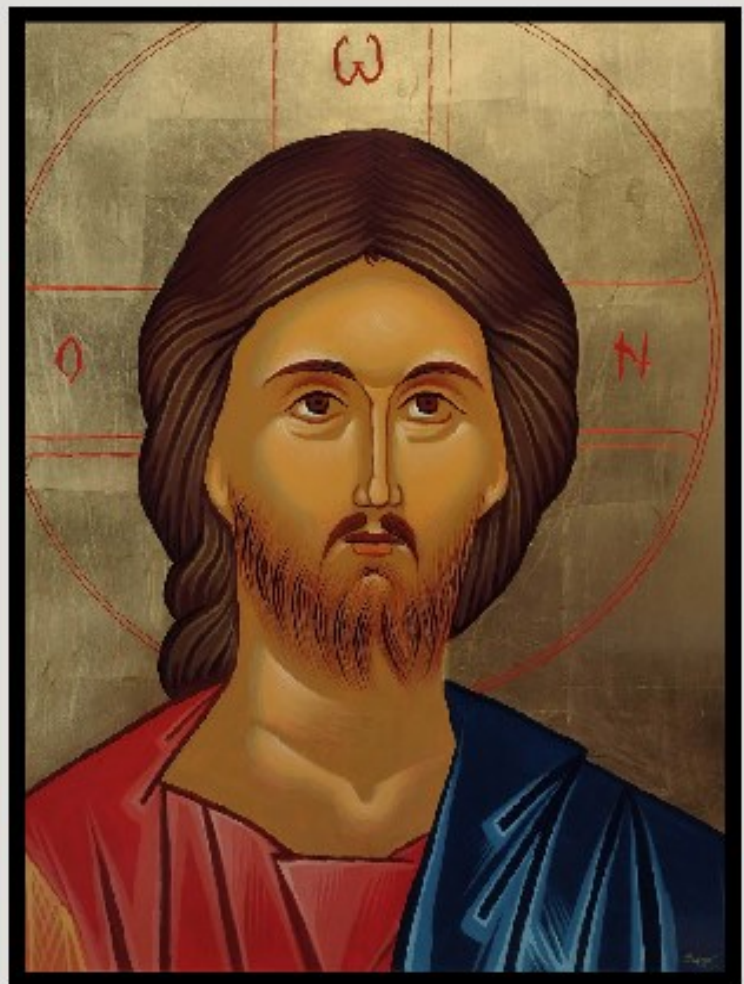
Join us for a three-day workshop painting the icon of Jesus.

Iconographer Drazen Dupor will lead a step-by-step class to create an icon using Byzantine technique.

No previous experience necessary. All materials included. Each participant will complete their own icon.

Workshop Hours

Fri. July 11 5 PM -- 8 PM
Sat. July 12 9 AM -- 5 PM
Sun. July 13 1 PM -- 5 PM



Register by June 15!

Scan the QR code
or email Christy at
christy.chappell@gmail.com.



SAVE THE DATE

Assumption Greek Orthodox Church

TUESDAY, JULY 8

GATES OPEN: 5:05 PM

FIRST PITCH: 6:05 PM

MORE DETAILS TO FOLLOW





FANARI CAMP PRESENTS

LIGHTHOUSE

EST. 2019

June 21-28, 2025 Waukesha, Wisconsin

A summer program for the high school class of 2025
where we facilitate reflection on self, God, and
neighbor, teaching you an immense amount about
who you are and what your purpose is in this world
and providing a deeper understanding of our faith.
Plus, fun activities and excursions in
and around Milwaukee!

**This might be exactly what
you need after graduation!**

Registration opens
March 10



Scan here for
more info & to
register



CHURCH CALENDAR / ΟΡΟΛΟΓΙΟΝ ΕΡΩΝ ΑΚΟΛΟΥΘΙΩΝ
HOLY WEEK/PASCHA
ΜΕΓΑΛΗΣ ΕΒΔΟΜΑΔΟΣ ΚΑΙ ΠΑΣΧΑ
2025

SATURDAY OF LAZARUS/ΣΑΒΒΑΤΟΝ ΤΟΥ ΛΑΖΑΡΟΥ

April 12th, 2025

9:00 a.m. Orthros followed by Divine Liturgy
 Ὁρθρος καὶ Θεία Λειτουργία

PALM SUNDAY/KYPIAKH ΤΩΝ ΒΑΙΩΝ

April 13th, 2025

8:30 a.m. Orthros/Ὁρθρος
 9:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy/ Θεία Λειτουργία
 6:00 p.m. Service of the Bridegroom/ Ακολουθία του Νυμφίου

