



The Church

What is the Church?
Why do we need her?

Fasting and Prayer Program
The Holy Great Fast

2019

The Holy Great Fast, in the Coptic Orthodox Tradition, is a 55 day spiritual journey to the foot of the Cross of Our Lord Jesus Christ. It is a time of fasting and prayer and spiritual struggle and culminates in The Passion Week or the Holy Pascha (Passover) which is the most important week of the year and the richest spiritually.

The Fasting and Prayer Program for the Holy Great Fast is designed to enrich you on your spiritual journey by providing daily readings for your contemplation.

The theme of this Fasting and Prayer Program is:

The Church

What is the Church?
Why do we need her?

Each day consists of:

- * A Theme
- * A Verse
- * Commentary
- * Daily Bible Readings

The Program concludes with the events and rites of the Holy Pascha week – “a week full of holy memories of the most crucial stage of salvation and the outstanding chapter in the story of redemption.”

We pray that this Fasting and Prayer Program will be of benefit to your spiritual life.

One man asked a priest:
“If God is everywhere, why do
I go to Church?”

To which the priest replied:
“The whole atmosphere is
filled with water; but when you
want to drink you have to go
to a fountain or a well.”

Preface

In celebration of the 50th Anniversary of the Coptic Orthodox Church in Australia, we have dedicated the Fasting & Prayer Program to the Church, primarily the meanings, roles & her beauty. We see nowadays, different concepts and diluted superficial meanings of the Church, away from the Spirit of God. Fr Pishoy Kamel said: "The Church is the invisible body of our Lord Jesus Christ & the struggling Church living in this world with the power of her head, the Lord Christ. The Church is in the world like a boat, and her mast is the Holy Cross and her captain is the Lord Jesus Christ. The boat passes through the seas of this world, but the water of this world does not seep into the boat. She goes against the current of this world and sails with the power of the Holy Spirit, and her continuous sailing is a sign of her power."

The Church is not of this world and does not adhere to the ways of the world but preserves the inner beauty of Man. Being more powerful than the world and abundantly rich with Christ, she conquers the desires of the world through her love for Christ and the power of His Cross. Her mission is not to display any philosophical notions but calls for the salvation and rescue of the tortured souls and preaches the resurrection of the dead. The dead soul enters her and exits resurrected and having the fragrance of Christ. The Church is a servant to anoint the wounds of the souls, having been injured from this world. The Church uses oil to soothe the injured souls, she is the Good Samaritan of this world. The Church is a mother, nursing and caring for her infants. She displays the fatherhood of God, through the Church fathers. She is led by the Spirit of God, forsaking the world and its vain desires, to follow the example of our Great High Priest, the Lord Christ.

May the Lord bless this work for the glory of His holy name.

The Coptic Orthodox Church

“The Orthodox Church is evangelical, but not Protestant. It is Orthodox, but not Jewish. It is Catholic, but not Roman. It is not non-denominational, it is pre-denominational. It has been believed, taught, preserved, defended, and died for.”

The Coptic Orthodox Church of Alexandria is:

An Ancient Christian Church: It is one of the most ancient Churches in the world, having been founded by Saint Mark the Apostle, the writer of the second gospel, in the first Century. The word ‘Coptic’ comes from the ancient Egyptian word ‘hekaptah’ meaning ‘Egypt’, and thus ‘Coptic’ merely means ‘Egyptian.’ As a conservative Church, the Coptic Church has carefully preserved the Orthodox Christian Faith in its earliest and purest form, handing it down from generation to generation, unaltered and true to the Apostolic doctrines and patterns of worship.

Trinitarian: She believes in the Holy Trinity: Father, Son and Holy Spirit (being one God); and that our Lord, God and Savior Jesus Christ, the true Son of God, became incarnate, was born of the Virgin Saint Mary, died for us on the Cross that He may grant us Salvation, rose on the third day that He may grant us everlasting life with Him, and ascended to heaven after forty days, sending the Holy Spirit to His disciples as He promised them, on the day of Pentecost.

Apostolic: She was founded by Saint Mark the Apostle and Evangelist who preached to the Egyptians around 60-70 A.D.

Scriptural (Biblical): Her main point of reference is the Holy Scripture, as depicted in literal translations such as King James (KJV), New King James (NKJV), and the Revised Standard Version (RSV). Although the Coptic Orthodox Church accepts any New Testament translation that is faithful to the Greek Textus Receptus translation, She prefers only the Septuagint (LXX) translation of the Old Testament and not the Masoretic text found in most Bibles today.

Traditional: One of the pillars of her faith is the teachings of the early Church Fathers as well as the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed as a statement of Her Faith.

Sacramental: She has seven primary Mysteries: Baptism, Chrismation, Confession, the Eucharist (Communion), Marriage, Priesthood, and the Anointing of the Sick.

Conservative: She does not change basic matters of Faith, Dogma or Tradition to suit current trends (this does not mean however that matters such as language and day-to day practices are not changed to suit conditions of ministry and the needs of the congregation). Holding on to such matters of Faith and practice has not been an easy task, as the Coptic Church has always lived persecution of one form or another since its establishment in the first century.

<http://lacopts.org/orthodoxy/coptic-orthodox-church/>

Introduction

The Mystery of the House of God

“How lovely is Your tabernacle,
O Lord of hosts!
My soul longs, yes, even faints
For the courts of the Lord;
My heart and my flesh cry out for the living God.
Even the sparrow has found a home,
And the swallow a nest for herself,
Where she may lay her young—
Even Your altars, O Lord of hosts,
My King and my God.
Blessed are those who dwell in Your house;
For a day in Your courts is better than a thousand.
I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my
God
Than dwell in the tents of wickedness.”
(Psalm 84:1-4,10)

“In the middle of the violent storms of the world, and under the pressure of ceaseless temptations, the Psalmist paused to think. The sparrow has found a home to settle, and the swallow a nest to protect its young... but where would he find a place to dwell, and a shelter to inhabit?

No other place could compete with the altars of God, Lord of hosts, to please our heart and comfort our body. There, the ground beneath our feet vanishes, the whole materialistic world disappears from our sight, and our soul emerges to heaven, her abiding place. As if by wings of Spirit we are lifted up to the divine throne to visualise our King, God, and intimate Beloved One. Embracing Him and leaning across His chest, we cast our burdens and pour all our secrets, commune with Him... hear His voice and participate in His glories.

Indeed, worship in the house of God is far from being a duty or routine work exercised by a group of believers. ... There we accept the free gifts of the Holy Spirit. Our worship allows us entrance into the Lord's green pastures where we are immersed into the spring of life giving water, feed from the heavenly banquet, drink from the chalice of salvation and enjoyment of the mysteries of God's everlasting love. The Spirit gratifies us so that we desire nothing but to be in God's presence.”

- Fr Tadros Y. Malaty – The Church the House of God

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Monday, 4 March 2019

THE FIRST PARADISE

“And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day.” (Gen 3:8)



‘Adam lived in Paradise as a priest in the house of God. Each inch in Paradise declared God’s love and care for him. Every now and then he would detect God’s presence around him and hear the sound of the Lord walking in the garden and respond to Him. With every breath Adam offered love to his Creator, everywhere and without mediators. Truly, the early Paradise with all its space, was the holy “House of God”, in which God planned to meet man without the need of a sanctuary, altar, offering, or incense.

Not before long, however, our parents were dismissed from Paradise, loaded with their burden of disobedience and unable to visualise the dazzling light of the Lord. In their weakness, and because of their deprived nature they felt as if heaven had become beyond their reach, and as if God had left them forever. They became aware of their earthly nature and wondered how they could be attached to the Heavenly One!

At this point it was inevitable that a heavenly action should intervene, to overcome such a deadlock created between God and man. Not only that, but also to emphasise, sometimes by concealed internal feelings, and at other times by clear announcements and tangible signs, that God is keen on His relationship with us, and ever wanting to share with us even our home... In view of that, God has introduced the rite of the sacrifice and the altar, as a preliminary basis for the house of God. ‘

- Fr Tadros Y. Malaty – The Church the House of God

1st Monday of the Holy Great Fast

| | | | |
|-------------|------------------------|---------------|---------------|
| Vespers: | - | | |
| Prophecies: | Ex 2:23-3:5; Is 1:2-18 | | |
| Matins: | Ps 6:1-2 | Matt 12:24-34 | |
| Mass: | Rom 1:26-2:7 | James 2:1-13 | Acts 14:19-28 |
| | Ps 22:26 | Mark 9:33-50 | |

THE ALTAR

“For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement for the soul.” (Lev 17:11)



‘The introduction of the altar, as God’s house even in its early and primitive stages, immediately reveals the two fundamental facts that are necessary in establishing the house of God.

1. The first fact deals with our relation with God.

The word “altar” in Hebrew, as in Arabic “mazbeh”, refers to the place at which sacrifices are slaughtered. This is evident from the story of Genesis (22:9) where Isaac was laid on the altar to be [slain] and burned, ie. meeting with God was made possible through a redeeming offering or sacrifice.

Indeed, if the house of God is a meeting with God, then it is definitely an entry to the Sacrifice of the Cross. Through this sacrifice, His beloved Son, we can be reconciled with God. His blood clears our sight so that we recognise the Lord as our Father, who sanctifies our inner depths and tears away the debt we were unable to pay.

... The church atmosphere should be conditioned as to attract every heart towards God, to enjoy reconciliation constantly with the Father brought about by the sacrifice of Jesus our Saviour.

2. The second fact deals with our relation with God as a group or congregation.

This concept came to light at the time when Elijah, the prophet built an altar of twelve stones (1 Kings 18:30), imitating the Sinai tradition when Moses did the same thing (Exod. 24:4). Each stone represents a tribe, as if God’s altar derives its existence from the combined effort of the whole people through the sacrifice of reconciliation. Thus although meeting with God is achieved on a personal basis, by our faith in the Saviour, it is bound to occur without isolation from others, ie. the holy congregation.

Once again, on such a basis the house of God ought to be built: its materials, rites or worships should all form authentic icons, revealing the two integral and inseparable aspects that govern our relation with God.

A. God’s eagerness to unite with each one personally.

B. God wishes that we all unite in Him, so that our knowledge of Him is not confined to the individual level, but is extended with the spirit of practical love and unity, as one church body extending from Adam. Each member represents a church, or a living sanctuary of God, that is not isolated nor separated from the altar body or the church body which is the only bride of Christ.’

- Fr Tadros Y. Malaty – The Church the House of God

1st Tuesday of the Holy Great Fast

| | | | |
|-------------|--------------------------|--------------|--------------|
| Vespers: | - | | |
| Prophecies: | Is 1:19-2:3; Zech 8:7-13 | | |
| Matins: | Ps 23:1,3 | Matt 9:10-15 | |
| Mass: | Rom 9:14-29 | 1 Pet 4:3-11 | Acts 5:34-42 |
| | Ps 25:16-17 | | |
| | Luke 12:41-50 | | |

BETHEL

“How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven!”
(Gen 28:17)



‘A holy historical incident of major ecclesiastical interest, is that of Jacob running away from his brother Esau. On his aimless way, lonely, distressed and [with] nothing to look forward to, he rested his head on a stone and dreamt. There was a ladder set up on earth, and the top of it reached heaven, and behold the angels of God were ascending and descending on it, and the Lord stood above it and said, “I am with you”, (Gen. 28:12-15). Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, “Surely the Lord is in this place! How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven!” Early in the morning, Jacob rose and took the stone which he had put under his head and set it up for a pillar and poured oil on the top of it and called the place BETHEL, i.e. “HOUSE OF GOD”.

...God wanted to illustrate two vital facts of faith in conjunction with his relation with the people. These are: His existence among them, and the accessibility of the heavens to man.

1. His existence among them: While Jacob was running away aimlessly, with no place to rest, and nobody to shelter him or offer him sympathy, God’s voice assured him, “I am with you” (Gen 28:15).

This point should be distinctly reflected on the church building. As Jacob found relief when he laid his head at the foot of the ladder, so it is with us at the steps of the house of God. Indeed, our souls rejoice, “Truly God is in this place”, and the inner Jacob within us hears God’s encouraging voice, through the building rite, saying, “I am with you”.

