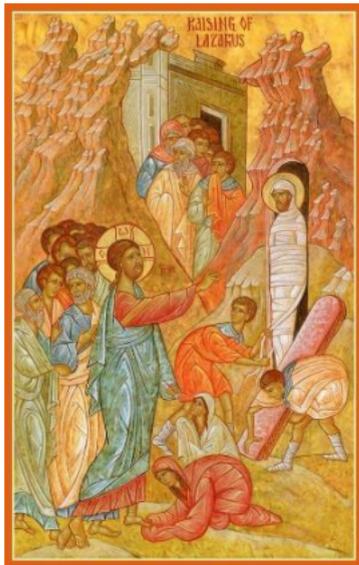


Lazarus Saturday

On this first day of Holy Week, Orthodox Christians celebrate the Divine Liturgy.

During the Gospel, we hear the shortest verse in the Bible: “*Jesus wept.*” (*John 11:35*). These two short words carry a very important message. Jesus’s sadness shows us that He was truly a man, not just God. He knew that as God, He could and would raise Lazarus from the dead. But as a man, He felt the emotion of sadness because His friend was sick and had suffered. Have you ever seen someone cry and felt sad for them? Jesus was also sad to see Mary and Martha grieving for their brother who had died. Hearing this powerful message in the Gospel helps us to understand this very important part of the Resurrection.



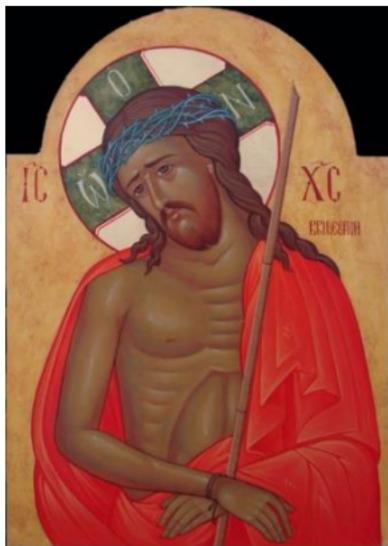
Palm Sunday

The Divine Liturgy is served on Sunday morning, with special Antiphons and other hymns. The Gospel tells us about Jesus riding into Jerusalem on a young donkey, to fulfill the Old Testament prophecy that said the Messiah would arrive on the “foal of a donkey.” Palms (and pussy-willows in many Ukrainian and other Slavic churches) are blessed. Just like the people who came to see Jesus on the donkey in Jerusalem, the people in church waive their palms and willows with the words “Hosanna in the highest, blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!” during the Gospel reading, during the Anaphora, and just before Communion.



Bridegroom Matins

Beginning with the Bridegroom Matins of Holy Monday, the church calendar shifts. Matins, which are usually served in the mornings are served the evening before during Holy Week. So, on Sunday evening the Matins of Holy Monday are served, on Monday evening (for Tuesday) and on Tuesday evening (for Wednesday). Because Christ IS Risen, we leave the normal schedule of time, as if we are moving back in time to relive this important moment. During the Bridegroom Matins we sing a hymn that begins “Behold, the bridegroom comes at midnight...” three times each night. When we sing it Sunday evening, the priest carries the icon of Christ the Bridegroom through the church as if we can actually see Christ’s journey to His crucifixion.



Holy Unction



The sacrament of Holy Unction is celebrated in the evening on Holy Wednesday. The service begins with readings from the Old Testament and special songs. There are also seven epistle readings and prayers asking God to grant healing to the souls and bodies of the people who have come to the service. Then each person comes to receive the sacrament of Holy Unction. The priest anoints each person on the head, hands, and wrists with the oil that has been prayed over and blessed. It's not a magic potion- but through the Holy Spirit, God has granted healing to many. The sacrament of Holy Unction can be celebrated any

time during the year, but it is especially appropriate during Holy Week.

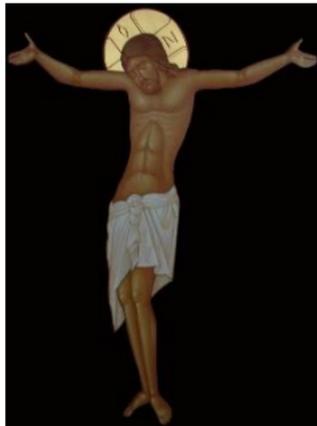
Commemoration of the Mystical Supper

A Vespereal Liturgy (combining parts of both Vespers and Divine Liturgy) is served on Holy Thursday morning. Holy Communion is consecrated during every Divine Liturgy, but on this special day we remember the first Eucharist, or Communion, that is the example that we follow to this day. The words that the priest says during the Anaphora *“Take, eat: this is my Body. Drink of it all of you; for this is my Blood of the New Covenant”* are taken directly from the first Eucharist when Jesus had gathered His disciples together after coming into Jerusalem. We “taste” and eat when we receive Communion near the end of the service.

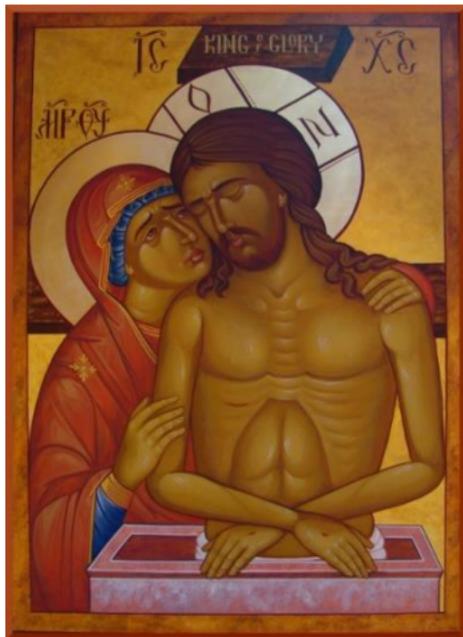


The Twelve Passion Gospels- Matins of Holy Friday

This solemn service occurs in the evening on Holy Thursday. We hear special hymns and twelve Gospel readings that tell us about Jesus's trial, crucifixion, and burial. Judas, His disciple, turned Jesus in to the priests who were jealous and wanted to kill Him. We also hear about Jesus' trial. Under Jewish law the punishment for blasphemy (saying that you were equal to or more powerful than God) was death. Of course Jesus IS God, but they did not believe and said this was proof that He should be put to death. However, the Jews were controlled by the Roman Empire and were not permitted to execute anyone. They tried to convince the Roman leader Pontius Pilate that Jesus was trying to be a King (treason). Pilate left it up to the crowd who had been told to say 'Crucify Him.' We hear how horribly the people treated Him, about His crucifixion, and about His burial in the sepulcher (tomb).



Royal Hours of Great and Holy Friday



During the Royal Hours in the morning of Great and Holy Friday, we hear more details about Jesus's betrayal, trial, crucifixion, and burial. By listening to the words that are read and sung, we are given the chance to understand what Jesus went through. This service is a combination of the third, sixth, ninth, and twelfth hour services that are held each day.

During the Byzantine Empire, it became known as the Royal Hours because the Emperor attended the entire service.

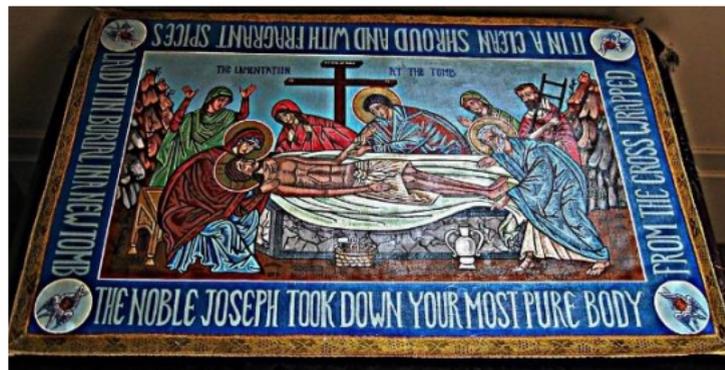
Great Vespers of Great and Holy Friday- Taking Down the Body of Jesus From the Holy Cross

Great Vespers are served in the afternoon of Holy Friday. We hear about Jesus's crucifixion one last time, followed by the story of Joseph of Arimathea and his friend Nicodemus who asked Pontius Pilate if they could bury Jesus's body in a tomb once He was removed from the cross. They were joined by Mary Magdalene, a follower of Jesus, and several other women who helped to care for Jesus's body in the proper, respectful way. The people in church make a procession. The priest carries the shroud or plaschanitsa, a cloth with an icon of Jesus's body on it, and we follow with candles as if we are walking in the steps of Joseph and the women. We venerate the icon by kissing the wounds on Jesus's hands and feet.



Matins of Holy Saturday- The Lamentation Service

The lamentation service is held in the evening on Holy Friday. We hear songs that show our sadness that Jesus had to go through the pain of His crucifixion, but we also hear how sweet the Resurrection will be. One of the hymns tells us about the myrrh-bearing women who brought myrrh, a sweet smelling oil and other spices that were used to prepare a body for burial. The priest sprinkles the whole church with rose water, giving us a clue about what it might have smelled like. We make another procession with the shroud/plaschanitsa carried over the priest, and we carry lighted candles. This procession symbolizes Jesus wandering through Hades, going to defeat the devil and to release everyone waiting there.



Vesperal Divine Liturgy of St. Basil the Great- Christ's Victory Over Death & Harrowing of Hades

In the morning on Holy Saturday, we celebrate the Vesperal Liturgy. All of the sadness from the services throughout this week is gone. The readings show us that Jesus is truly the Messiah that the Old Testament promised. He has freed the souls of all of the dead who have been stuck, waiting in Hades. We see the church transform before our eyes. We take away the black and purple cloths and replace them with bright white ones. In some churches, we throw flower petals and herbs in celebration!

