

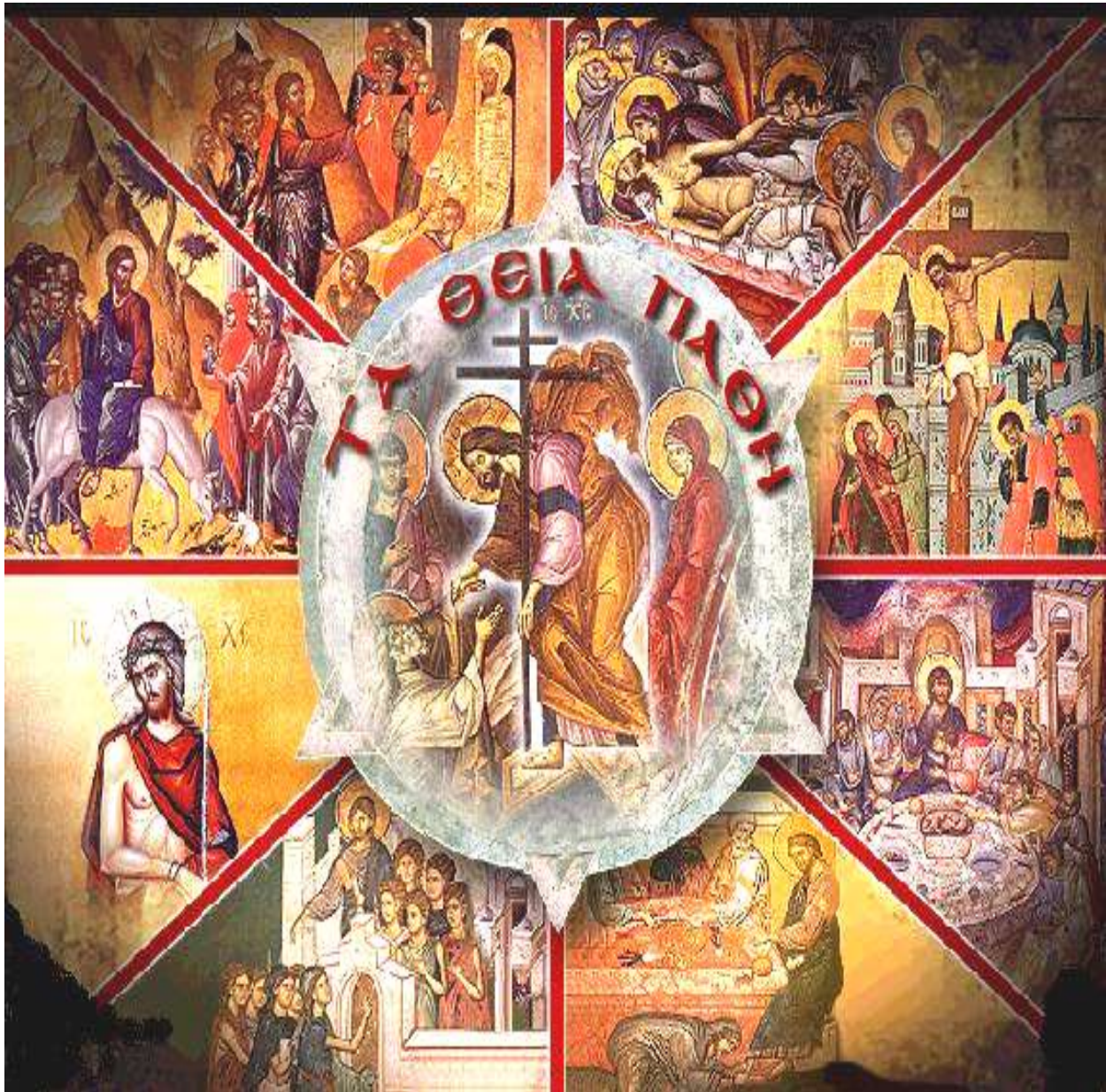


Saints Constantine and Helen  
Greek Orthodox Church  
of Washington, DC



Holy Week  
**Μεγάλη Εβδομάδα**  
April 5-12, 2015

# The Meaning of Holy Week





## PALM SUNDAY

On this day we commemorate the glorious and brilliant feast of the Entrance of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, into Jerusalem. Our Lord and His Apostles proceeded to the Holy City to celebrate

the feast of Passover.