2. The accessibility of the heavens to man: Jacob saw the angels ascending and descending on the ladder and at the top of which the Lord was standing: as if God wanted to fulfil His wish of linking the heavenly creation with the earthly one through incarnation and crucifixion (the heavenly ladder). Angels descend to serve the people, and humans rise to join the angels in their worship... Such a magnificent exchange explains why the church is called “House of Angels”.

This is what was visualised by St. Chrysostom on contemplation of the incarnation. He said (1), “First the Lord sends angels to people, then leads the humans to the heavens, thus establishing a heaven on earth, so that heaven is obliged to accept the human creation”. ‘

- Fr Tadros Y. Malaty – The Church the House of God

(1) SUNDAY SERMONS OF THE GREAT FRs, VOL 1, P 113.

1st Wednesday of the Holy Great Fast

| | | | |
|-------------|-------------------------|--------------|--------------|
| Vespers: | - | | |
| Prophecies: | Is 2:3-11; Joel 2:12-27 | | |
| Matins: | Ps 25:6-7 | Luke 6:24-34 | |
| Mass: | Rom 14:19-15:7 | 2 Pet 1:4-11 | Acts 10:9-20 |
| | Ps 25:20,16 | | |
| | Luke 6:35-38 | | |

THE TABERNACLE

“And let them make Me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them. According to all that I show you, that is, the pattern of the tabernacle and the pattern of all its furnishings, just so you shall make it.” (Exo 25:8-9)



‘For the first time, an official divine commandment regarding setting up the “House of God” had been issued to the people of God, on their way to Jerusalem, as the symbol of heaven, the dwelling place of the Lord. It was in the form of a tent ahead of their tents to be pitched wherever they camp.

The design of that tent was not a man’s design but was directly dictated by God to Moses, after he had strictly fasted forty days and forty nights on the mountain. He was told, “See that you make everything according to the pattern which was shown to you on the mountain”. (Heb. 8:5; Exod. 25:9). In fact, the completed outcome of the tent; its name, exterior shape, interior construction, contents, rites, and movements were produced according to a precise divine plan that revealed to us the “Mystery of God’s House”.

1. As far as the name is concerned it was called “miskan” in Hebrew, which means “the dwelling place”, as if God wished it known that His tent resides among our tents, so that every heart is opened to Him, and turned into a dwelling for Him.

It was also called “ohel mo, ed” in Hebrew, or “the meeting place”, which signifies that the people are not assembled within to worship God, but that it is rather a place wherein God is present among His people. Through clouds and glory He visibly uncovers Himself to them (Exod. 40: 34).

2. Concerning its shape and external look, it was roofed with badgers’ skin, goat’s and sheep’s hair..., needless to say, it held inner beauty. All its attractions were inside. Such is the case with the House of God. On the outside, it is stones, bricks and wood, but it bears hidden divine glories announced to the humble soul by the Holy Spirit.

3. With regards to the tabernacle’s internal design and contents, all its details exposed God’s saving deeds and as a mystery of God’s dwelling among the people. It included the screen, the laver of brass, the golden lamp stand, the table of showbread, the ark of testament, the altar of burnt-offerings etc.

A. The Screen: This makes the “Holy of Holies”, which is entered once a year, only by one mediator (the high-priest), bearing blood in his hand, which acts as the passport for all mankind, giving access to God’s Holies. It is the mystery of “heavens’ openness on the people”. This Mediator is the Messiah, the sole High-Priest who “entered once for all into the Holy place, taking not the blood of goats and calves but His own Blood, having obtained eternal redemption”.

B The Laver: This is employed to wash and purify the body, symbolising baptism in the Church of the New Testament. It grants the baptised a new birth in order that he may become entirely holy and a temple of the Lord in which the Spirit resides through the Mystery of Chrism.

C. The Golden Lamp stand: With its seven lamps, it declares the church’s illumination through the continuous acts of the Spirit.

D. The Table Of Showbread: This refers to the care of Christ for His Church. He feeds the people with His own body and blood, that they abide in Him.

E. The Ark Of Testament: With its inner contents uncovers the unity between God and people aiming them to participate in His Heavenly glories eternally.’

- Fr Tadros Y. Malaty – The Church the House of God

1st Thursday of the Holy Great Fast

| | | | |
|-------------|--------------------------|-----------------|-------------|
| Vespers: | - | | |
| Prophecies: | Is 2:11-19; Zech 8:18-23 | | |
| Matins: | Ps 24:1-2 | Luke 8:23-25 | |
| Mass: | 1 Cor 4:16-5:9 | 1 John 1:8-2:11 | Acts 8:3-13 |
| | Ps 118:14,18 | Mark 4:21-29 | |

THE TEMPLE

“Concerning this temple which you are building, if you walk in My statutes, execute My judgments, keep all My commandments, and walk in them, then I will perform My word with you, which I spoke to your father David. And I will dwell among the children of Israel, and will not forsake My people Israel.’ So Solomon built the temple and finished it” (1 Kin 6:12-14)



‘When the people settled in Jerusalem, the temple was constructed according to the pattern demonstrated to the Prophet David by God. Once again, the temple design was dictated from above, simply as an extension to the tabernacle. It included the same sections, the same contents, observed the same message and even followed its mobility. The tabernacle kept on moving across the wilderness with no fixed place to settle, referring to the foreignness of the church in this world, for she is only seeking its heavenly home. Likewise, God gave no permission to David, the man of wars, to find for him a permanent dwelling at Jerusalem. So long as the church is in a state of struggle, she cannot regain settlement. Only through her True Solomon, Jesus, the King of Peace, she can enjoy settlement, supported by His glories in heavenly Jerusalem.

It is not surprising, that the word “Temple”, in Hebrew as well as in Arabic is “Hekal”(1), taken from the “Ekalu” language, and bears the meaning of the ‘great house’. It was exclusively used to refer to an imperial place. Hence, the House of God as a temple, can only designate that its occupant (God) is the King reigning upon the hearts of His people and their inner senses guiding their external plans.

In that sense, the church ought to be a “Temple” that manifests God’s Kingdom in people’s lives, and is capable of preparing the inner hearts to be thrones of God.

Now we can realise Jesus’ tremendous love for the temple, considering it the “House of my own Father”, which is worthy of every honour. Within, prayers take place as a sign of God’s possession of the hearts.’

- Fr Tadros Y. Malaty – The Church the House of God

(1) THE ‘EKALU IS A SEUCTIC LANGUAGE THAT WAS USED TO LARGE FROM APPROXIMATELY THE 28TH CENTURY BEFORE CHRIST UNTIL 1A.D.

1st Friday of the Holy Great Fast

| | | | |
|-------------|--------------------------|---------------|---------------|
| Vespers: | - | | |
| Prophecies: | Deut 6:3-7:26; Is 3:1-14 | | |
| Matins: | Ps 30:1-2 | Luke 5:12-16 | |
| Mass: | Rom 12:6-21 | 3 John 1:1-14 | Acts 2:42-3:9 |
| | Ps 13:5-6 | | |
| | Luke 11:1-10 | | |

THE CHURCH OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

“Jesus answered and said to them, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.” Then the Jews said, “It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will You raise it up in three days?” But He was speaking of the temple of His body.” (John 2:19-21)



‘By this stage, the “House of God” has entered a new phase, whereby the symbol has realised its fullness. Looking back, it is envisaged that ever since the dismissal from Paradise, God has prepared man by every conceivable way, to accept His existence among people. Ultimately, the divine incarnation fulfilled such an aim, not only as God’s residence among the people, but also establishing His unity with them, for “the Word became man”.

In view of this new position that we have been granted by the divine incarnation, we no longer evaluate the church by its size, building materials or icons. Instead, the Incarnated Lord is transfigured in front of our eyes, so that we recognise the church as “Christ’s Body”. Extending in the life of the human race, it includes all temple corners, widens to embody the heavens, and transfers us above the limits of time.

This is the new temple that to which the Lord drew our attention when He said, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up again.... But the temple He was speaking of, was His own Body”. (Jn. 2: 19, 20).

As a result, God’s dwelling among His people in the past has been replaced by His Incarnation. His Body and Blood are offered to them so that they may abide in Him and unite with Him as branches in the One Vine. They become “members of His Body”. A temple of God, as the Apostle says, “Whereas the man who unites Himself to the Lord becomes one spirit with Him... Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God!” (1 Cor. 6: 17- 19).

Through such a concept of faith, the “Church of the New Testament” holds a distinctive sanctity in the believers’ eyes, for the Church Building is correlated with the holy Body of Christ as well as with the members of the Congregation. For this reason, on entering the church they kiss its steps, doors, icons and kneel before the sanctuary as if before God Himself.’

- Fr Tadros Y. Malaty – The Church the House of God

SUMMMARY

IN BRIEF, THE IDEA OF BUILDING THE “HOUSE OF GOD”, HAS EVOLVED THROUGHOUT SACRED HISTORY, IN ACCORDANCE WITH MAN’S ABILITY TO COMPREHEND THE ESSENCE OF “MEETING WITH GOD AND ATTAINING UNITY WITH HIM”, COUPLED WITH ITS APPLICATION IN HIS DAILY LIFE.

IT BEGAN WITH ELEMENTARY, MOBILE FORMS OF ALTARS UNDERLINING THAT SACRIFICE IS THE RECONCILIATION WITH GOD.

THEN BETHEL WAS INTRODUCED, TO ANNOUNCE THE OPENNESS OF HEAVEN TOWARDS THE EARTH AS AN UNSHAKEABLE EVIDENCE OF GOD’S EAGERNESS TO BE PRESENT WITH HIS CHILDREN, PARTICULARLY DURING HARD TIMES.

LATER ON, DIVINE INSTRUCTIONS WERE GIVEN TO PREPARE THE TABERNACLE SO AS TO MEET WITH THIS PEOPLE AND LEAD THEM THROUGH THE WILDERNESS ON THE WAY TO JERUSALEM.

NEXT THE TEMPLE WAS BUILT IN JERUSALEM, AS A SYMBOL OF GOD’S KINGDOM IN THE LIVES OF HIS PEOPLE.

FINALLY, CAME THE CHURCH OF THE NEW TESTAMENT, FOUNDED NOT ON VISIONS AND SYMBOLS, BUT UPON THE DIVINE ACT I.E. THE WORD WAS INCARNATED. HERE, OUR RELATION WITH GOD COMMENCED A NEW PHASE IN WHICH WE BECAME QUALIFIED TO ENJOY THE NEW LIFE AND TO BE TRANSFERRED TO HEAVEN TO PARTICIPATE IN HIS GLORIES.

THIS IS THE NEW CHURCH THAT, WITHIN ITS BUILDING, GATHERS THE HOLY BODY OF CHRIST THE HEAD TOGETHER WITH ITS MEMBERS. THE HEAD LEADS THE VARIOUS MEMBERS THROUGH THE HOLY SPIRIT, AND THE MEMBERS ATTAIN THEIR RIGHT TO UNITE WITH ONE ANOTHER THROUGH THEIR BELONGING TO THE SAME HEAD.

1st Saturday of the Holy Great Fast

| | | | |
|-------------|--------------|--------------|---------------|
| Vespers: | - | | |
| Prophecies: | - | | |
| Matins: | Ps 119:57-58 | Matt 5:25-37 | |
| Mass: | Rom 12:1-21 | James 1:1-12 | Acts 21:27-39 |
| | Ps 5:1-2 | Matt 5:38-48 | |

Day 7

Sunday, 10 March 2019

**1ST SUNDAY
OF THE HOLY GREAT FAST**

19 “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal;

20 “but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal.

21 “For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

22 “The lamp of the body is the eye. If therefore your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light.

23 “But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great [is] that darkness!

24 “No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.

25 “Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing?

26 “Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?

27 “Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature?

28 “So why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin;

29 “and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.

30 “Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, [will] [He] not much more [clothe] you, O you of little faith?

31 “Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’

32 “For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things.

33 “But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.

