

The Confessor's Tongue for April 25, A. D. 2021

Palm Sunday; Entrance of Our Lord into Jerusalem

In honor of St. Maximus the Confessor, whose tongue and right hand were cut off in an attempt by compromising authorities to silence his uncompromising confession of Christ's full humanity & divinity.

Concerning Great and Holy Week

We now enter the most sacred week of the year. It starts with the feast of Jesus' entry into Jerusalem, which, along with the raising of Lazarus, forms a prelude of joy and glory to the harrowing humiliations which are to follow. The Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday of Holy Week are a preparation for the Passion. They already have a strongly accented character of mourning and repentance. The Thursday, Friday, and Saturday of Holy Week belong to the Paschal solemnities—each one of these days reveals to us a special aspect of the Mystery of Pascha. One could even say that this mystery has three aspects, each of which corresponds to a day: Holy Thursday, Holy Friday, and Holy Saturday. One could also say that each of these three aspects corresponds to a place: the Upper Room, Golgotha, the Holy Sepulchre. Holy Thursday commemorates the mystery of the upper room, Holy Friday the mystery of Golgotha, Holy Saturday the mystery of the tomb of Christ. On the Thursday, in the upper room, Jesus, through a sacramental action, both announces and represents, consecrates, and offers what is to take place during the following days. On the Friday, at Golgotha, Jesus, by His death on the Cross, accomplishes our redemption. On the Saturday, Jesus rests in the tomb: but the Church, already looking ahead to the feast of Pascha Sunday, speaks to us of the victory over death that our Savior has won. This anticipation of the Resurrection on Holy Saturday allows us to say that the mystery of Christ's Resurrection, triumphantly celebrated on Easter Sunday, already belongs, although incompletely, to Holy Week. And so this week constitutes a summary of the whole economy of our salvation.

Holy Week is the most solemn week of the entire year, celebrating the events of our salvation. The Holy Services should be our primary task each day; we schedule all other events around them. Children should be regular participants, even if it means leaving before a service is finished. They should not be deprived of the Week's blessings.

A blessed silence should reign in our homes with no television or radio, etc. Lipstick and lip balms should not be worn when venerating holy objects to avoid greasy smears: Cross, Winding-sheet, Chalice, Icons. Old palms and willows should be placed in an area to decay where they will not be disturbed, as they have been blessed.

Holy Week Notes

The lenten melodies and the Prayer of St. Ephrem are used through the last Presanctified Liturgy of the week, on Holy Wednesday.

At Matins, candles are placed unlit in the candlestands before the service. They will be lit during the Alleluia after the Great Litany.

Prostrations are made during Matins at the Troparion "Behold, the Bridegroom comes at midnight," the Exapostilarion "Thy bridal chamber I see adorned..." at the Prayer of St. Ephrem, and during the First Hour when the Priest comes out after the psalms for the troparion of the hour and again during the prayer of St. Ephrem.

Holy Friday Fast

The Typicon calls for a total Fast on Holy Friday, not eating or drinking at all in honor of Christ's death because of our sins. Strictly, this fast would not be broken until after the Liturgy on Holy Saturday. Those who cannot go that long are permitted to eat and drink after the Burial Vespers Friday afternoon. At one time, we put food out during the session of church cleaning and decorating on Holy Friday morning. Your priest was never been comfortable with that, and decided a few years ago that the time had come for us to strengthen our observance of Holy Friday. As we do not put out meat and dairy at church functions during the fasts, neither should we put out food on Holy Friday. We may feed our children as needed, even during the work time at church, but I would ask that adults not put out food for general consumption. You are blessed to drink (not alcohol), and we'll make coffee (I don't think most of us are ready for abstaining from liquids all day; those who so desire are welcome to try), but those adults who cannot or will not observe the Holy Friday Fast are asked to eat at home so that we all may properly and loving support one another in keeping the fast on the day of our Lord's death for us.

Holy Week Needs

You may volunteer or be recruited for these (and other) tasks!

1. Clean & decorate church and Tomb (and grounds) on Holy Friday.
2. Yardwork that can be done before Friday including weeding, picking up trash, sticks, anything else unsightly as well as cleaning the front porch and inside the building.
3. Boil and dye eggs for Paschal Vigil (we need 12 dozen at least).
4. People to read the Paschal Gospel from John chapter 1 (1:1-17, but this year we shall read 1:1-5, 11-14) in various languages at the paschal liturgy.
5. Prepare egg hunt for children (candy into eggs) for the picnic.
6. Remove tomb during the Paschal procession, light all candles, reposition flowers.

7. Greet at Paschal Vigil, sell processional candles, and help guests.
8. Men and boys for processions on Holy Friday (to carry cross, winding sheet, etc.) and Pascha night.
9. Put out lights to mark the procession path around the church for Friday and Saturday nights.
10. Keep the Grave Watch Friday afternoon through Saturday night
11. Bake Artos.
12. Bake bread for after Holy Saturday Liturgy.
13. Learn Paschal Greetings (all)
14. Make and bring food to celebrate the feast!

The Tradition of the Pascha Basket

On the Great Feast of Pascha, many Orthodox Christians bring to the church a basket containing those foods that they have abstained from during the Fast—both meat and dairy products.

The rich Paschal Bread (kulich, full of eggs and butter) symbolizes Christ, the living bread (John 6:51) who came down from Heaven to give life to the world. The meat products symbolize the sacrificial animals of the Old Testament, which foreshadow the true sacrifice of our Savior. The dairy products, especially the rich cheese pascha, remind us of the prosperity of peace of the Messianic times which had been foretold by the Prophets. Eggs were always considered a symbol of resurrection—the emergence of new life. Our Savior came forth from the tomb as chick from its egg at birth.

The Pascha basket is usually covered with a decorated scarf or white cover. The baskets are blessed following the Paschal Liturgy: after Liturgy, pull back the cover that the contents may be blessed and light the decorated candle included in your basket. After the baskets have been blessed, our custom is to break the fast together. (Some consider it proper to eat first of what is in the basket before moving on to other food.) As we endure the struggle of the Fast together, it is fitting that we share together the joy of Christ's Resurrection and the Feast it brings to us.

Gospel Readings During Holy Week

During Holy Week on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday at the reading of the Hours (3rd, 6th, 9th—the First Hour is read attached to the end of Matins the night before) in the morning, there is a custom of reading through all four Gospels except John 13:33-21. Matthew is read in two parts: at the Third and Sixth Hours on Monday, Mark is read in two parts: at the Ninth Hour on Monday and at the Third Hour on Tuesday; Luke is read in three parts: at the Sixth and Ninth Hours Tuesday and at the Third Hour Wednesday; John is read in two parts up through 13:32: at the Sixth and Ninth Hours of Wednesday.

This year, we shall approximate this by reading the Third Hour at 6:30 a.m. each day and read through the Gospel of Mark.

Reading the Gospels may be something you would like to attempt at home, to read all four Gospels, or even just one, as a family together each taking turns, or alone. To read or hear all four Gospels or one in its entirety this week will heighten your experience of Holy Week and Pascha.

The texts for the Hours are on our website under "Orthodox Prayers". The Gospels are read after the Theotokion at each hour.

Paschal Greetings in Various Languages

Greek: Christos anesti! Alethos anesti!

Slavonic: Khristós voskréye! Vo istinu voskréye!

Russian: Khristós voskrés! Vo ístinu voskrés!

Arabic: El Messieh kahm! Hakken kahm!

Romanian: Hristos a inviat! Adevărat a inviat!

Serbian: Crístos vâskres! Vaístinu vâskres!

Georgian: Kriste aghsda! Cheshdmaritad aghsda!

Finnish: Kristus nousi kuolleista! Totisesti nousi!

Japanese: Christos fukkatsu! Jitsu ni fukkatsu!

German: Christus ist auferstanden! Wahrlich er ist erstanden!

Norwegian: Kristus er oppstanden! Han er sannelig oppstanden!

Latin: Christus resurrexit! Vere resurrexit!

Spanish: Cristo ha resucitado! En verdad ha resucitado!

French: Le Christ est ressuscité! En vérité il est ressuscité!

Italian: Cristo e' risorto! Veramente e' risorto!

Portuguese: Cristo ressuscitou! Em verdade ressuscitou!

Eritrean-Tigre: Christos tensiou! Bahake tensiou!

Swahili: Kristo amefufukka! Kweli Amefufukka!

Welsb: Atgyfododd Crist! Atgyfododd in wir!

Yupik: Kris-túsaq Ung-uíxtuq! Iluúmun Ung-uíxtuq! Kris TOO Sahq Ung OOIKH took! Ee LOO Moon oong OOIKH took!

From St. Seraphim of Sarov

One should partake of enough food each day so that the body, strengthened, may be the friend and helper of the soul in the performance of virtue; otherwise, it may happen that, while wearing out one's body, one's soul also will grow weak.

On Fridays and Wednesdays, and especially during the four fasts, partake of food once in the day, and an angel of the Lord will join himself to you.

When your activities fall into a real order, boredom will find no place in your heart. Only those are afflicted with boredom whose affairs have no orderly arrangement.

Upcoming Events 2021

26-30 April: Great & Holy Week

30 April: Clean and Decorate Church, 10:00 a.m.

1 May: Paschal All-Night Vigil, 11:30 p.m.

2 May: Agape Vespers, 3:00 p.m., Picnic and Egg Hunt following.

GLORY BE TO GOD IN ALL THINGS!