News of the great miracle Jesus Christ had performed in bringing Lazarus, His beloved friend, back to life had reached the City of Jerusalem before Him, and multitudes of people prepared to give Him a warm welcome:

*“And many spread their garments in the way and others cut down branches off the trees and strewed them in the way. And they that went before and they that followed cried, saying, Hosanna; Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord. Blessed be the Kingdom of our father David, that cometh in the name of the lord. Hosanna in the highest.” (Mark 11:8-10)*

The branches of palm trees were a symbol of our Lord's victory over Satan and death. Today our Church distributes palms made into crosses to the congregation commemorating the solemn Entrance of our Lord Jesus Christ into the Holy City of Jerusalem.



## THE SERVICES OF THE NYMPHIOS (BRIDEGROOM) ON SUNDAY, MONDAY & TUESDAY EVENING OF HOLY WEEK

On these three evenings of Passion Week (Holy Week), the service of the Nymphios is observed. The meaning and the significance of these services is that our Lord Jesus Christ, the Bridegroom, is to be taken away from us, that days of sorrow, tears, contrition and fasting are awaiting us. According to the Evangelist Matthew we read:

*“But the days will come when the bridegroom shall be taken from them and then shall they fast.” - (Matthew 9:15)*

On these three evenings we sing one of the most inspiring hymns of our ecclesiastical hymnology:

*“Behold, the Bridegroom cometh in the midst of the night, and blessed is the servant whom He shall find watching, and again unworthy is he who He shall find heedless. Beware, therefore, O my soul, lest thou be borne down with sleep, lest thou be given up to death, and lest thou be shut out from the Kingdom. Wherefore rouse thyself and cry: Holy, Holy art Thou, O God; through the protection of the Heavenly hosts save us.” saying: Drink ye all of it; for this is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.” (Matthew 26:26-28)*

**On Holy and Great Tuesday** evening the “Troparion tis Kassianis,” a famous hymn suggesting the need of repentance, is sung. This Troparion, an exalting musical masterpiece, has been inspired by the incident of the sinning woman who anointed the head and the feet of Jesus Christ with sweet-smelling perfumes and washed them with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head, in the house of Simon the Pharisee. (Luke 7:48)

*The woman who had fallen into many sins recognizes Thy Godhead, O Lord. she takes upon herself the duty of a myrrh-bearer, and makes ready the myrrh of mourning, against Thy entombment. Woe to me! saith she, for my might is an ecstasy of excess, gloomy and moonless, and full of sinful desire. Receive the sources of my tears, O Thou Who dost gather into clouds the water of the sea; in Thine ineffable condescension, deign to bend down Thyself to me and to the lamentations of my heart. O Thou who didst spread out the Heavens. I will fervently embrace Thy sacred feet, and wipe them again with the tresses of the hair of my head. Thy feet at whose sound Eve hid herself for fear when she heard Thee walking in Paradise in the cool of the day. Who, O my Savior and savior of souls, can trace out the multitude of my sins, and the abysses of my misdeeds? Disregard not me, Thy slave, O Thou Whose mercy is unbounded.”*

#### **LITURGY OF THE PRESANCTIFIED GIFTS**

This Liturgy is celebrated according to a very ancient custom and is celebrated during the Lenten Season, with the exception of Saturday, Sunday and the Feast of the Annunciation. The Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts is conducted every Wednesday and or Friday of the Great Lent and on the first three days of Holy Week. At this Liturgy the Holy Gifts are not consecrated, but the faithful partake of the Immaculate Mysteries which have been consecrated at the preceding Liturgy and preserved in the Tabernacle on the Holy Altar Table. In the early days of Christianity many faithful Christians fasted all day long and at the sunset gathered in the Churches singing vespers and then receiving the Holy Communion, which had been prepared in advance during the Divine Liturgy on the previous Sunday. Today this particular service of the Presanctified Gifts gives the opportunity to the faithful, who are properly prepared, to receive Holy Communion during the Season of Lent.

#### **HOLY AND GREAT WEDNESDAY**

Wednesday of Passion Week is known as the day when the Christians are anointed with Holy Oil, and Divine Grace heals the illnesses of the body and the soul of the faithful. This Sacrament of Holy Unction, one of the Seven Sacraments of our Church, is sometimes performed in the homes of the congregation for the healing of bodily ills and the forgiveness of our sins, that we are supposed to have confessed. The celebrant anoints the faithful in the form of a cross on the forehead, cheeks and the palm of the hands uttering the prayer:

*“Holy Father, Physician of soul and body, do Thou heal Thy servant....of his spiritual and bodily infirmities and quicken him with the Grace of Thy Christ.”*



#### **HOLY AND GREAT THURSDAY**

On this day we commemorate the washing of the Disciples' feet by our Lord, the Last Supper, Christ's praying in the Garden at Gethsemane, His betrayal by Judas the Iscariot, His trial and crucifixion. On Holy Thursday morning the Liturgy of Saint Basil the Great is celebrated and Holy Communion is given to the congregation. It is called the Last Supper because Jesus and His Disciples ate for the last time together. During the Last Supper Jesus Christ instituted the Sacrament of Holy Eucharist.