Matthew 6:19-33

1st Sunday of the Holy Great Fast

| | | | |
|-------------|-------------|----------------|------------------|
| Vespers: | Ps 17:1-2 | Matt 6:34-7:12 | |
| Prophecies: | - | | |
| Matins: | Ps 18:1-2 | Matt 7:22-29 | |
| Mass: | Rom 13:1-14 | James 1:13-21 | Acts 21:40-22:16 |
| | Ps 25:1-2,4 | Matt 6:19-33 | |

ATTRIBUTES OF THE TRUE CHURCH (PART I)

“When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.” (Acts 2:1-4)



“In the apostolic era there was one true Church of Christ, which was a united community of the saved. The Book of Acts of the Holy Apostles tells how the Church started to exist in Jerusalem, when, on the fiftieth day after the Resurrection of Christ, the Holy [Spirit] descended onto the Apostles like tongues of fire. Since that day the Christian faith started to spread out in different parts of the extensive Roman Empire. As it disseminated in towns and villages, Christian communities, or churches, sprang up. Because of tremendous distances, these communities were more or less separated in the everyday life. Still they considered themselves as organic parts of One, Holy, Universal and Apostolic Church. They were united by one faith and one source of sanctification, drawn from the grace-filled sacraments (baptism, Communion and ordaining, or imposition of hands).

Initially, the Holy Apostles performed these sacred actions. But very soon they started to need assistants, and the Apostles chose the worthy amongst the members of Christian communities, and ordained them bishops, presbyters and deacons. (For example, the Apostle Paul ordained Timothy and Titus to the bishop degree). The Apostles compelled bishops to watch the purity of Christian teaching, instruct the faithful in righteous living and ordain new bishops, priests and deacons as assistants to themselves. By doing so the Apostles themselves established the ecclesiastical hierarchy, which is still in existence today. Over her lifespan, the Church, like a tree (Mark 4:31), permanently grew and spread out, getting richer in spiritual experience, religion literature, prayers and singing of the divine service, and later on church architecture and art; still she preserved her essence of the Church of the Apostolic era.

The Gospels and Apostolic Epistles did not appear all at once and all at one place. For decades after the Church was created, the Church was instructed not by the Scripture, but by the oral preaching that the Apostles called the tradition (1 Corinthians 11:16 and 15:2, 2 Thessalonians 2:15 and 3:6, 1 Timothy 6:20). The Tradition is a unified custom of instruction in faith. It has always been decisive when people needed to find what's right and what's wrong. When something was inconsistent with the apostolic tradition, say in the issues of faith, conducting of sacraments or administration, it was considered false and rejected. In line with the Apostolic tradition, bishops of the first centuries checked all Christian manuscripts very thoroughly, and collected the works of the Apostles, Gospels and Epistles, one after another, into one set of books. We know it as the New Testament, and together with the books of the Old Testament it makes up the Bible we read today. This process of collecting books was finalized in the 3rd century. The controversial books, which were not in agreement with everything in the apostolic tradition (though said to be left by the Apostles), were rejected as false... The Apostolic Tradition played the decisive role in the formation of the New Testament, the Church's treasure of writing...

We are grateful to other documents, written by disciples of the Holy Apostles and preserved until today, for the many valuable details of life and belief of the Early Christian communities that we know today. The belief in the existence of One, Holy, Apostolic Church was then universal.”

<https://www.orthodoxphotos.com/readings/kingdom/attributes.shtml>

2nd Monday of the Holy Great Fast

| | | | |
|-------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|----------------|
| Vespers: | - | | |
| Prophecies: | Ex 3:6-14; Is 4:2-5:7 | | |
| Matins: | Ps 40:11 | Mark 9:25-29 | |
| Mass: | Rom 1:18-25 Ps 29:1-2 | Jude 1:1-8 Luke 18:1-8 | Acts 4:36-5:11 |

ATTRIBUTES OF THE TRUE CHURCH (PART II)

“...and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.” (Matt 16:18)



“If we agree that one real Church existed in the early centuries of Christianity, then can we find out the historical moment when she fractured, split and ceased to exist? The honest answer is no. Deviations from the clear Apostolic doctrine, or heresies, began to occur yet in the apostolic age. Most active then were Gnostic teachings, which put together Christian belief and elements of pagan philosophy. The Apostles warned Christians against such teachings in their epistles, and stated directly that adherents of those sects had fallen away from the faith. The Apostles considered heretics as dry branches that broke off from the living tree of the Church. In a like way, the successors of the Apostles, bishops of the first centuries, renounced the deviations from the Apostolic faith, which emerged at their times, and excommunicated persistent adherents of false teachings, according to the Apostles’ instruction: “But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed,” i.e. excommunicated (Galatians 1:8-9).

Thus, the oneness and unity of the Church was not questioned in the early centuries of Christianity: the Church is one spiritual family, which has been holding the true doctrine, Sacraments and unbroken succession of grace, transferred from bishop to bishop since the Apostolic age. The Apostles’ successors never had doubts in that the Church is absolutely necessary for salvation. She keeps and proclaims the pure teaching of Christ, she sanctifies the believers and leads them to salvation. We can use the images of the Scriptures and say that, in the first centuries of Christianity, the Church was viewed as a fenced sheepfold where the Good Shepherd, Christ, secures His sheep from the wolf, the devil. The Church was compared to a vine, from which believers, like branches, from the same root, received spiritual powers needed for Christian life and good works. The Church was also looked at as the Body of Christ, in which every believer is a limb that has to do some service needed to the whole. The Church was also presented as Noah’s Ark, on board of which the believers cross the ever-storming sea of life and reach the shore of the Kingdom of Heaven. The Church was likened to a high mountain, raised above human delusions and leading the travelers toward the Heaven, communion with God, angels and saints.

In the first centuries of Christianity believing in Christ meant believing that what He had done on earth, and the means that He had given the believers for salvation, cannot be lost or taken away through efforts of enemies of the Church. The Old Testament prophets, the Lord Jesus Christ and His Apostles definitely taught that the Church would exist until the last times of the world... The Lord made a promise to the Apostle Peter, “Upon this rock (of faith) I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it” (Matthew 16:18).

In this way, if only we believe the promise of the Saviour, we should acknowledge that His Church exists in our time and until the end of the world... she should exist in her holy, indivisibly whole, real essence. Fractured, damaged, evaporated — she will not be the Church.”

<https://www.orthodoxphotos.com/readings/kingdom/attributes.shtml>

2nd Tuesday of the Holy Great Fast

| | | | |
|-------------|------------------------|---------------|--------------|
| Vespers: | - | | |
| Prophecies: | Job 19:1-27, Is 5:7-16 | | |
| Matins: | Ps 41:4,13 | Luke 12:22-31 | |
| Mass: | 2 Cor 9:6-15 | James 1:1-12 | Acts 4:13-22 |
| | Ps 41:1 | Mark 10:17-27 | |

Day 10**Wednesday, 13 March
2019****ATTRIBUTES OF THE TRUE CHURCH
(PART III)**

“Hold fast the pattern of sound words which you have heard from me, in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. That good thing which was committed to you, keep by the Holy Spirit who dwells in us.” (2 Tim 1:13-14)



“So where is she [the Church]? What are the hallmarks that help to find her among many modern Christian ‘branches’?”

First, the true Church must maintain the Christian doctrine, proclaimed by the Apostles, in its intactness and purity. The Son of God came to the earth with the goal of bringing the truth to people, as He said before His suffering on the Cross, “To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice” (John 18:37). The Apostle Paul, instructing his disciple Timothy on how to fulfill the bishop’s office, concluded, “But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth” (1 Timothy 3:15).

It is sad to recognize significant divergence in doctrinal issues amongst modern Christian denominations. In principle we must agree that all teachings cannot be correct. If one church teaches that, say, the Eucharist is the Flesh and Blood of Christ, and another says that it is not so, then it cannot happen that both are right. If one church believes in the reality of spiritual power of the sign of cross, and another rejects this power, then obviously one of the two is in error. The True Church is that which has no doctrinal deviation from the Church of the first centuries of Christianity....

Another indication of the true Church is the grace and power of God that the Church sanctifies and strengthens believers with. Although grace is invisible, there is a visible condition that permits us to judge whether grace is present or not: the apostolic succession. Since the Apostolic age grace was given to believers in the Sacraments of baptism, Communion, imposition of hands (Chrismation... or ordination) and other mysteries. First these Sacraments were worked by the Apostles (Acts 8:14-17), and later by bishops... The right to perform these Sacraments could be conferred exclusively in the form of succession: the Apostles ordained bishops, and to ordain other bishops, priests and deacons, was allowed to them only... That is why continuity of the apostolic succession has been thoroughly watched since the Apostles’ times: that a bishop is ordained only by genuine, legitimate bishops with their ordination traced back to the Apostles themselves. If bishops fell into heresy or conducted immoral life, they were deposed and lost the right to perform Sacraments or ordain successors...

One more indication of the true Church is her suffering. It may be difficult to people to recognize which church is true, but her enemy, the devil, understands it very well. He hates the Church and attempts to extinguish her. When we study Church history we see that it is written with blood and tears of her martyrs.... And here is the wonder: the martyrs’ blood became the seed for new Christians, and, as Christ promised, the gates of hell have not prevailed against the Church.”

<https://www.orthodoxphotos.com/readings/kingdom/attributes.shtml>

2nd Wednesday of the Holy Great Fast

| | | | |
|-------------|-------------------------------------|---------------|-------------|
| Vespers: | - | | |
| Prophecies: | Ex 2:11-20; Is 5:17-25; Mal 1:6-3:6 | | |
| Matins: | Ps 18:17-18 | Matt 5:17-24 | |
| Mass: | Rom 3:1-17 | 2 John 1:8-13 | Acts 5:3-11 |
| | Ps 18:1-2 | Matt 15:32-38 | |

THE CREED

“...holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict.” (Titus 1:9)



“What you believe and base your life on is your creed...The word “Creed” derives from the Latin word “Credo” meaning, “I believe.” The Creed is the essence of our Christian faith. All the Christian churches all over the world have the same belief, and those who do not hold to it are not deemed Christians.

Creating the Creed

There was a need for a short summary of the faith to which those who were baptized could subscribe. Some of the earliest Christian creeds were written for this reason. The great heresies in early church history prompted the writing of the Creed. The “Nicene Creed” is the one formulated by St. Athanasius (the 20th Pope of Alexandria), the Hero of the first Ecumenical Council of Nicea in the 4th century (324AD). This Council of 318 Bishops approved this Creed under the guidance of the Holy Spirit to refute the false teaching of Arius and his followers, who denied the divinity of Christ. This Creed was completed in the second Ecumenical Council of Constantinople (381AD) convened by 150 Bishops against Macedonious’ heresy against the divinity of the Holy Spirit. The third Ecumenical Council at Ephesus (431AD), convened by 200 Bishops against Nestor’s heresy, added the introduction to the Creed. This Creed is shared by all the churches the world over.

The Nicene Creed is expressing the faith of the Universal Church. It is the summary of our beliefs, based on the Biblical facts without any contradiction with the Holy Scripture.

We need to know, what we believe, and in whom we believe, if we want to be Christians. We cannot remain silent about what God had done for us. We must communicate our faith expressed through this Creed. This is why we have the Nicene Creed as a summary of our Christian faith to live by.

The Nicene Creed

Introduction to the Creed

We exalt you, the Mother of the true Light. We glorify you, O Saint, the Mother of God (Theotokos), for you brought forth unto us the Saviour of the whole world; He came and saved our souls. Glory be to You, our Master, our King, Christ, the pride of the apostles, the crown of the martyrs, the joy of the righteous, the firmness of the churches, the forgiveness of sins. We proclaim the Holy Trinity in One Godhead. We worship Him. We glorify Him. Lord have mercy. Lord have mercy. Lord bless. Amen.

The Creed

We believe in one God, God the Father the Pantocrator who created heaven and earth, and all things seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Only-Begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all ages; Light of Light, true God of true God, begotten not created, of one essence with the Father, by whom all things were made; Who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven, and was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary and became Man. And He was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate, suffered and was buried. And on the third day He rose from the dead, according to the scriptures, ascended to the heavens; He sits at the right hand of his Father, and He is coming again in His glory to judge the living and the dead, Whose kingdom shall have no end.