GREAT AND HOLY MONDAY/ΜΕΓΑΛΗ ΔΕΥΤΕΡΑ

April 14th, 2025

6:00 p.m. Service of the Bridegroom/ Ακολουθία του Νυμφίου

GREAT AND HOLY TUESDAY/ΜΕΓΑΛΗ ΤΡΙΤΗ

April 15th, 2025

6:00 p.m. Service of the Bridegroom/Ακολουθία του Νυμφίου

GREAT AND HOLY WEDNESDAY/ΜΕΓΑΛΗ ΤΕΤΑΡΤΗ

April 16th, 2025

3:00 p.m. Sacrament of Holy Unction/ Ακολουθία του Αγίου Ευχελαίου
 6:00 p.m. Orthros of Holy Thursday and Anointing with Holy Unction/
 Ὁρθρος της Μεγάλης Πέμπτης

GREAT AND HOLY THURSDAY/ΜΕΓΑΛΗ ΠΕΜΠΤΗ

April 17th, 2025

9:00 a.m. Vespers Divine Liturgy/ Εσπερινή Θεία Λειτουργία
 6:00 p.m. The Passion of our Lord and the Reading of the 12 Gospels/
 Ακολουθία των Φρικτών Παθών του Κυρίου

GREAT AND HOLY FRIDAY/ΜΕΓΑΛΗ ΠΑΡΑΣΚΕΥΗ

April 18th, 2025

8:00 a.m. Royal Hours/ Ακολουθία τις Μεγάλης Ωρες
 2:30 p.m. Apokathelosis/ Αποκαθήλωσις του Κυρίου
 6:30 p.m. Lamentations Service/ Ακολουθία Τὰ Ἑγκώμια

GREAT AND HOLY SATURDAY/ΜΕΓΑΛΟ ΣΑΒΒΑΤΟΝ

April 19th, 2025

9:00 a.m. Vespers Divine Liturgy/ Εσπερινή Θεία Λειτουργία
 11:00 p.m. Holy Resurrection Canon/
 Τά Προκαταρκτικά Μεσονυκτικού της Αναστάσεως
 Followed by Resurrection Service and Divine Liturgy/
 Ὁρθρος της Αναστάσεως καὶ Θεία Λειτουργία

HOLY AND GREAT PASCHA/ ΑΙΩΝ ΠΑΣΧΑ

April 20th, 2025

10:00 a.m. Agape Vespers/ Μέγας Εσπερινός της Αγάπης

BRIGHT WEDNESDAY GREATMARTYR GEORGE THE TROPHYBEARER

April 23rd, 2025

8:30 a.m. Orthros followed by the Divine Liturgy/
 Ὁρθρος καὶ Θεία Λειτουργία









FIRST SUNDAY AFTER PASCHA/SUNDAY OF THOMAS

April 27th, 2025

8:30 a.m. Orthros followed by the Divine Liturgy at 9:45 a.m.
 Ὁρθρος καὶ Θεία Λειτουργία

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!

ani with Mary Magdalene or Mary of Bethany) who entered the house of Simon the Leper, washed Jesus' feet with her tears, dried them with her hair, and anointed Him with expensive myrrh (Matthew 26:6-13; Luke 7:36-50). This act, performed out of deep love and repentance, was accepted by Christ as preparation for His burial. Jesus declared her sins forgiven because of her great love.

This act of devotion is sharply contrasted with the actions of the disciple Judas Iscariot, who, motivated by greed ("love of money"), went to the chief priests that same day and agreed to betray Jesus for thirty pieces of silver (Matthew 26:14-16). The hymns of the day, especially the poignant Troparion of Kassiani (chanted during the Matins of Holy Wednesday, i.e., Tuesday evening), explore this contrast: the woman offering costly myrrh, Judas selling the priceless One; the woman finding freedom, Judas becoming a slave to sin and the enemy. The Church emphasizes that Judas perished not merely for the betrayal itself, but because he fell into despair and refused to believe in the possibility of forgiveness, unlike the woman whose repentance saved her. This provides a powerful pastoral message: the critical factor is not the magnitude of the sin, but the response of the heart – repentance leading to life, or despair leading to perdition. The Wednesday fast observed throughout the year commemorates Judas's act of betrayal.

On the afternoon or evening of Holy Wednesday, the Sacrament of Holy Unction (Euchelaion) is typically celebrated. This Mystery, rooted in the Epistle of James (5:14-16), is offered for the healing of soul and body and the forgiveness of sins. Oil, a symbol of God's presence, strength, reconciliation, and healing, is blessed through prayers and readings. Ideally performed by seven priests, the service involves seven sets of Epistle and Gospel readings, and seven prayers, focusing on healing and forgiveness. The faithful are then anointed with the blessed oil on their forehead, chin, cheeks, and hands, covering the senses and seeking purification for sins committed in thought, word, and deed. This sacrament provides forgiveness for sins perhaps forgotten or unknowingly committed (though not those deliberately withheld from Confession). Positioned strategically before Holy Thursday, Holy Unction serves as a spiritual bridge, offering healing and reconciliation, cleansing the faithful to worthily approach the institution of the Holy Eucharist and enter into the fullness of Christ's Passion.

The Saving Passion: Holy Thursday and Holy Friday

As Holy Week progresses, we move from preparation and vigilance into the heart of the Paschal mystery: the Lord's voluntary suffering, death, and burial.

Holy Thursday

This pivotal day commemorates four major events from the final hours of Christ's freedom :

The Washing of the Disciples' Feet (John 13:3-17): Before the final meal, Jesus took a towel, girded Himself, and washed the feet of His disciples. This act demonstrated profound humility and set the pattern for Christian leadership as service to others. He taught them, "If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet" (John 13:14). In some cathedrals and monasteries, this Niptir ceremony is re-enacted.

The Mystical Supper (Last Supper): During the Passover meal, Jesus took bread and wine, gave thanks, and gave them to His disciples, saying, "Take, eat; this is My Body... Drink of it, all of you; for this is My Blood of the New Covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins" (Matthew 26:26-28). With these actions, He instituted the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist, the central mystery of the Church's life. In the Eucharist, bread and wine are mystically changed into the true Body and Blood of the risen Christ, offered continually for our salvation, uniting us intimately to His sacrifice and Resurrection.

The Agony and Prayer in Gethsemane (Matthew 26:36-46): After the supper, Jesus went to the Garden of Gethsemane to pray. Facing the horror of His impending suffering and death, He experienced deep human anguish ("My soul is very sorrowful, even to death") but ultimately submitted His human will to the Father's divine plan: "My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will" (Matthew 26:38-39).

The Betrayal by Judas (Matthew 26:47-50): While Jesus was praying, Judas arrived with guards and betrayed his Master with a kiss, the sign of friendship, initiating the Lord's arrest.

The liturgical observances of Holy Thursday reflect these events. The Vespertine Divine Liturgy of St. Basil the Great is celebrated in the morning. This service uniquely commemorates the institution of the Holy Eucharist. The Cherubic Hymn is replaced by the moving hymn, "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". Many Orthodox Christians make a special effort to receive Holy Communion on this day. During this Liturgy, the priest also prepares the reserved Sacrament (the Amnos) used for communing the sick throughout the year. The liturgical colors are often bright (Red, White, or Gold) reflecting the divine institution of the Eucharist, though the underlying solemnity remains.

In the evening, the Church anticipates the services of the next day by celebrating the Matins of Holy Friday, known as the Service of the Holy Passion. This lengthy and profoundly moving service recounts the entirety of Christ's Passion through the reading of Twelve Gospel passages, beginning with Christ's final discourse at the Supper and ending with His burial. After the reading of the fifth Gospel, which describes the Crucifixion, a large Cross is carried in procession through the darkened church as the choir chants the solemn hymn, "Today He who hung the earth upon the waters is hung upon the Cross...". The Cross is then erected in the center of the church for veneration. The atmosphere is one of deep reverence and sorrow, and the vestments are typically dark (Black or Purple). The deliberate sequence of the day's services powerfully links Christ's self-offering in the Eucharist at the Mystical Supper with His physical sacrifice on the Cross, revealing them as two dimensions of the one saving act.

Holy Friday

This is the most solemn day of the entire Church year, the day we commemorate the culmination of the Lord's Passion: His suffering, crucifixion, death, and burial. It is the day sin seemingly triumphed, as humanity nailed the Son of God to the Cross. Yet, in this ultimate act of hatred, God revealed His ultimate love. Christ voluntarily accepted death, entering into our darkest reality to destroy the power of sin and death from within. His death becomes our true birth into eternal life. No Divine Liturgy is celebrated on this day; it is a day of strictest fast and mourning.

The day's services guide the faithful meticulously through the final hours:

Morning: The Royal Hours. These services (First, Third, Sixth, and Ninth Hours) are read, often consecutively in the morning. They consist of psalms, hymns, and specific Old Testament prophecies, Epistle readings, and Gospel accounts relating to the Passion, read at the hours corresponding roughly to the events of the Crucifixion. They provide a scriptural vigil, allowing the faithful to stand watch with the suffering Lord.

Afternoon: The Great Vespers of the Apokathelosis. This service commemorates the Taking Down of Christ's Body from the Cross by Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus. During the Gospel reading recounting the burial (John 19:38-42), the soma, an icon representation of Christ's body, is solemnly removed from the large Cross in the center of the church. It is wrapped in a white linen sheet, symbolizing the burial shroud. Near the end of the service, the Epitaphios, a large, richly embroidered cloth icon depicting the dead Christ laid out for burial, is carried in procession from the Altar. The Epitaphios (meaning "upon the tomb") becomes the focal point for the remainder of Holy Friday and Holy Saturday. It is placed on a decorated bier, called the Kouvouklion, which represents the Tomb of Christ. The faithful come forward to venerate the Epitaphios, kissing the Gospel book placed upon it and the image of the Lord's body. The hymns are mournful, including "The Noble Joseph..." sung during the procession.

Evening: The Matins of Holy Saturday (Service of Lamentations or Epitaphios Threnos). Celebrated on Friday evening by anticipation, this service gathers the faithful around the Kouvouklion for a service of mourning and praise. The Encomia (Lamentations or Praises) are chanted – beautiful verses reflecting on Christ's sacrifice, His descent into death, and the paradox of the Creator lying dead for His creation. These are interspersed with the chanting of Psalm 119 (118), the longest psalm, which speaks of God's law and righteousness, often used in Orthodox funeral services. The Lamentations are divided into three sections or stases. During the third stasis, the priest sprinkles the Epitaphios and the congregation with rosewater, recalling the

spices used for burial. Following the Great Doxology, the Epitaphios, within its Kouvouklion, is carried in a solemn procession outside the church, or around the neighborhood, simulating Christ's funeral procession. The faithful follow with lit candles, chanting hymns. Upon returning, the Kouvouklion is often held aloft at the church entrance, and the faithful re-enter by passing underneath it, symbolizing entering into Christ's death and burial. While profoundly sorrowful, the service ends with readings and hymns that already hint at the coming Resurrection.

The liturgical color for Holy Friday is predominantly Black or dark Purple/Red, signifying deep mourning and the Passion. The Lamentations service might see a transition to brighter colors like Gold or Red in some traditions, reflecting the undertones of hope. The Epitaphios itself, central to these services, acts as a powerful visual focus. It begins as an object of intense grief during the Apokathelosis and Lamentations. Yet, it simultaneously symbolizes Christ's victory achieved through death and His harrowing of Hades. Its continued presence, especially its placement on the Holy Altar during the Paschal season, transforms it from a symbol of death into a testament to the life that burst forth from the tomb.

The Blessed Sabbath: Holy Saturday

Great and Holy Saturday is a day unique in the liturgical year, poised between the utter desolation of the Cross and the explosive joy of the Resurrection. It is the day Christ "rested" in the tomb, the Great Sabbath. But this is no empty repose; it is the time of Christ's Descent into Hades (eis Hadou kathodos). While His body lay in the tomb, His soul, united with His divinity, descended to the realm of the dead to preach the Gospel to those held captive since the beginning of time, shattering the gates of Hades and breaking the tyranny of death from within.

This is the day of watchful expectation, where mourning transforms into anticipation. The charmolypy (joyful-sadness) that permeates Holy Week reaches its peak. Christ's rest fulfills the divine plan; He who created all things now makes all things new.

The main service of the day is the Vespereal Divine Liturgy of St. Basil the Great, celebrated later than usual, often on Saturday morning or afternoon. This service is often called the "First Resurrection" (Proti Anastasi). It begins as Vespers, but dramatically shifts in tone. After the entrance and the hymn "O Gladsome Light," fifteen Old Testament readings are chanted, recounting the history of salvation and pointing prophetically towards Christ's victory over death – from creation to the story of Jonah and the Three Holy Youths in the furnace.

A pivotal moment occurs after the Epistle reading (Romans 6:3-11, speaking of dying and rising with Christ). Instead of the usual Alleluia, the choir chants verses from Psalm 81 (82): "Arise, O God, judge Thou the earth: for Thou shalt have an inheritance in all the nations!". During this chant, the entire liturgical atmosphere transforms. The dark Lenten colors (Black or Purple) that have covered the Altar and adorned the clergy are replaced with bright White vestments and coverings. Simultaneously, the priest comes forth and joyfully scatters bay leaves and flower petals throughout the church. This symbolic action represents Christ shattering the gates of Hades and His triumph over death, often accompanied by the faithful making noise (stamping feet, banging) in some traditions. The service continues with the Divine Liturgy, but with unique hymns. The Baptismal Hymn ("As many as have been baptized...") again replaces the Trisagion. The Cherubic Hymn is replaced by the ancient and awe-filled hymn, "Let all mortal flesh keep silence and stand with fear and trembling...". The Communion Hymn proclaims, "So the Lord awaked as one out of sleep, and He is risen to save us". This "First Resurrection" service acts as a crucial bridge, liturgically enacting the transition from death to life before the historical hour of the Resurrection. It powerfully underscores the Orthodox understanding that Christ's victory was already being achieved in His descent into Hades, His harrowing of Hell. The Paschal Vigil later that night celebrates the glorious manifestation of this already-accomplished victory.

The primary icon associated with Pascha in the Orthodox Church is, in fact, the Icon of the Descent into Hades (also called the Anastasis). It does not depict Christ emerging from a cave, but rather shows Him, radiant in glory, standing victoriously upon the shattered gates of Hades. He forcefully pulls Adam and Eve (representing all humanity) from their tombs, while figures like King David, Solomon, and St. John the Baptist

look on. Below His feet, Death or Satan lies bound and defeated. This icon powerfully conveys the communal and cosmic scope of the Resurrection – it is not merely Christ's personal triumph, but the liberation and restoration of all humanity and creation from the power of death.

As Saturday evening approaches, the faithful gather for the Midnight Office, which precedes the Paschal Vigil. During this service, the Epitaphios is solemnly removed from the Kouvouklion and placed upon the Holy Altar Table, where it will remain until the Feast of the Ascension, a constant reminder of the Resurrection that emerged from that very tomb.

The Resurrection: Great and Holy Pascha

Pascha (the Greek word deriving from the Hebrew Pesach, meaning Passover) is the Feast of Feasts, the brightest and most joyous day of the Orthodox year. We celebrate the life-giving Resurrection of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ – His ultimate victory over sin, death, and Hades, and the bestowal of eternal life upon all who believe. It is the New Passover, a passage not from slavery in Egypt, but from the bondage of death to everlasting life in the Kingdom of God.

The Paschal Vigil (Anastasi)

The celebration begins late on Saturday night with the Paschal Vigil, the service of the Anastasi (Resurrection). The service commences in complete darkness, symbolizing the darkness of the tomb and the despair of a world under the dominion of death. Precisely at midnight, the priest emerges from the Altar bearing a single lit candle, chanting, "Come receive the light from the unwaning Light, and glorify Christ, Who is risen from the dead!". This light, often originating from the Holy Light (or Holy Fire) – the flame miraculously received annually at the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem – represents the Light of the Risen Christ dispelling the darkness. The flame is passed from candle to candle until the entire church is filled with light, held by the faithful as a symbol of their living faith in the Resurrection.

A procession then forms, exiting the church and circling it, reminiscent of the Myrrh-bearing Women going to the tomb early in the morning. Returning to the closed doors of the church (symbolizing the sealed tomb), the Resurrection Gospel (e.g., Mark 16:1-8) is proclaimed. Then comes the triumphant moment as the priest intones the Paschal Troparion for the first time:

"Christ is risen from the dead, Trampling down death by death, And upon those in the tombs bestowing life!"

This hymn, Christos Anesti! (Χριστὸς Ἀνέστη!), becomes the joyful refrain sung countless times throughout the service and the entire Paschal season. The doors are opened, and the faithful re-enter the now brilliantly lit church for the joyous Paschal Matins (Orthros). The entire service is sung, filled with hymns of victory and light, celebrating Christ trampling down Hades and raising humanity with Himself. The Canon of St. John of Damascus is chanted, exulting in the New Jerusalem illuminated by Christ's glory.

Following Matins, the Paschal Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom is celebrated. The Liturgy begins with the Paschal Troparion and verses from Psalm 68 ("Let God arise, let His enemies be scattered..."). The Gospel reading is the sublime Prologue of St. John's Gospel (John 1:1-17), proclaiming Christ as the eternal Word, the Light, and the Life of the world. Before the dismissal, the famous Paschal Sermon of St. John Chrysostom is read, a powerful invitation to all – whether they have fasted diligently or not – to enter into the joy of the Resurrection feast, for the Master is generous and death has been vanquished.

Throughout the Paschal season, beginning at the Vigil, the faithful exchange the Paschal Greeting: One person proclaims, "Christ is Risen!" (Greek: Christos Anesti!), and the other joyfully responds, "Truly He is Risen!" (Greek: Alithos Anesti!). This greeting, rooted in the angelic proclamation at the tomb and the disciples' own realization (Matthew 28:6; Luke 24:34), transforms everyday encounters into affirmations of this central truth. The structure of the Paschal Vigil itself, moving dramatically from darkness to light, from silence to triumphant song, from procession to communion, serves as a powerful sacramental enactment of the entire Christian journey – our personal and collective passage from the death of sin to the new life granted through Christ's Resurrection.

Agape Vespers (Vespers of Love)

On the afternoon or evening of Pascha Sunday, a special service called Agape Vespers (Esperinos tis Agapis, or Vespers of Love) is held. This service continues the Paschal celebration, focusing on the theme of agape – the selfless, divine love revealed in the Resurrection. It commemorates Christ's first appearance to the disciples gathered behind locked doors on the evening of His Resurrection (John 20:19-25), where He bestowed His peace upon them and gave them authority to forgive sins.

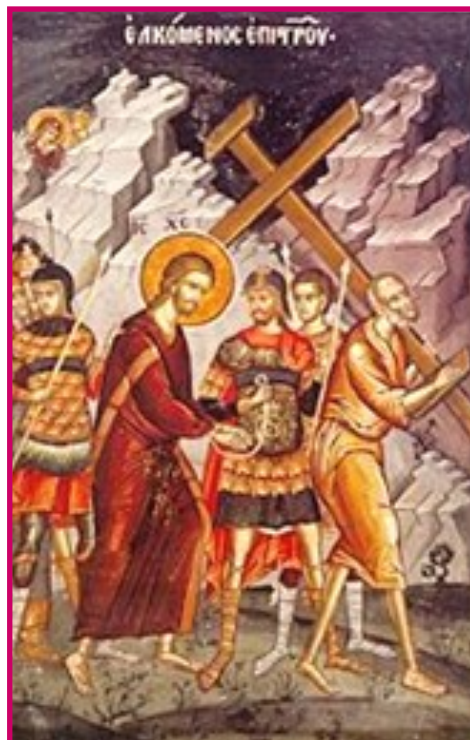
A distinctive feature of Agape Vespers is the reading of this Gospel passage in multiple languages. This beautiful tradition signifies the universality of the Resurrection message – the Good News is for all peoples, all nations, all tongues. It underscores that God's agape, manifested in the Resurrection, transcends all human divisions. The service emphasizes forgiveness and reconciliation, echoing the Paschal hymn: "It is the Day of Resurrection... let us embrace one another. Let us say even to those that hate us, 'Let us forgive all things in the Resurrection!'" Often, red eggs, symbolizing the life emerging from the tomb and the blood of Christ, are distributed. The liturgical colors remain the bright, festive hues of Pascha.

Living in the Light of the Resurrection

The journey through Great and Holy Week brings us from the depths of sorrow to the heights of Paschal joy. We walk with Christ, witnessing His love, His sacrifice, and His ultimate triumph over death. But this journey does not end on Pascha Sunday. The Resurrection is not merely an event we commemorate once a year; it is the very foundation of our faith and the source of our life in Christ. As St. Paul declared, "If Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith" (1 Corinthians 15:14).

Because He is risen, our faith is victorious, and our lives are transformed. We are called to live continuously as people of the Resurrection, carrying the unwaning Light we received at Pascha into our homes and into the world. The message of Holy Week and Pascha is one of profound hope, boundless love, and radical forgiveness. The Paschal greeting, "Christ is Risen! Truly He is Risen!", which we exchange for forty days until the Ascension, serves as a constant reminder of this reality. It infuses our daily lives with the joy and power of the Resurrection, reminding us that we live, move, and have our being within the victory Christ has won for us. Let us, therefore, embrace the gifts of this holy season – forgiveness, reconciliation, love, and inextinguishable joy – and share them generously, proclaiming by our words and our lives the foundational truth of our faith: Christ is Risen!.

+Very Rev. Archimandrite Christodoulos Margellos



April 2025

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1 Strict Fast Day	2 Strict Fast Day 11:00 a.m. Adult Religious Education Class 5:30 p.m. Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 7:00 p.m. Choir Practice	3 Strict Fast Day 6:30 p.m. Virtual Adult Religious Education Class	4 Strict Fast Day 8:00 p.m. Akathist Service	5 Fast Day (Wine & Oil Permitted) Russian Mission Service
6 5th Sunday of Lent Sunday of Saint Mary of Egypt 8:30 a.m. Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy Sunday School/Creek School Sunday School Confessions	7 Strict Fast Day	8 Strict Fast Day 7:00 p.m. Parish Council Meeting	9 Strict Fast Day 7:00 p.m. Choir Practice	10 Strict Fast Day	11 Strict Fast Day	12 Fast Day Saturday of Lazarus 8:30 a.m. Orthros followed by Divine Liturgy Following Services Youth Retreat Church Cleaning and Polishing day Church Decoration
13 Palm Sunday Fast Day (Fish Permitted) 8:30 a.m. Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy Palm Sunday Luncheon 8:00 p.m. Bridegroom Service	14 Holy Monday Strict Fast Day 8:00 p.m. Bridegroom Service	15 Holy Tuesday Strict Fast Day 8:00 p.m. Bridegroom Service with Hymn of Saint Kassiani	16 Holy Wednesday Strict Fast Day 3:00 p.m. Holy Unction Service 8:00 p.m. Matins for Holy Thursday	17 Holy Thursday Strict Fast Day 8:00 a.m. Vespers Divine Liturgy 8:00 p.m. Passion Service	18 Holy Friday Strict Fast 8:00 a.m. Royal Hours 8:00 a.m. Decorations of Epitaphios 2:30 p.m. Vespers of Unnailing 8:30 p.m. Lamentation Service with Procession	19 Holy Saturday Strict Fast Day 8:00 a.m. Vespers Divine Liturgy 11:00 p.m. Holy Resurrection Canon
20 Holy & Great Pascha Midnight Resurrection Orthros & Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Agape Vespers	21 Bright Monday	22 Bright Tuesday 7:00 p.m. Philotheos Meeting via Zoom	23 Bright Wednesday Fast Free Great Martyr George the Trophybearer 8:30 a.m. Resurrection Orthros followed by Divine Liturgy	24 Bright Thursday	25 Bright Friday Fast Free Day LifeGiving Font Service at Saint Iakovos Retreat Cen- ter in Kanasville, WI	26 Bright Saturday Russian Mission
27 Sunday of Thomas 8:30 a.m. Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy Sunday School/Creek School	28	29	30 Strict Fast Day			