*“And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body. And he took the cup and gave thanks, and gave it to them”*

At this Divine Liturgy the Priest consecrates the bread, dips it into the consecrated wine which is the Precious Blood of our Lord, and stores it in the Tabernacle on the Holy Altar Table for use especially for the sick during the entire year that follows.



**On Holy Thursday** evening the long and dread Passion of our Lord God and Savior Jesus Christ is commemorated. All the dramatic scenes, the betrayal, the capture, the trial, the condemnation, the spittings, the blows, the scourges, the curse, the cheers, the wearing of the purple, the

rod, the sponge with the vinegar, the nails, the spear, the Crucifixion, the Death, the unnauling of His Body from the Cross, and its placing in a tomb are so very vividly described in the twelve Gospels which are read at this time. The procession of the Crucifix takes place inside the Church after the fifth Gospel is read. During this colorful procession the Priest is chanting the following hymn of the Crucifixion:

*“Today is hung upon the Tree, He Who did hang the land in the midst of the waters. A crown of thorns crowns Him Who is the King of Angels. He is wrapped about with the purple of mockery, Who wrapped the Heavens with clouds. He received buffetings, Who freed Adam in Jordan. He was transfixed with nails, Who is the bridegroom of the Church. He was pierced with a spear, Who is the son of the Virgin. We worship Thy Passion, O Christ. Show also unto us Thy glorious Resurrection.”*

After the procession the Priest places the Crucified Christ in the front of the solea so that He can be venerated by the faithful.

The twelve Gospels read on this evening are:

- First Gospel: St. John 13:31-18:1
- Second Gospel: St. John 18:1-39
- Third Gospel: St. Matthew 26:57-75
- Fourth Gospel: St. John 18:28-19:1-16
- Fifth Gospel: St. Matthew 27:3-32
- Sixth Gospel: St. Mark 15:16-32
- Seventh Gospel: St. Matthew 27:33-54
- Eighth Gospel: St. Luke 23:32-49
- Ninth Gospel: St. John 19:25-37
- Tenth Gospel: St. Mark 15:43-47
- Eleventh Gospel: St. John 19:38-42
- Twelfth Gospel: St. Matthew 27:62-66



## **HOLY AND GREAT FRIDAY**

**On Friday of Holy Week** there is no Liturgy. In the morning the "Hours" are read, in which Psalms and Prophecies, the Epistle and Gospel all have reference to Christ's Passion.

**On Friday afternoon the removal of the Immaculate Body of Christ from the Cross takes place.** This act is called "Apokathelosis." According to the Gospel, Joseph of Arimathea with Nicodemus took down the Immaculate Body of Christ from the Cross, wrapped it in a clean linen cloth and laid it in a sepulcher and rolled a stone over its door. The Priest re-enacts the scenes of the Gospel. He unnauls the Crucified Christ's image, wraps it in a clean white sheet and takes it to the Altar. After this, the Priest takes the image of the Body of Christ, and carries it around the interior of the Church and places it in the Kouvouklion or Tomb of our Lord which has been appropriately decorated. The service of the Apokathelosis is concluded and the faithful come, bow reverently, cross themselves and venerate the body of Christ. The hymn of the Apokathelosis follows:

*“Joseph with Nicodemus takes Thee down from the Tree, Who clothes Thyself with light as it were with a garment; and when he saw Thee dead, naked and unentombed, he mourned with compassionate wailing and said: Alas! beloved Jesus, so short a time ago the sun beholding Thee upon the Cross covered himself with gloom, the earth trembled for fear, and the veil of the temple was rent in twain; and now, lo! I see Thee, for me, willingly going down to Death. How can I bury Thee, my God, or how can I enwrap Thee in fine linen? How with my hands dare I touch Thy sacred Body? or with what chants can I celebrate Thy going hence, O Lord of mercies? I magnify Thy sufferings, and I praise Thy tomb and Thy Resurrection, crying: Lord, glory to Thee.”*

In the evening of the same day the Burial Services are conducted. The Priest and the Altar boys gather around the Tomb of our Lord, Jesus Christ, and the



choir sings the **“Epitafios Lament.”**

These hymns have reference to Christ's Death, the emotions of His grieving Mother and to our Lord's descent into

Hades, by which humanity was recalled from corruption and permitted to pass over to eternal life. There are three categories of Lamentation hymns, all different in expression and tone. These are some of them that the Priest and the choir chant.

*First category:*

1. *“Thou, O Christ the Life, wast laid in the tomb, and armies of Angels were amazed, and they glorified Thy humiliation.”*
2. *“O Life, how canst Thou die? How canst Thou dwell in the tomb? Thou dost break down the kingdom of Death, and hast raised up those who were dead in Hades.”*

*Second category:*

1. *“It is meet to magnify Thee, the Creator of all; for by Thy sufferings we are freed from suffering and delivered from corruption.”*
2. *“Joseph cried out trembling: How shall I close Thy dear eyes and lips, O Word? and how can I fittingly prepare Thee for burial?”*

*Third category:*

1. *“All generations offer adoration to Thy Tomb, O Christ.”*
2. *“The All-holy, when she saw Thee laid low, O Word, wept with a mother's love.”*

The chanting of the Epitafios Lament is over after these doleful hymns are completed. Immediately the reading of Doxology follows and procession with Christ's Body begins around the interior or exterior of the Church. This act solemnizes the descent of Jesus Christ into Hades. The services are concluded by the reading of the prophecy of the Prophet Ezekiel, in which faith in the resurrection is heralded. Holy Friday is a day of strictest fasting.

## HOLY AND GREAT SATURDAY

On Holy Saturday morning, the Divine Liturgy of Saint Basil the Great is celebrated and is combined with Vesper Services. Holy Communion is offered to the faithful during the Divine Liturgy. This service is highlighted by readings from the Holy Bible, which all refer to the salvation of mankind through the Passion and the glorious Resurrection of our Lord, Jesus Christ. Before the Gospel is read, the Priest comes out of the Sanctuary holding a basketful of flower petals and bay leaves; and strewing them in the Church, he sings this beautiful hymn:

*“Arise, O God, and judge Thou the earth; for Thou shalt take all Heathen to Thine inheritance.”*

The liturgy continues and ends and the worshippers will return to Church before midnight to celebrate the Feast of Feasts and the Festival of Festivals, the Resurrection of our Lord.

## THE RESURRECTION



On Holy Saturday evening before midnight, the matins of the Life-giving Resurrection of our Lord begin. At midnight the Church is plunged into darkness. The priest then appears from the Holy Altar holding a candle lighted from the sacred lamb which burns day and night over the Altar. This is the only light

visible in the Church and is symbolic of the light which is our Lord coming out of the dark tomb of death. While he chants:

*“Come ye and receive light from the unwaning Light and glorify Christ, Who arose from the dead.”*

the Parish Council members light their candles from the Priest's candle and pass this light to the faithful, and soon the entire Church is ablaze with light. The priest then leads all the faithful outside the Church from where he heralds the good news of the Resurrection of our Lord according to the Evangelist Mark (16:1-8).

Immediately after the Gospel reading, the priest, holding up his candle, calls on the congregation to sing joyfully the hymn of Resurrection, which has as follows:

*“Christ has risen from the dead, by death trampling upon death, and has bestowed life upon those in the tombs.”*

At the end of the Divine Liturgy, the red Easter eggs are blessed and distributed to the congregation, who carry their lighted candles to their homes where they break the fast in joy and celebration of our Lords Resurrection.

### **EASTER SUNDAY (The Feast of Love)**



On Sunday afternoon the Service of Love - AGAPE - will begin. During this colorful service, the Gospel of the first appearance of the Risen Lord (John 20:19-26) is read in several languages, so that all may hear the good news each in his own tongue. This custom originated from the day when the Apostles first began to preach the

Resurrection of our Lord:

*“The multitudes came together, and were confounded because every man heard them (the Apostles) speak in his own language.” (Acts 2:6)*

In the early days of Christianity, it was the custom for the faithful to embrace each other at the end of the Service of Love as an indication of brotherly affection; hence the name AGAPE. In our days there is usually a great deal of handshaking and embracing among relatives and friends. They greet one another joyously saying: **“Christ is Risen,”** and they respond: **“Truly He is Risen.”**

**Father Michael, The  
Parish Council, and all  
our Parish  
Ministries wish one  
and all:**



**Blessed Pasha!**  
**Καλό Πάσχα!**

# HOLY WEEK GUIDELINES

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>April 5th - PALM SUNDAY</b></p> <p>Orthros ..... <b>8:30am</b>            Liturgy..... <b>9:45am</b>            Bridegroom Service..... <b>7:00pm</b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>5 Απριλιου-ΚΥΡΙΑΚΗ ΤΩΝ ΒΑΪΩΝ</b></p> <p>Ορθρος..... <b>8:30am</b>            Θεία Λειτουργία..... <b>9:45am</b>            Η Ακολουθία του Νυμφίου..... <b>7:00pm</b></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>April 6th - HOLY MONDAY</b></p> <p>9<sup>th</sup> Hour &amp; Presanctified Liturgy..... <b>8:30am</b>            Bridegroom Service..... <b>7:00pm</b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>6 Απριλιου-ΜΕΓΑΛΗ ΔΕΥΤΕΡΑ</b></p> <p>Ενάτη Ωρα &amp; Προηγιασμένη Θεία Λειτουργία..... <b>8:30am</b>            Η Ακολουθία του Νυμφίου..... <b>7:00pm</b></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>April 7th - HOLY TUESDAY</b></p> <p>9<sup>th</sup> Hour &amp; Presanctified Liturgy..... <b>8:30am</b>            Bridegroom Service (Hymn of Kassiane)..... <b>7:00pm</b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>7 Απριλιου-ΜΕΓΑΛΗ ΤΡΙΤΗ</b></p> <p>Ενάτη Ωρα &amp; Προηγιασμένη Θεία Λειτουργία..... <b>8:30am</b>            Η Ακολουθία του Νυμφίου (Τροπαριον της Κασσιανης) ..... <b>7:00pm</b></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>April 8th - HOLY WEDNESDAY</b></p> <p>9<sup>th</sup> Hour &amp; Presanctified Liturgy..... <b>8:30am</b>            Holy Unction Service..... <b>3:00pm</b>            Matins for Holy Thursday and Anointing with Holy Unction..... <b>7:00pm</b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>8 Απριλιου-ΜΕΓΑΛΗ ΤΕΤΑΡΤΗ</b></p> <p>Ενάτη Ωρα &amp; Προηγιασμένη Θεία Λειτουργία..... <b>8:30am</b>            Το Μυστήριο του Ευχελαίου..... <b>3:00pm</b>            Ορθρος (του Μυστικού Δείπνου) και επίχρισις με το Άγιον Μύρον..... <b>7:00pm</b></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>April 9th - HOLY THURSDAY</b></p> <p>Vespers &amp; Divine Liturgy of St. Basil ..... <b>8:30am</b>            The Holy Passion Service (12 Gospels)..... <b>7:00pm</b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>9 Απριλιου-ΜΕΓΑΛΗ ΠΕΜΠΤΗ</b></p> <p>Εσπερινή Θεία Λειτουργία του Μεγάλου Βασιλείου (Ο Μυστικός Δείπνος)..... <b>8:30am</b>            Ορθρος ( Η Σταύρωση και τα Δώδεκα Ευαγγέλια)..... <b>7:00pm</b></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>April 10th - HOLY FRIDAY</b></p> <p>Reading of the Royal Hours. .... <b>8:30am</b>            Vespers of the Decent from the Cross..... <b>3:00pm</b>            The Service of the Lamentations..... <b>7:00pm</b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>10 Απριλιου-ΜΕΓΑΛΗ ΠΑΡΑΣΚΕΥΗ</b></p> <p>Η Ακολουθία των Μεγάλων Ωρών..... <b>8:30am</b>            Εσπερινός της Αποκαθήλωσης..... <b>3:00pm</b>            Η Λιτανεία του Επιταφίου..... <b>7:00pm</b></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>April 11th - HOLY SATURDAY</b></p> <p>Vesperal Divine Liturgy of St. Basil..... <b>8:30am</b>            Resurrection Service..... <b>11:00pm</b>            Divine Liturgy..... <b>12:00am</b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>11 Απριλιου-ΜΕΓΑΛΟ ΣΑΒΒΑΤΟ</b></p> <p>Εσπερινή Θεία Λειτουργία του Μεγάλου Βασιλείου (Ανάστασις)..... <b>8:30am</b>            Η Ακολουθία της Αναστάσεως και Ορθρος..... <b>11:00pm</b>            Θεία Λειτουργία του Αγίου Ιωάννου του Χρυσοστόμου..... <b>12:00am</b></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>April 12th - PASCHA SUNDAY</b></p> <p>Agape Vespers..... <b>11:30am</b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>12 Απριλιου-ΑΓΙΟ ΠΑΣΧΑ</b></p> <p>Εσπερινός της Αγάπης..... <b>11:30am</b></p>

**Blessed Pascha! – ΚΑΛΟ ΠΑΣΧΑ!**