Yes, we believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the Life-Giver, Who proceeds from the Father, Who with the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified, who spoke by the prophets.

And in one holy, catholic and apostolic church. We confess one baptism for the remission of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the coming age. Amen.”

<http://wiscopts.net/spiritual-library/129>

2nd Thursday of the Holy Great Fast

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|-------------|--|---------------|---------------|
| Vespers: | - | | |
| Prophecies: | Deut 5:15-22; Is 6:1-12; Josh 2:1-6:27 | | |
| Matins: | Ps 28:9 | Matt 11:20-30 | |
| Mass: | Rom 16:17-27 | James 3:1-12 | Acts 12:12-23 |
| | Ps 48:10-11 | Matt 19:16-30 | |

Day 12**Friday, 15 March 2019****ONE, HOLY, CATHOLIC AND APOSTOLIC CHURCH**

“For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and have all been made to drink into one Spirit.” (1 Cor 12:12-13)



“The One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church.... is the creedal form of belief in the Church. What is implied in that belief are commonly called the marks of the Church: unity, sanctity, catholicity, and apostolicity.

Unity

The Church is one. The Church is Christ's mystical body; just as He cannot be divided, neither can His body. There is one Church, not many; and it is united, not divided. This may seem naïve or callous given the present realities of Christians separated for nearly a thousand years. In the face of this real division, modern men are tempted to despair and speak of a “divided Church,” abandoning the creedal faith.

According to Protopresbyter Thomas Hopko:...this one Church, because its unity depends on God, Christ, and the Spirit, may never be broken. Thus, according to Orthodox doctrine, the Church is indivisible; men may be in it or out of it, but they may not divide it.

Sanctity

The Church is holy because God makes her members holy by union with Him. God sanctifies the Church by drawing her into His divine life, supremely through the union effected by the Incarnation. The faith and life of the Church participates in the holiness of God by expressing the divine life in doctrine, sacraments, services and saints --- men and women whose lives have been recognized for their holiness.

Just as untruth separates from the unity of God and ultimately separates from the unity of the Church, immorality also separates one from God and the Church.

Catholicity

The Church is the fullness of Christ's body on earth. As a term, catholicity means fullness or perfection, wholeness. Only God is perfect wholeness, the fullness of being. God makes the Church to be catholic by its participation in His full, divine life.

Fr. Thomas Hopko: The term “catholic” as originally used to define the Church (as early as the first decades of the second century) was a definition of quality rather than quantity. Calling the Church catholic means to define how it is, namely, full and complete, all-embracing, and with nothing lacking.

Even before the Church was spread over the world, it was defined as catholic. The original Jerusalem Church of the apostles, or the early city-churches of Antioch, Ephesus, Corinth, or Rome, were catholic. These churches were catholic -- as is each and every Orthodox church today -- because nothing essential was lacking for them to be the genuine Church of Christ. God Himself is fully revealed and present in each church through Christ and the Holy Spirit, acting in the local community of believers with its apostolic doctrine, ministry (hierarchy), and sacraments, thus requiring nothing to be added to it in order for it to participate fully in the Kingdom of God....Catholicity is a qualitative mark: the quality of the whole faith handed down from the apostles.

Apostolicity

The Church has been sent into the world, to bring the world into communion with God. Just as the Son was sent by the Father, and the Spirit sent by the Son, the Church has been sent by the Holy Trinity into the world.

Fr. Thomas Hopko: As Christ was sent from God, so Christ Himself chose and sent His apostles. “As the Father has sent me, even so I send you ... receive ye the Holy Spirit,” the risen Christ says to His disciples. Thus, the apostles go out to the world, becoming the first foundation of the Christian Church.

In this sense, then, the Church is called apostolic: first, as it is built upon Christ and the Holy Spirit sent from God and upon those apostles who were sent by Christ, filled with the Holy Spirit; and secondly, as the Church in its earthly members is itself sent by God to bear witness to His Kingdom, to keep His word and to do His will and His works in this world.

This sending was first effected with the apostles, thus apostolicity is not only the divine mission; it is also unity of the Church with the apostles who were sent out by Jesus Christ. Thus, there is an apostolic succession by which the pastors of the Church are able to trace their orders back to the infant Church founded by Jesus Christ in the first century.”

<https://oca.org/orthodoxy/the-orthodox-faith/doctrine-scripture/the-symbol-of-faith/church>

2nd Friday of the Holy Great Fast

Vespers: -
 Prophecies: Deut 8:1-9:4; 1 Sam 17:1-18:4; Is 7:1-14; Job 11:1-20

Matins: Ps 116:7-81 Matt 15:39-16:12

Mass: Heb 12:28-13:16 1 Pet 4:7-16 Acts 15:22-31

Ps 29:10-11 Luke 6:39-49

Day 13**Saturday, 16 March 2019****ORTHODOXY**

“And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” (Eph 4:11-13)



“[The term Orthodox] comes to us from the fifth century and has two meanings which are closely related. The first definition is “true teaching.” The Orthodox Church believes that she has maintained and handed down the Christian faith, free from error and distortion, from the days of the Apostles. The second definition...is “true praise.” To bless, praise, and glorify God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is the fundamental purpose of the Church. All her activities, even her doctrinal formulations, are directed toward this goal.

Occasionally, the word Catholic is also used to describe the Orthodox Church. This description, dating back to the second century, is embodied in the Nicene Creed, which acknowledges One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church. From the Orthodox perspective, Catholic means that the Church is universal and also that she includes persons of all races and cultures. It also affirms that the Church has preserved the fullness of the Christian faith.”

<https://www.goarch.org/-/the-orthodox-church-an-introduction>

“The life of the Orthodox Church perpetuates and fulfills the ministry of Jesus Christ. The close association between Christ and His Church is reflected in the images from the Scriptures which declare that Christ is the Head and the Church is His Body, and that Christ is the Bridegroom and the Church is His bride. These images express the reality that the Church does not exist independently from Christ.

... His Church continues to be the realm through which the image and likeness of God in each of us is brought to perfection. The Orthodox Christian becomes united with Christ at Baptism and is nurtured by Christ at every Eucharist.

Orthodoxy has avoided any temptation to reduce its vision of the Church. The biblical descriptions of the Church as the Body of Christ and the Temple of the Holy Spirit indicate that she truly must be recognized as much more than one institution among many, or a social service agency, or as an ethnic or fraternal organization... The Greek word for Church, *ecclesia*, implies a community called and gathered by God for a special purpose. This means that the Church can be described as the unique meeting place between God and His people.

The Orthodox Faith cannot be appreciated fully, or appropriated personally, by the individual who is outside the Orthodox Church. Viewed from this vantage point, Orthodoxy can falsely appear as one world-view among many, as a cultural appendage, or merely as a ceremonial church. It is only from within the Church that one has the necessary perspective of experiencing Orthodoxy as the revelation of Divine Life.

The ultimate commitment of the Orthodox Christian is a commitment to Christ our Lord, Who is known in and through the Church.”

http://holytrinityholyyoke.ma.goarch.org/about-orthodoxy/the_church

2nd Saturday of the Holy Great Fast

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|-------------|--------------|---------------|---------------|
| Vespers: | - | | |
| Prophecies: | - | | |
| Matins: | Ps 25:7-8,11 | Mark 9:43-50 | |
| Mass: | Rom 14:1-18 | James 1:22-27 | Acts 22:17-30 |
| | Ps 118:19-20 | Matt 7:13-21 | |

Day 14

Sunday, 17 March 2019

2ND SUNDAY
OF THE HOLY GREAT FAST

1 Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.

2 And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterward He was hungry.

3 Now when the tempter came to Him, he said, "If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread."

4 But He answered and said, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.' "

5 Then the devil took Him up into the holy city, set Him on the pinnacle of the temple,

6 and said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down. For it is written:

'He shall give His angels charge over you,' and,

'In [their] hands they shall bear you up,

Lest you dash your foot against a stone.' "

7 Jesus said to him, "It is written again, 'You shall not tempt the Lord your God.' "

8 Again, the devil took Him up on an exceedingly high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory.

9 And he said to Him, "All these things I will give You if You will fall down and worship me."

10 Then Jesus said to him, "Away with you, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only you shall serve.' "

11 Then the devil left Him, and behold, angels came and ministered to Him.

Matthew 4:1-11

2nd Sunday of the Holy Great Fast

| | | | |
|-------------|----------------|--------------|--------------|
| Vespers: | Ps 51:1,9 | Mark 1:12-15 | |
| Prophecies: | - | | |
| Matins: | Ps 57:1 | Luke 4:1-13 | |
| Mass: | Rom 14:19-15:7 | James 2:1-13 | Acts 23:1-11 |
| | Ps 27:8-9 | Matt 4:1-11 | |

Day 15

Monday, 18 March 2019

A HOSPITAL FOR THE SPIRITUALLY SICK

“Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” (Matt 11:28)



““God, I thank Thee that I am not as other men are.” A sinful man dares to say this, in Church, to God’s face! What is the Church, if not a place where the sick meet their physician? Those sick from sin come to confess their sickness to God the Physician, and to find medicine and healing from Him who is the true Healer from all human suffering and weakness, and the Giver of all good things. Do the healthy go to hospital, to boast of their health to the doctor?

But this Pharisee did not come to the Temple with a whole and healthy soul, to boast of his health, but as a man seriously ill with unrighteousness who, in the delirium of his sickness, no longer knows he is ill. Once, when I was visiting a mental hospital, the doctor took me in front of a wire screen across the cell of the most seriously ill of his patients. “How do you feel?”, I asked him. He immediately replied: “How do you think I feel, among all these madmen?” - St Nikolai Velimorivhc

“The Church is a hospital, and not a courtroom, for souls. She does not condemn on behalf of sins, but grants remission of sins. Nothing is so joyous in our life as the thanksgiving that we experience in the Church. In the Church, the joyful sustain their joy. In the Church, those worried acquire merriment, and those saddened, joy. In the Church, the troubled find relief, and the heavy-laden, rest.” - St John Chrysostom

3rd Monday of the Holy Great Fast

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|-------------|---------------------------|---------------|---------------|
| Vespers: | - | | |
| Prophecies: | Prov 1:20-33; Is 8:13-9:7 | | |
| Matins: | Ps 32:1-2 | Luke 19:11-28 | |
| Mass: | 1 Cor 5:9-6:5 | 1 Pet 1:3-12 | Acts 17:10-14 |
| | Ps 32:5 | Luke 11:33-36 | |

Day 16

Tuesday, 19 March 2019

THE HEAVENLY EMBASSY ON EARTH

“And He said, ‘To you it has been given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God.’” (Lk 8:10)



“In God’s Church, simple, faithful and kind souls are like children in the house of the Heavenly Father — here they are free and are totally at ease. In Church, sincere Christians can foretaste the future Kingdom that has been prepared for them from the day of Creation: future liberation from all sin and death: future tranquillity and joy.” - St John of Kronstadt

“It is during the Liturgy that the doors of heaven are open. It is the time that Christ is present among us, offering His flesh and blood in Holy Communion, so that we may live and be granted the forgiveness of our sins.” - St Kyrillos VI

“The Holy Church is a place of Angels, a place of Archangels, the Kingdom of God, heaven itself!” - St John Chrysostom

3rd Tuesday of the Holy Great Fast

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|-------------|---------------------------------------|---------------|--------------|
| Vespers: | - | | |
| Prophecies: | Prov 2:1-15; Is 10:12-20; Josh 7:1-26 | | |
| Matins: | Ps 32:10 | Luke 12:54-59 | |
| Mass: | Rom 4:1-8 | 1 John 2:1-11 | Acts 27:9-12 |
| | Ps 32:2-3 | John 8:31-39 | |

Day 17**Wednesday, 20 March
2019****THE SOURCE OF SALVATION**

“To the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all who in every place call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours.” (1 Cor 1:2)



“The holy Church is God’s most supreme, most holy, most good, most wise and necessary establishment upon the earth. She is “the true tabernacle” of God, “which the Lord pitched, and not man” (Heb. viii. 2).... The Church is a union of people established by God, united among themselves by the Faith, Doctrine, Hierarchy, and Mysteries.

She is Christ’s spiritual army, equipped with spiritual weaponry against the numberless armed hordes of the devil: “For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual wickedness in high places” (Eph. vi. 12). She is a spiritual hospital where mankind, enfeebled by the open wound of sin, is cured by grace-filled treatments given by God—by repentance and communion in the Holy Mysteries of Christ, in Christ’s Body and Blood, and by the word of God, by the instructions and counsels and consolations of the shepherds of Christ’s rational flock.

She is a common laver of purification, rebirth, and sanctification; she is God’s sanctuary in which all are sanctified by the Holy Spirit through Baptism, Chrismation, and the other Mysteries, and the Divine Service. She is the spiritual sun of the world, enlightening and giving life to all who sit in the darkness and shadow of death and who are dead through sin.”
- St John of Kronstadt

3rd Wednesday of the Holy Great Fast

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|-------------|--|---------------|--------------|
| Vespers: | - | | |
| Prophecies: | Ex 4:19-6:13; Joel 2:21-26; Is 9:9-10:4; Job 12:1-14:22 | | |
| Matins: | Ps 27:4 | Luke 13:18-22 | |
| Mass: | 2 Thess 2:9-17 | 2 Pet 2:9-15 | Acts 28:7-11 |
| | Ps 27:7-8 | Luke 4:1-13 | |

Day 18**Thursday, 21 March 2019****THE HARBOUR OF HOLINESS (“SET APART FROM THE WORLD”)**

“...Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.” (Eph 5:25-27)



“During each and every celebration of the Divine Liturgy, we, as the people of God, recite the Nicene Creed. This ancient declaration is the very core of our common faith and connects us to the teachings of the Ancient Church. In this creed, we declare that we believe in “The One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church”. The word “holy” is something we often fail to see as having anything to do with us, personally. The Church is holy, but we are not, we tell ourselves. Yet the first Christians called themselves “the holy”, precisely because they knew the Holy Spirit was in their midst, sanctifying the Church. They knew they were not simply members of a religious body, but that they WERE the Church.

Because the Holy Spirit sanctifies the Church, they, as members of the Body of Christ, were sanctified, even if they often fell short of the Glory of God. But how could the Church be holy when she so often experiences moments of darkness, and when even her priests and bishops fall short the standards set forth in the Gospels? How can we call the Church holy, when we are all such sinners?

The Church is holy because her founder is holy, and because Christ has never abandoned His Church. The Church is holy because she is guided by the Holy Spirit. She is holy because she is always being purified and transformed anew, by the Holy Spirit. The Church is not holy because of anything we have done, but because God has made her holy.

If the holiness of the Church was dependent upon her people, most of us would have to be banned from membership. Yet this very holiness is based upon the fact that the Church does not turn away we sinners, but welcomes us with open arms. Because of the great mercy of God, and His tender love for us, we enter the very threshold of the Church with the expectation we will receive healing and forgiveness. It is within the boundaries of the Church that even the weakest of sinners can become holy, for holiness is the destiny of every Christian. Every Christian is called to holiness because our weakness is overcome by the strength of God’s mercy. It is not about living extraordinary lives, but about being transformed by an extraordinary God.” - Abbot Tryphon

<https://www.thegoodshepherd.org.au/heretics-and-holiness>

3rd Thursday of the Holy Great Fast

| | | | |
|-------------|---|---------------|-------------|
| Vespers: | - | | |
| Prophecies: | Gen 18:17-19:29; Prov 2:16-3:4; Is 11:10-12:2 | | |
| Matins: | Ps 9:11-12 | Luke 20:20-26 | |
| Mass: | Rom 4:6-11 | James 4:1-10 | Acts 28:1-6 |
| | Ps 9:7-8 | John 12:44-50 | |

Day 19

Friday, 22 March 2019

THE UNIFIED BODY OF CHRIST

And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.” (Eph 1:22-23)



“‘I believe in one Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church.’ Do you believe that all Orthodox Christians are members of one and the same body, and that therefore we must all ‘keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace,’ must care for one... another, help one another? Do you believe that the saints are likewise members of the one body of Christ – that is, of the Church, and are our brethren, interceding for us before God in heaven? Do you respect every Christian, as a member of Christ, as His brother according to human nature?

Do you love everybody as yourself, as your own flesh and blood? Do you generously forgive offenses? Do you help others in need, if you yourself have means? Do you teach the ignorant? Do you turn the sinner from the error of his ways? Do you comfort those who are in affliction? Faith in the Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church inspires, obliges you to do all this; and for all this you are promised a great reward from the Head of the Church – our Lord Jesus Christ.” -St. John of Kronstadt

“We are members of the Holy Orthodox Church, members of the Body of Christ, whose Head is Christ God Himself, but each is a member individually; Christ is holy, the Head of the body, and therefore the members also must be holy.” - St. John of Kronstadt

3rd Friday of the Holy Great Fast

| | | | |
|-------------|---|---------------|--------------|
| Vespers: | - | | |
| Prophecies: | Deut 9:7-10:11; 1 Sam 23:26-24:22; Job 15:1-35; Is 13:2-13; Sirach* 2:1-3:4 [* Second Canonical Book] | | |
| Matins: | Ps 16:10-11 | Luke 20:27-38 | |
| Mass: | Heb 11:1-8 | Jude 1:17-25 | Acts 23:6-11 |
| | Ps 16:1-2 | Luke 11:14-26 | |

Day 20**Saturday, 23 March 2019****THE SCHOOL FOR SPIRITUAL
EDUCATION**

“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.” (Col 3:16)



“The Christian must unremittingly care for his spiritual education for which he was born anew in the holy font through the Holy Spirit, received spiritual regeneration, and was sealed with chrism, or the seal of the Holy Spirit, and was made worthy of the right to communicate in the Most immaculate Blood of Christ.—According to, God’s intent, the holy Church is the first and most lawful educator of Christian souls.

There is no more important work than that of Christian education. Judge and understand for yourselves how dear are these rational, immortal souls unto God, which were redeemed by the Blood of the Son of God Himself, which were called out of the darkness of ignorance into the light of the knowledge of God by the Lord Himself, which were betrothed and united to the Lord as pure virgins to a most pure Bridegroom!

How dear is the salvation of these souls, to whom He offers His most immaculate Body and most pure Blood as food and drink, whom He Himself undertook to educate spiritually through these wonderful, dreadful, life-creating and deifying Mysteries! Devote yourselves, all of you, to your spiritual education with all attention and diligence; devote yourselves to thoughts concerning God, to prayer, self-investigation, self-condemnation, with self-amendment in every way; exercise yourselves in the virtues of meekness, humility, obedience, patience, compassion, chastity, simplicity, guilelessness and cut off all sinful thoughts, lusts, habits, passions.” - St. John of Kronstadt

“The Church, through the temple and Divine service, acts upon the entire man, educates him wholly; acts upon his sight, hearing, smelling, feeling, taste, imagination, mind, and will, by the splendour of the icons and of the whole temple, by the ringing of bells, by the singing of the choir, by the fragrance of the incense, the kissing of the Gospel, of the cross and the holy icons, by the prosphoras, the singing, and sweet sound of the readings of the Scriptures.” - St. John of Kronstadt

<http://www.orthodoxchurchquotes.com/2014/10/16/st-john-of-kronstadt-the-church-through-the-temple-and-divine-service-acts-upon-the-entire-man/>

3rd Saturday of the Holy Great Fast

| | | | |
|-------------|--------------|---------------|---------------|
| Vespers: | - | | |
| Prophecies: | - | | |
| Matins: | Ps 130:1-2 | Mark 10:17-27 | |
| Mass: | 2 Cor 7:2-11 | James 2:14-26 | Acts 23:12-35 |
| | Ps 27:6-8 | Matt 18:23-35 | |

Day 21

Sunday, 24 March 2019

3RD SUNDAY OF THE HOLY GREAT FAST

11 Then He said: "A certain man had two sons.

12 "And the younger of them said to [his] father, 'Father, give me the portion of goods that falls [to] [me].' So he divided to them [his] livelihood.

13 "And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together, journeyed to a far country, and there wasted his possessions with prodigal living.

14 "But when he had spent all, there arose a severe famine in that land, and he began to be in want.

15 "Then he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine.

16 "And he would gladly have filled his stomach with the pods that the swine ate, and no one gave him [anything].

17 "But when he came to himself, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!

18 'I will arise and go to my father, and will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you,

19 "and I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired servants." ' "

20 "And he arose and came to his father. But when he was still a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him.

21 "And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight, and am no longer worthy to be called your son.'

22 "But the father said to his servants, 'Bring out the best robe and put [it] on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on [his] feet.

23 'And bring the fatted calf here and kill [it], and let us eat and be merry;

24 'for this my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' And they began to be merry.

25 "Now his older son was in the field. And as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing.

26 "So he called one of the servants and asked what these things meant.

27 "And he said to him, 'Your brother has come, and because he has received him safe and sound, your father has killed the fatted calf.'

28 "But he was angry and would not go in. Therefore his father came out and pleaded with him.

29 "So he answered and said to [his] father, 'Lo, these many years I have been serving you; I never transgressed your commandment at any time; and yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might make merry with my friends.

30 'But as soon as this son of yours came, who has devoured your livelihood with harlots, you killed the fatted calf for him.'

31 "And he said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that I have is yours.

32 'It was right that we should make merry and be glad, for your brother was dead and is alive again, and was lost and is found.' "

Luke 15:11-32

3rd Sunday of the Holy Fast

| | | | |
|-------------|--------------|---------------|--------------|
| Vespers: | Ps 88:1-2 | Matt 15:1-20 | |
| Prophecies: | - | | |
| Matins: | Ps 55:1-2,16 | Matt 20:1-16 | |
| Mass: | 2 Cor 6:2-13 | James 3:1-12 | Acts 24:1-23 |
| | Ps 79:8-9 | Luke 15:11-32 | |

Day 22**Monday, 25 March 2019****TO ENTER INTO COMMUNION WITH GOD
THROUGH LOVE**

“My soul longs, yes, even faints For the courts of the Lord;
My heart and my flesh cry out for the living God.” (Ps 84:2)



“Since God is love; and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him, by the word of Apostle John (1 John 4:16), we can enter into communion with Him only through love.

As affirmed by the word of the Lord, the entire Divine [Law] can be reduced to two commandments: “You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.” This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.” (Matthew 22:37-40). Can we truly fulfill these commandments without going to Church? If we love someone, do not we try to see this person as often as possible? Is it possible to imagine two people in love who are avoiding seeing one another? Yes, they can talk on the phone; but it is far better to talk face to face. The same goes for the person who loves God—he wants to come closer to God.

May King David be an example for us. He, being a ruler of his people, fighting numerous wars with enemies, executing judgment, used to say: “How lovely is Your tabernacle, O Lord of hosts! My soul longs, yes, even faints For the courts of the Lord; My heart and my flesh cry out for the living God. Even the sparrow has found a home, And the swallow a nest for herself, Where she may lay her young— Even Your altars, O Lord of hosts, My King and my God. Blessed are those who dwell in Your house; They will still be praising You. Blessed is the man whose strength is in You, Whose heart is set on pilgrimage...For a day in Your courts is better than a thousand. I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God Than dwell in the tents of wickedness.” (Psalm 84:1-5,10).

When he was in exile, he would tearfully cry every day over the fact that he cannot enter the house of God: “When I remember these things, I pour out my soul within me. For I used to go with the multitude; I went with them to the house of God, With the voice of joy and praise, With a multitude that kept a pilgrim feast.” (Psalm 42:4). It is exactly this attitude that gives rise to the need of going to God’s temple and makes it essential for the person.

And this is not surprising! The eyes of the Lord are always directed towards God’s temple, the Church. In the Church, He Himself is present in His Body and Blood. In the Church, He revives us in the Baptism, therefore the Church is our [Mother]. In the Church, God forgives us our sins in the Mystery of Confession, He gives us His own self in the most holy Communion. Where else can we find such sources of incorruptible life?”

<http://russianorthodoxchurch.ca/en/why-should-we-attend-church-every-sunday/2499>

4th Monday of the Holy Great Fast

| | | | |
|-------------|--|---------------|--------------|
| Vespers: | - | | |
| Prophecies: | Gen 27:1-41; Is 14:24-32; Job 16:1-17:16 | | |
| Matins: | Ps 55:1, 27:7-8 | Luke 14:7-15 | |
| Mass: | Rom 8:12-26 | James 5:16-20 | Acts 11:2-18 |
| | Ps 55:16-17 | Luke 16:1-9 | |

Day 23

Tuesday, 26 March 2019

IT IS OUR STRENGTH, OUR REFUGE, OUR HOPE

“Though an army may encamp against me, My heart shall not fear; Though war may rise against me, In this I will be confident. One thing I have desired of the Lord, That will I seek: That I may dwell in the house of the Lord All the days of my life, To behold the beauty of the Lord, And to inquire in His temple. For in the time of trouble He shall hide me in His pavilion; In the secret place of His tabernacle He shall hide me; He shall set me high upon a rock. And now my head shall be lifted up above my enemies all around me; Therefore I will offer sacrifices of joy in His tabernacle; I will sing, yes, I will sing praises to the Lord.” (Ps 27:3-6)



“According to the word of an ancient ascetic, they who throughout the week fight against the devil, hasten on Saturdays and Sundays to Church to partake from the sources of the living water of Communion, in order to quench the thirst of their hearts and to be cleansed of the filth of their defiled conscience. Ancient legends tell us that deer hunt snakes and eat them; but when the poison starts burning their interior parts they run to a spring of clear water. So also we have to hasten to the Church, in order to cool the irritation of our hearts with the communal prayer. As Hieromartyr Ignatius the God-bearer said, “Try to gather together more frequently to celebrate God’s Eucharist and to praise him. For when you meet with frequency, Satan’s powers are overthrown and his destructiveness is undone by the unanimity of your faith. There is nothing better than peace, by which all strife in heavenly and earthly spirits is cast out” - Hieromartyr Ignatius the God-bearer. Epistle to the Ephesians, 13. ...Church prayer can save man from the devil’s attacks, for he is trembling before the power of God and is unable to harm the person who abides in Divine love.

Besides the fact that in His temple the Lord protects us and gives us strength, He also teaches us, for the Divine Service in its entirety is a true school of Divine love. In God’s holy temple, we hear His word, we bring to mind his marvellous acts, we learn about our future; indeed, “In His temple everyone says, ‘Glory!’” (Psalm 29:9); as if before our very eyes there takes place feats of the martyrs, the victories of the ascetics, courage of kings and priests; we learn about the mystical nature of God, about the salvation which Christ has granted us; here we rejoice at Christ’s radiant Resurrection. Often it seems to us that everything around us is terrible, awful and hopeless, but the Sunday Divine Service reveals to us our extreme hope. It was not without reason that Prophet David said that “We have thought, O God, on Your lovingkindness, In the midst of Your temple.” (Psalm 48:9). Sunday Divine Service is the best weapon against those numerous depressions and sorrows which inhabit our grey everyday life. This service is a brightly shining rainbow of God’s covenant amidst the fog of the everyday bustle.

...Indeed, a Church is Heaven’s embassy on the Earth where we pilgrims looking for the Heavenly city, receive support. “How precious is Your lovingkindness, O God! Therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of Your wings. They are abundantly satisfied with the fullness of Your house, And You give them drink from the river of Your pleasures. For with You is the fountain of life; In Your light we see light.” (Psalm 36:7-9).”

<http://russianorthodoxchurch.ca/en/why-should-we-attend-church-every-sunday/2499>

4th Tuesday of the Holy Great Fast

| | | | |
|-------------|---|---------------|-------------|
| Vespers: | - | | |
| Prophecies: | Gen 28:10-22; Is 25:1-26:8; Job 18:1-21, Sirach* 8:1-10:1 | | |
| Matins: | Ps 17:1 | Matt 21:28-32 | |
| Mass: | Eph 4:1-16 | 2 Pet 2:2-8 | Acts 27:1-3 |
| | Ps 17:6 | Luke 9:57-62 | |

* Second Canonical Book

Day 24**Wednesday, 27 March
2019****A COMMUNITY FOR OUR SPIRITUAL
DEVELOPMENT (PART I)**

“But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvellous light; who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy.” (1 Pet 2:9-10)



“The jungle cannot bring up Newtons or Einsteins, Apostles Pauls or reverend Seraphims. However gifted a man is, if even he is a genius, still he cannot comprehend everything on his own but needs family and society for his development. Even the most talented person won't become an excellent violinist when you give him a violin and music. Someone has to teach and pass experience to him. The visible progress of humankind, advancement of civilization takes place due to the experience previously gained. The preceding generations serve as a base for the intellectual growth of the following generations....

For development of mental abilities and harmonious overall progress a man needs teachers, schools and the very complex structure of human society. Man grows, improves and becomes useful as a member of community. Without it, man would be a savage, not adapted to life. In one word, man was created in such a way that he cannot live outside a community.

Ideally, family and community have to form not only the mental and applied abilities of a man, but build his spiritual self as well. That is how God designed it. The celestial, angelic world is the ideal community of goodness and truth, founded on the principles of divine love, where blameless beings live not for themselves but for the sake of each other, with a joyful praise of the Maker.

Sin intruded into the entire order of human life, perverted the spiritual nature of man, and social life as a whole. Community, which, by God's design, had to facilitate the correct spiritual development of humans, has lost the capability for this in practice. Without the spiritual checkpoints, community focused all its efforts on the development of outward advancement, material goods, this resulting in one-sidedness of its members, and sometimes in callousness, brutality and other things that we see daily in the surrounding world.

Therefore, for the sake of salvation of our souls, and for spiritual upbringing and development of man, God set up another community: Church. “But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvellous light; who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy.” (1 Peter 2:9:10).”

<https://www.orthodoxphotos.com/readings/kingdom/need.shtml>

4th Wednesday of the Holy Great Fast

| | | | |
|-------------|--|--------------------------------|-----------------|
| Vespers: | - | | |
| Prophecies: | Ex 7:14-8:18; Joel 2:28-32; Job 1:1-22; Is 26:21-27:9 | | |
| Matins: | Ps 18:37,40 | Luke 14:16-24 | |
| Mass: | Eph 4:17-32 Ps 18:17-18 | James 3:13-4:4 Mark 4:35-41 | Acts 11:26-12:2 |

Day 25

Thursday, 28 March 2019

A COMMUNITY FOR OUR SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT (PART II)

“And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.” (Heb 10:24-25)



“The Church is a peculiar community, established and sanctified by God. The Church is different from any other human society or state in that she is the Kingdom of God on earth, and her goals are the moral renewal of humans and guidance towards salvation. Christ gave the Church everything necessary to fulfill this purpose, which can be put in just a pair of words: grace and truth. These are her spiritual treasures that she is called to keep, and to enrich the faithful with them. But even the greatest jewel won't do any good to a man unless he makes use of it. That is why it is necessary for everyone to enrich oneself from the Church's spiritual treasury: learn the truth that she keeps, receive the sanctification through her gifts of grace, absorb the spiritual experience of her righteous people.

A man has a body and a soul, and similarly the Church has a visible and invisible part. Her invisible part is the action of Christ's grace, the spiritual improvement of the faithful, and her heavenly portion — the Church Triumphant. Church is a celestial-terrestrial community, headed by Christ. This is why much in ecclesiastical life cannot be subject to study. The visible part of Church is her teaching, ecclesiastic hierarchy, ecumenical and local councils, temples, divine services, feasts and traditions, canon laws and chapters.

Many contemporary Christians do not understand what the Church exists for. They think that it is enough to read the Gospel and believe in Christ. But, for one, the Gospel did not fall from the heaven. Someone had to collect the books written by the Apostles, check them through and incorporate them in the body of the Bible. Someone had to take away from the Bible any false, heretical writings. The Church did it in her first three centuries. Two, one cannot learn from books alone. Even in the very precise and logical science of mathematics a student needs someone to explain what is not clear to him, check on his success, give him guidance for further learning. In the same way, man's spiritual education requires spiritual guides to explain what is not clear and warn him against false teachers and false prophets that have always been abundant.

Listening to the teaching of the Saviour and His Apostles, we can understand that, in accordance with the Divine plan, people are not called for salvation haphazardly and in loneliness; oppositely, they can be saved in their togetherness, as members of one big family. The faithful are not only called to utilize whatever the Church gives, but also to assist one another's salvation. Sin and selfishness are sources of disintegration, while charity and kindness initiate integration.

No man can reach perfection in a blink of the eye. Christian life is a process of self-improvement. It is therefore natural that the Church consists of people on different stages of spiritual development. Those who have reached a greater degree of perfection, should help their weaker fellows. The Lord Himself established the order that some teach and others are taught.

In the Church a Christian learns the truth and receives sanctification by the grace of the Holy [Spirit]. In the Holy Sacrament of Eucharist, he comes into real communion with Christ, Son of God Incarnate, and through Him becomes a partaker of Divine nature. In this mysterious communion with God man receives mighty spiritual powers, which help him to grow and improve spiritually. Moral perfection is the goal of our life: “Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.” (Matthew 5:48).”

<https://www.orthodoxphotos.com/readings/kingdom/need.shtml>

4th Thursday of the Holy Great Fast

| | | | |
|-------------|--|----------------|--------------|
| Vespers: | - | | |
| Prophecies: | Gen 32:1-30; Is 28:14-22; Job 20:1-29; Dan 6:1-27 | | |
| Matins: | Ps 12:7 | Mark 3:7-12 | |
| Mass: | 1 Cor 12:31-14:1 | James 4:11-5:3 | Acts 4:19-31 |
| | Ps 48:10-11 | Luke 18:35-43 | |

Day 26

Friday, 29 March 2019

THE PILLAR AND GROUND OF TRUTH

“I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.” (1 Tim 3:15)



“One should not seek among others the truth that can be easily gotten from the Church. For in her, as in a rich treasury, the apostles have placed all that pertains to truth, so that everyone can drink this beverage of life. She is the door of life.” - St. Irenaeus of Lyons, *Against Heresies*, III.4

<http://www.orthodoxchurchquotes.com/2014/06/03/st-irenaeus-of-lyons-one-should-not-seek-among-others-the-truth-that-can-be-easily-gotten-from-the-church/>

“The Christian today- not unlike the Christians of other eras, but in ways that are continually “updated” as society carries on - is not told simply that he mustn’t fight the passions, that he mustn’t battle the devil: he is told that the passions are unreal and the devil does not exist. He is told that [asceticism] is unnatural, that spiritual warfare is delusional. He is told that judgment is oppressive and the desire to become something defined by another (even God!) is psychologically unhealthy. He is told that to believe in the Church’s tradition is simplistic, pietistic adherence to the past; that he had better “think for himself.”

He is told, in other words, that the very arena of the spiritual contest is unreal, and that his work is foolishness. He is made to believe that the only way it can be defended at all in modern society is for it to be conformed to society’s views. He is told, we might say, precisely what the devil would want him to be told.

The Christian today, then, is charged with a mission: to reclaim from this disastrous situation the right contours of truth and reality, and to live them fully despite the world’s constant insistence to do otherwise. The Christian must reclaim, firstly in himself (this, the ascetical struggle), and then with an eye to and for those around him, the right vision of our condition in this life and our approach to it.

How are we to do this? The only way is by renewing in ourselves the ascetical vision handed on to us in the Church, and by conforming ourselves to the life that binds us to the wellspring of life, Christ Himself. Given the degree to which the world etches itself into our minds and hearts, this means at a basic and practical level that we must struggle inwardly to reclaim that which the Church unfailingly provides, so that our struggle is built up by the true bulwark of the Faith.” - From the book, “The beginnings of a life of Prayer”, by Archimandrite Irinei

<http://stioannis.org/quotes/>

4th Friday of the Holy Great Fast

| | | | |
|-------------|---|---------------|---------------|
| Vespers: | - | | |
| Prophecies: | Deut 10:12-11:28; Is 29:13-23; Job 21:1-34; Dan* 14:1-42 [* Second Canonical Book] | | |
| Matins: | Ps 28:6-7 | Luke 4:31-37 | |
| Mass: | Heb 13:7-16 | 1 John 4:7-16 | Acts 22:17-24 |
| | Ps 28:2 | Matt 15:21-31 | |

Day 27**Saturday, 30 March 2019****To CLEANSE US FROM SIN**

“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”
(1 John 1:9)



“Brothers and Sisters! The all-merciful God desires happiness for us both in this life and in the life to come. To this end He established His Holy Church, so that she might cleanse us from sin, sanctify us, reconcile us with Him and give us a heavenly blessing. The embrace of the Church is always open to us. Let us all hasten there more quickly, we whose consciences are burdened. Let us hasten, and the Church will lift the weight of our burdens, give us boldness before God, and fill our hearts with happiness and blessedness.”
-St. Nectarius of Aegina, The Path to Happiness, 1.

http://orthodox.cn/patristics/300sayings_en.htm

“Are you a sinner? Do not become discouraged, and come to Church to put forward repentance. Have you sinned? Then tell God, ‘I have sinned.’ What manner of toil is this, what prescribed course of life, what affliction? What manner of difficulty is it to make one statement, ‘I have sinned’? Perhaps if you do not call yourself a sinner, you do not have the devil as an accuser? Anticipate this and snatch the honour away from him, because it is his purpose to accuse. Therefore, why do you not prevent him, and why do you not tell your sin and wipe it out, since you know that you have such an accuser who cannot remain silent? Have you sinned? Come to Church. Tell God, ‘I have sinned.’ I do not demand anything else of you than this. Holy Scripture states, ‘Be the first one to tell of your transgressions, so you may be justified.’ Admit the sin to annul it. This requires neither labour nor a circuit of words, nor monetary expenditure, nor anything else whatsoever such as these. Say one word, think carefully about the sin and say, ‘I have sinned.’” - St. John Chrysostom, On Repentance and Almsgiving, Homily 2

<http://www.orthodoxchurchquotes.com/2015/02/10/st-john-chrysostom-are-you-a-sinner-do-not-become-discouraged-and-come-to-church/>

4th Saturday of the Holy Great Fast

Vespers: -

Prophecies: -

Matins: Ps 142:5,7

Luke 16:19-31

Mass: Phil 4:4-9

James 3:13-4:6

Acts 24:24-25:12

Ps 61:1,5

Matt 21:33-46

Day 28

Sunday, 31 March 2019

4TH SUNDAY OF THE HOLY GREAT FAST

1 Therefore, when the Lord knew that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John 2 (though Jesus Himself did not baptize, but His disciples), 3 He left Judea and departed again to Galilee. 4 But He needed to go through Samaria. 5 So He came to a city of Samaria which is called Sychar, near the plot of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. 6 Now Jacob's well was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied from [His] journey, sat thus by the well. It was about the sixth hour. 7 A woman of Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give Me a drink." 8 For His disciples had gone away into the city to buy food. 9 Then the woman of Samaria said to Him, "How is it that You, being a Jew, ask a drink from me, a Samaritan woman?" For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans. 10 Jesus answered and said to her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, 'Give Me a drink,' you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water." 11 The woman said to Him, "Sir, You have nothing to draw with, and the well is deep. Where then do You get that living water?" 12 "Are You greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well, and drank from it himself, as well as his sons and his livestock?" 13 Jesus answered and said to her, "Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again, 14 "but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life." 15 The woman said to Him, "Sir, give me this water, that I may not thirst, nor come here to draw." 16 Jesus said to her, "Go, call your husband, and come here." 17 The woman answered and said, "I have no husband." Jesus said to her, "You have well said, 'I have no husband,' 18 "for you have had five husbands, and the one whom you now have is not your husband; in that you spoke truly." 19 The woman said to Him, "Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet. 20 "Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, and you [Jews] say that in Jerusalem is the place where one ought to worship." 21 Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe Me, the hour is coming when you will neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, worship the Father. 22 "You worship what you do not know; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews. 23 "But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. 24 "God [is] Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth." 25 The woman said to Him, "I know that Messiah is coming" (who is called Christ). "When He comes, He will tell us all things." 26 Jesus said to her, "I who speak to you am [He]." 27 And at this [point] His disciples came, and they marveled that He talked with a woman; yet no one said, "What do You seek?" or, "Why are You talking with her?" 28 The woman then left her waterpot, went her way into the city, and said to the men, 29 "Come, see a Man who told me all things that I ever did. Could this be the Christ?" 30 Then they went out of the city and came to Him. 31 In the meantime His disciples urged Him, saying, "Rabbi, eat." 32 But He said to them, "I have food to eat of which you do not know." 33 Therefore the disciples said to one another, "Has anyone brought Him [anything] to eat?" 34 Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work. 35 "Do you not say, 'There are still four months and [then] comes the harvest'? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest! 36 "And he who reaps receives wages, and gathers fruit for eternal life, that both he who sows and he who reaps may rejoice together. 37 "For in this the saying is true: 'One sows and another reaps.' 38 "I sent you to reap that for which you have not labored; others have labored, and you have entered into their labors." 39 And many of the Samaritans of that city believed in Him because of the word of the woman who testified, "He told me all that I [ever] did." 40 So when the Samaritans had come to Him, they urged Him to stay with them; and He stayed there two days. 41 And many more believed because of His own word. 42 Then they said to the woman, "Now we believe, not because of what you said, for we ourselves have heard [Him] and we know that this is indeed the Christ, the Savior of the world."

John 4:1-42

4th Sunday of the Holy Great Fast

| | | | |
|-------------|-------------|---------------|-----------------|
| Vespers: | Ps 28:9 | Luke 12:22-31 | |
| Prophecies: | - | | |
| Matins: | Ps 32:11 | Matt 22:1-14 | |
| Mass: | Eph 6:10-24 | James 4:7-17 | Acts 25:13-26:1 |
| | Ps 105:3-5 | John 4:1-42 | |

Day 29

Monday, 1 April 2019

THE PROMISE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

“But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.” (John 14:26)



“Our Lord Jesus Christ promised the gift of the Holy Spirit to His disciples ‘I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever’ (John 14:16). He assured them that the Holy Spirit would reveal truth to the Church. ‘When He, the Spirit of truth has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take what is Mine and declare it to you’ (John 16:13,14). Just before His Ascension our Lord Jesus Christ promised, ‘John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now’ (Acts 1:5). This word was fulfilled ten days later on the Day of Pentecost.

In his homily On the Holy Spirit, St. Gregory Nazianzen says: “We celebrate the feast of Pentecost and of the descent of the Spirit, the fulfillment of promise and the achievement of hope. O how great and how exalted is the mystery!” The divine revelation of the Holy Trinity was brought to its completion by the descent of the Holy Spirit, which St. Gregory called the great and exalted mystery.

The Holy Spirit gives us the Church and she, in turn, gives us the Mysteries. St. Augustine taught us, “What the soul is to man’s body, the Holy Spirit is to the Body of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is the Church. The Holy Spirit does in the whole Church what the soul does in the members of the one body.”

The Holy Spirit is involved in every step of the development and growth of the Church. He is the power that builds up the Church. His work is clear in all the mysteries, in the grace of God, in the gifts and in the virtues. Nothing happens in the Church without the direct involvement of the Holy Spirit. Through the Holy Spirit, our Lord Jesus Christ unites the Church as one, holy, catholic and apostolic. The Holy Spirit plays an important role in each of the mysteries of the church.”

<http://suscopts.org/resources/literature/139/the-holy-spirit-in-the-mysteries-of-the-church/>

5th Monday of the Holy Great Fast

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|-------------|---|---------------|---------------|
| Vespers: | - | | |
| Prophecies: | Prov 3:5-18; Is 37:33-38:6; Job 22:1-30 | | |
| Matins: | Ps 88:2-4 | Luke 12:16-21 | |
| Mass: | Phil 2:1-16 | 1 Pet 3:10-18 | Acts 10:25-35 |
| | Ps 86:3-4 | Luke 9:12-17 | |

Day 30

Tuesday, 2 April 2019

THE HOLY BAPTISM

“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” Amen.” (Matt 28:19-20)



“In the mystery of Holy Baptism, the Holy Spirit descends upon the water and turns it from ordinary water into living water which washes a person and gives him a new birth, ‘But according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit’ (Titus 3:5). Water is a symbol of the Spirit in that it is necessary for keeping life and maintaining it. God is the fountain of living water because from Him comes the Holy Spirit, ‘But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me’ (John 15:26).

Through the water of baptism, the Holy Spirit freed us from sin and joined us with our Lord Jesus Christ, sharing in His holiness and destined for eternal life. Baptism leaves us permanently changed, no longer the person we once were, but a new person, dying to death and sin, and rising to new life in our Lord Jesus Christ. In the words of St. Paul, “We were buried with Him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so too may we live a new life” (Romans 6:4).

Ezekiel the prophet said, “Then I washed you in water; yes, I thoroughly washed off your blood, and I anointed you with oil” (Ezekiel 16:9). As the words bathed with water refer to the work of the Holy Spirit in baptism the words anointed you with oil refer to His work in the mystery of Holy Chrismation.”

<http://suscopts.org/resources/literature/139/the-holy-spirit-in-the-mysteries-of-the-church/>

5th Tuesday of the Holy Great Fast

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|-------------|--|---------------|---------------|
| Vespers: | - | | |
| Prophecies: | Num 10:35-11:34; Prov 3:19-4:9; Is 40:1-8; Job 25:1-6; Job 26:1-14 | | |
| Matins: | Ps 86:5-6 | Mark 9:14-24 | |
| Mass: | Phil 2:22-26 | 1 John 3:2-11 | Acts 24:10-23 |
| | Ps 86:17 | John 8:12-20 | |

THE HOLY CHRISMATION

“Now when the apostles who were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them, who, when they had come down, prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit. For as yet He had fallen upon none of them. They had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then they laid hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.” (Acts 8:14-17)



“St. John the Baptist came preparing the way for our Lord Jesus Christ, and teaching that when the Lord comes, He will baptize not just with water but with the Holy Spirit! “I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire” (Matthew 3:11).

We were baptized by the Holy Spirit at the time of our Chrismation when the priest anointed our body with the holy chrism (Myron). At this moment we received the full outpouring of the Holy Spirit. This is the same gift that the holy apostles obtained on the day of Pentecost. In the mystery of Holy Chrismation, the heavens opened and the Holy Spirit descended upon us, taking possession of our soul. We became a living “temple of the Holy Spirit” (1 Corinthians 6:19).

Through this mystery, we became the anointed ones when we received the sign of the Holy Spirit. St. Cyril of Jerusalem explains Christ bathed in the river Jordan, imparting to its waters the fragrance of His divinity, and when He came up from them the Holy Spirit descended upon Him, like resting upon like. So we also, after coming up from the sacred waters of baptism, were anointed with chrism, which signifies the Holy Spirit, by Whom Christ was anointed and of Whom blessed Isaiah prophesied in the name of the Lord: The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me. He has sent me to preach good news to the poor.

St Cyril of Jerusalem also says: “But we too have been anointed with oil, and by this anointing we have entered into fellowship with Christ and have received a share in His life. Beware of thinking that this holy oil is simply ordinary oil and nothing else. After the invocation of the Spirit it is no longer ordinary oil but the gift of Christ, and by the presence of His divinity it becomes the instrument through which we receive the Holy Spirit. While symbolically, on our foreheads and senses, our bodies are anointed with this oil that we see, our souls are sanctified by the Holy and Life-giving Spirit. The Holy Spirit gives us a new divine life and, therefore, we profess Him to be the ‘Giver of Life’.”

This divine life is the life of grace, making us “partakers of the divine nature” (2 Peter 1:4) and true children of God: “For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, “Abba, Father”. The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God (Romans 8:15-16). Chrismation, then, is our own “Pentecost” when the fullness of the gifts of the Holy Spirit is poured upon us, enabling us to live a life worthy of our Christian calling as the children of God.

Holy Baptism and Chrismation are closely connected to the Eucharist. In Holy Baptism we take off the old, sinful person and wash away the sinful nature. In Chrismation, we are anointed with the oil of the Holy Spirit and filled with His gifts. Finally, we are led to the Eucharistic banquet

Holy Baptism and Chrismation are considered the mysteries of entrance into the life of the Church. They lead us into the life of the Church and unite us with its essential nature. They are therefore intimately connected with the Eucharist, which is the centre and the source of the whole life of the Church.”

<http://suscopts.org/resources/literature/139/the-holy-spirit-in-the-mysteries-of-the-church/>

5th Wednesday of the Holy Great Fast

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|-------------|--|---------------|---------------|
| Vespers: | - | | |
| Prophecies: | Ex 8:20-9:35; Is 41:4-14; Joel 3:9-21; Job 28:12-28; | | |
| | Prov 4:10-19; 1 Sam 1:1-2:21 | | |
| Matins: | Ps 55:1-2 | Mark 10:1-12 | |
| Mass: | Rom 4:14-5:5 | 1 Pet 4:12-19 | Acts 11:12-18 |
| | Ps 86:13-14 | Luke 13:6-9 | |

THE HOLY EUCHARIST

“For we, though many, are one bread and one body; for we all partake of that one bread.” (1 Cor 10:17)



“In the Divine Liturgy, the priest asks the Lord for two things, the descent of the Holy Spirit to change the bread and wine into the Holy Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ and His descent on us to change us who eat and drink of the Holy Body and Blood, ‘We worship You by the pleasure of Your goodness that your Holy Spirit descend upon us and upon these gifts set forth and purify them change them as a sanctification of Your saints.’ St. Augustine reminded his audience: “If then you are the body of Christ and His members, it is your mystery that reposes on the altar of the Lord...Be what you see and receive what you are” and “There you are on the table, and there you are in the chalice.”

The Holy Spirit underlies and pervades the Church’s celebration of the Holy Eucharist. He makes present the blessed Body and Blood of the risen Lord Jesus Christ and by our eating and drinking the Holy Gifts, we ourselves are renewed in the Spirit.

Although it is the Holy Spirit that accomplishes the change of the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of the incarnate Word, it is by our partaking of our Lord’s Body and Blood that we receive the Holy Spirit. The Spirit indwells, penetrates, and suffuses the glorified flesh of the Lord Jesus Christ. St. Paul writes: “And so it is written, ‘The first man Adam became a living being.’ The last Adam became a life-giving spirit” (1 Corinthians 15:45).

This invitation to partake of the Holy Eucharist is truly an extension to the day of the Pentecost. For by partaking in one bread and one cup with one spirit we are united with our Lord Jesus Christ and with one another to become one church, the Body of our Lord Jesus Christ and enter in partnership with the Spirit receiving the forgiveness of our sins.”

<http://suscopts.org/resources/literature/139/the-holy-spirit-in-the-mysteries-of-the-church/>

5th Thursday of the Holy Great Fast

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|-------------|--|---------------|--------------|
| Vespers: | - | | |
| Prophecies: | Is 42:5-16; Prov 4:20-27; Job 29:2-20; 1 Sam 3:1-20 | | |
| Matins: | Ps 86:14 | Luke 9:37-43 | |
| Mass: | 1 Cor 10:14-11:1 | 1 Pet 1:2-8 | Acts 21:5-14 |
| | Ps 86:17 | Luke 13:10-17 | |

**REPENTANCE AND CONFESSION;
UNCTION OF THE SICK**

“And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.”
(John 20:22-23)



Repentance and Confession

“Through the power of the Holy Spirit, the stain of sin is removed in the mystery of confession. This Divine power and authority of our Lord Jesus Christ, to forgive sins or to retain them, was given to the Apostles when the Lord outpoured the Holy Spirit upon them. And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained” (John 20:22-23).

It is the Holy Spirit that convicts us and drives us to repent and confess our sins. “And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment” (John 16:8). Sin grieves the Spirit and quenches His work in our lives. By acknowledging both our sin and God’s gracious forgiveness and cleansing through Christ (1 John 1:9), we free the Holy Spirit to fill us.”

Unction of the Sick

“The unction of the sick is a gift of the Holy Spirit ministered by the Church and performed by the priest. The chief biblical text for anointing of the sick is “Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven” (James 5:14-15). When Christians are experiencing illness they receive the necessary particular gifts of the Holy Spirit such as strength, peace and courage to overcome such difficulties. Through this anointing, the sins are forgiven. By the power of the Holy Spirit, the sick persons soul will be healed; and if its Gods will, he also may be healed physically. The sick person receives the strength and gift of uniting his sufferings with our Lord’s Passion.”

<http://suscopts.org/resources/literature/139/the-holy-spirit-in-the-mysteries-of-the-church/>

5th Friday of the Holy Great Fast

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|-------------|---|----------------|-----------------|
| Vespers: | - | | |
| Prophecies: | Deut 11:29-12:27; 1 Kin 17:2-24; Prov 5:1-12; Is 43:1-9; Job 30:9-32:5 | | |
| Matins: | Ps 86:9-10 | Mark 12:28-34 | |
| Mass: | Heb 12:5-16 | 1 Pet 4:15-5:5 | Acts 15:36-16:3 |
| | Ps 138:1-3 | John 8:21-27 | |

HOLY MATRIMONY; HOLY PRIESTHOOD

“For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church. For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones. “For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.” (Eph 5:29-31)



Holy Matrimony

“Through the mystery of Holy Matrimony, the Holy Spirit forms a communion between the bride and the bridegroom. St. Paul reminds us that our body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. A man and a woman who are members of the Body of our Lord Jesus Christ, through the mystery of Holy Matrimony not only do they become one flesh, but their union is sealed by the Holy Spirit living in each of them.

Holy Priesthood

The priesthood is the vehicle that God, through His Son, chose to maintain the regular flow of His grace and blessings through the sacraments. The Divine power and authority of our Lord Jesus Christ, was given to the Apostles “Assuredly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven” (Matthew 18:18). He gave them the authority to forgive sins or to retain them, when He outpoured the Holy Spirit upon them. And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained” (John 20:22-23). This breath of the Holy Spirit still remains in existence, being passed down from generation to generation. In the ordination ceremony, the candidate chosen for the priesthood opens his mouth and the bishop blows into it saying ‘Receive the Holy Spirit’ while the new priest recites “I open my mouth and pant, for I long for Your commandments” (Psalm 119:131).

The apostles used to confer the Holy Spirit by the laying on of hands upon all ranks of priesthood, bishops, priests and even deacons.

Through Holy Mysteries we have received the seal of the Holy Spirit. Our task now is to preserve the integrity of what we have received by living a truly Christian life. We must give time to prayer, and to the study of scripture. Speaking to God, listening to His word to us, and letting His teaching mould us are possible by the power of the Holy Spirit Who dwells in us.”

<http://suscopts.org/resources/literature/139/the-holy-spirit-in-the-mysteries-of-the-church/>

5th Saturday of the Holy Great Fast

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|-------------|--------------|---------------|--------------|
| Vespers: | - | | |
| Prophecies: | - | | |
| Matins: | Ps 65:2-3 | Luke 15:3-10 | |
| Mass: | Gal 5:16-6:2 | James 5:7-11 | Acts 26:1-18 |
| | Ps 143:1-2 | Matt 23:14-39 | |

5TH SUNDAY
OF THE HOLY GREAT FAST

1 After this there was a feast of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.

2 Now there is in Jerusalem by the Sheep [Gate] a pool, which is called in Hebrew, Bethesda, having five porches.

3 In these lay a great multitude of sick people, blind, lame, paralyzed, waiting for the moving of the water.

4 For an angel went down at a certain time into the pool and stirred up the water; then whoever stepped in first, after the stirring of the water, was made well of whatever disease he had.

5 Now a certain man was there who had an infirmity thirty-eight years.

6 When Jesus saw him lying there, and knew that he already had been [in] [that] [condition] a long time, He said to him, "Do you want to be made well?"

7 The sick man answered Him, "Sir, I have no man to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up; but while I am coming, another steps down before me."

8 Jesus said to him, "Rise, take up your bed and walk."

9 And immediately the man was made well, took up his bed, and walked. And that day was the Sabbath.

10 The Jews therefore said to him who was cured, "It is the Sabbath; it is not lawful for you to carry [your] bed."

11 He answered them, "He who made me well said to me, 'Take up your bed and walk.' "

12 Then they asked him, "Who is the Man who said to you, 'Take up your bed and walk'?"

13 But the one who was healed did not know who it was, for Jesus had withdrawn, a multitude being in [that] place.

14 Afterward Jesus found him in the temple, and said to him, "See, you have been made well. Sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon you."

15 The man departed and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had made him well.

16 For this reason the Jews persecuted Jesus, and sought to kill Him, because He had done these things on the Sabbath.

17 But Jesus answered them, "My Father has been working until now, and I have been working."

18 Therefore the Jews sought all the more to kill Him, because He not only broke the Sabbath, but also said that God was His Father, making Himself equal with God. John 5:1-18

5th Sunday of the Holy Great Fast

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|-------------|----------------|---------------|-----------------|
| Vespers: | Ps 39:12 | Luke 18:1-8 | |
| Prophecies: | - | | |
| Matins: | Ps 102:1-2,12 | Matt 21:33-46 | |
| Mass: | 2 Thess 2:1-17 | 2 Pet 3:1-18 | Acts 26:19-27:8 |
| | Ps 33:5-6 | John 5:1-18 | |

Day 36

Monday, 8 April 2019

THE HOUSE OF GOD

“But I am like a green olive tree in the house of God;
I trust in the mercy of God forever and ever.” (Ps 52:8)



“O holy temple, how good, how sweet it is to pray in
you! For where can there be ardent prayer if not within
your walls, before the throne of God, and before the
face of Him Who sits upon it? Truly the soul melts from
prayerful emotion, and tears flow down the cheeks like
water. It is sweet to pray for all.

In the Church we are freed from worldly enchantment,
and from the intoxication of worldly passions and
desires; we become enlightened, sanctified, cleansed
in our souls; we draw near to God, we are united with
God. How worthily revered and loved should the
temple of God be! How God's saints loved it!

Truly, the temple is heaven upon earth; for where
the throne of God is, where the [divine] mysteries
are celebrated, where the angels serve together with
men, where the Almighty is unceasingly glorified, there
is truly heaven, and the heaven of heavens. And thus
let us enter into the temple of God, and above all, into
the Holy of Holies, with the fear of God, with a pure
heart, laying aside all passions and every worldly care,
and let us stand in it with faith and reverence, with
understanding attention, with love and peace in our
hearts, so that we may come away renewed, as though
made heavenly; so that we may live in the holiness
natural to heaven, not binding ourselves by worldly
desires and pleasures.

In the temple of God the simple, believing souls are
as in the house of the Heavenly Father: they feel so
free, so happy and light. Here true Christians have a
foretaste of the future kingdom, prepared for them
from the foundation of the world, of future freedom
from every sin and from death, of future peace and
blessedness. When do they especially have a foretaste
of this? When they turn sincerely with all their soul
to God, praying fervently to God, taking the firm
resolution to devote their lives to God, and when doing
deeds of virtue outside the temple.

The spiritual tranquillity and blessedness which
we sometimes experience in God's temple during the
harmonious singing and the distinct reading of the
reader, or of the officiating clergy, is a foretaste of
that infinite bliss which those will experience who
will eternally contemplate the unspeakable beauty
of God's countenance. We must be zealous about
harmonious singing and distinct reading. By calling
upon the names of God's saints in prayer we move
them to pray for us.”

<https://orthodoxtacoma.com/mylifeinchrist02.html>

6th Monday of the Holy Great Fast

| | | | |
|-------------|---------------------------------------|--------------|--------------|
| Vespers: | - | | |
| Prophecies: | Prov 8:1-11; Is 43:10-28; Job 32:6-16 | | |
| Matins: | Ps 38:9 | Mark 12:1-12 | |
| Mass: | 1 Thess 4:1-18 | James 4:7-12 | Acts 18:9-18 |
| | