

Palm Sunday, Great and Holy Week and Pascha Services 2025



(times in brackets are approximate ending times)

Palm Sunday	13 th April	10.15 am	Divine Liturgy (and other usual services)
Great and Holy Monday:	14 th April	8.00 pm	Bridegroom Matins (9.00pm)
Great and Holy Tuesday:	15 th April	8.00 pm	Bridegroom Matins (9.00 pm)
Great and Holy Wednesday:	16 th April	8.00 pm	Holy Unction (Healing) Service (10.00 pm)
Great and Holy Thursday:	17 th April	8.00 pm	Vesperal Liturgy of St. Basil (9.45 pm) The Last Supper
Great and Holy Friday:	18 th April	9.00 am	Matins with 12 Gospels (12 noon)
		3.00 pm	Vespers of the Cross [Deposition] (4.00 pm)
		8.00 pm	Matins [Lamentations] (10.00 pm)
PASCHA (Saturday night to Sunday morning)	19 th / 20 th April	6.30 pm	Great Vespers (<i>transferred from morning</i>)
		7.30 pm	Baptisms / Chrismations
		8.30 pm	Reading of the Acts of the Apostles
<i>Please bring food to share after the Paschal Liturgy. There are no other services later on Sunday morning.</i>		10.00 pm	Night Office
		10.30 pm	Paschal Procession
		10.45 pm	Paschal Matins
		12.00 am	Paschal Divine Liturgy
		1.30 am	Paschal Meal [Bring & Share] (2.30am)

Many indeed are the miracles of that time: God crucified; the sun darkened and again rekindled; for it was fitting that the creatures should suffer with their Creator; the veil rent; the Blood and Water shed from His Side; the one as from a man, the other as above man; the rocks rent for the Rock's sake; the dead raised for a pledge of the final Resurrection of all men; the Signs at the Sepulchre and after the Sepulchre, which none can worthily celebrate; and yet none of these equal to the Miracle of my salvation. A few drops of Blood recreate the whole world and become to all men what rennet is to milk, drawing us together and compressing us into unity.*

* rennet = a curdling agent

St. Gregory the Theologian

A Guide to Holy Week in the Orthodox Church

The Services of Great and Holy Week are many and a rich source of salvation in our lives through the power and operation of the Holy Spirit. Through them we become more closely conformed to Christ through whom we receive the death destroying life of Pascha from the Father. Here follows a very short guide to the services we shall celebrate this year.

On Great and Holy Monday and Tuesday we serve the Bridegroom Matins. This puts our hearts in readiness to receive Christ the Bridegroom who will come perhaps when we least expect. We must always be prepared to greet him by watchfulness and prayer.

On Great and Holy Wednesday evening we serve the Unction Service of Healing. Hearing the 7 gospels and imploring the healing grace of Christ we are anointed and made whole.

On Great and Holy and Thursday at the Liturgy we celebrate our Lord's Institution of the Eucharist in the Vespereal Liturgy. ***(NOTE: We serve all Vespereal Liturgies in the evenings).***

On Great and Holy Friday at Matins we proclaim the 12 Passion Gospels. In this service the holy and life giving cross is installed in the nave. (This service is served on Holy Friday morning).

At **Vespers** (mid-afternoon) we take down the image of our Lord from the Cross and place it in a white shroud in the altar. Shortly afterwards the burial epitaphion is solemnly processed into the nave where the icon of the crucified Christ is venerated with great devotion.

At **Matins** later in the same evening we sing the solemn but joyful funeral chant for our Lord and process with his icon in the epitaphion outside the Church. The people walk under the epitaphion as they come into Church to signify that through the cross they have passed from death to life. They then venerate the gospel book and receive a flower from the epitaphion (venerated at the end of the service).

Great and Holy Saturday sees the beginning of the Paschal Vigil - We begin to celebrate the resurrection victory of Christ our God and particularly see this as a fulfilment of the great promise of redemption in the Law and the Prophets proclaimed in the Old Testament Readings. The vestments are all changed from purple to white/gold at the beginning of the Paschal Vigil. Baptisms and /or chrismations often take place in this service after the Vespereal part.

After Vespers and the Baptisms, we read from the **Acts of the Apostles**. Pascha marks the beginning of the new Israel of God, the Church. We then serve the **Night Office** which prepares us to enter into the joy of the Paschal victory. Afterwards we process around the temple, enter and celebrate the resurrection with "**Christ is Risen!**" in many languages - concluding with the famous **Paschal Homily of St. John Chrysostom**. There then follows **Paschal Matins and the Paschal Liturgy**. ***You should not go home at this point but rather stay for the Liturgy.*** The **Agape Party** follows the morning Paschal Liturgy. There are no other services on Sunday later in the day. You may need to sleep in!

Fr Gregory

NOTE:

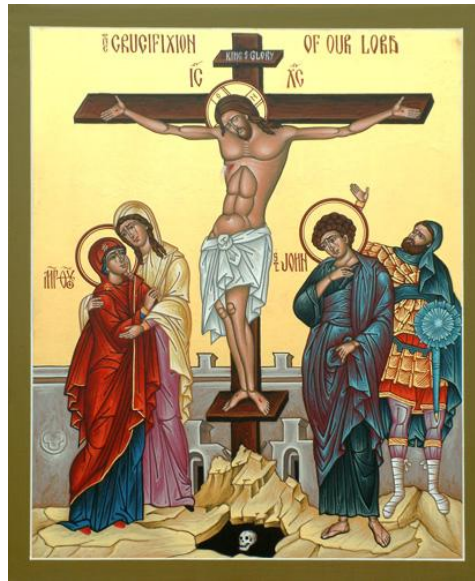
1. Please come to as many services as possible at this holy time. The cross must come before the resurrection, both in our personal lives and our liturgical lives.
2. The light of the resurrection is received between 10.30pm and 10.45 pm, NOT midnight. The Paschal Liturgy starts at midnight and this must be the priority for all Orthodox Christians. With the old timing, too many people (mostly those who irregularly attended church) received the light and then promptly left, well before the Paschal Liturgy began. This is unacceptable.
3. Vespereal Liturgies are appointed for the evening, (hence “vesperal”), not the morning! For spurious reasons of convenience, all the services of Great and Holy Week got moved 12 hours earlier centuries ago, thus creating a “semi-paschal” Liturgy on Saturday morning ... mainly because some people were not attending the night vigil. The timings above restore the original integrity of the services at their appointed times with ONE Liturgy at Pascha, not two!

ON THE PASSION AND PASCHA

Thou hast given thyself for redemption:
Soul for soul, Body for body, and Blood for blood,
Man for man, and Death for death.
O strange and unspeakable mystery:
The Judge was judged;
He who loosed the bound was bound;
He who created the world was fixed with nails;
He who measures heaven and earth was measured;
He who gives creatures life died;
He who raises the dead was buried.
What is this new Creation?
The Judge is judged and is silent;
The Invisible is seen on the Cross and is not ashamed;
The Infinite is contained and does not complain;
The Impassible suffers and does not seek vengeance;
The Immortal dies and says nothing;
The King of heaven is buried and endures it.
What is this strange Mystery?

St. Melito of Sardis

Extracts from a Paschal Homily



Yesterday I was crucified with Him; today I am glorified with Him; yesterday I died with Him; to-day I am quickened with Him; yesterday I was buried with Him; to-day I rise with Him. But let us offer to Him Who suffered and rose again for us--you will think perhaps that I am going to say gold, or silver, or woven work or transparent and costly stones, the mere passing material of earth, that remains here below and is for the most part always possessed by bad men, slaves of the world and of the Prince of the world. Let us offer ourselves, the possession most precious to God, and most fitting; let us give back to the Image what is made after the Image. Let us recognize our Dignity; let us honour our Archetype; let us know the power of the Mystery, and for what Christ died.

Let us become like Christ, since Christ became like us. Let us become God's for His sake, since He for ours became Man. He assumed the worse that He might give us the better; He became poor that we through His poverty might be rich; He took upon Him the form of a servant that we might receive back our liberty; He came down that we might be exalted; He was tempted that we might conquer; He was dishonoured that He might glorify us; He died that He might save us; He ascended that He might draw to Himself us, who were lying low in the Fall of sin. Let us give all, offer all, to Him Who gave Himself a Ransom and a Reconciliation for us. But one can give nothing like oneself, understanding the Mystery, and becoming for His sake all that He became for ours.

St Gregory the Theologian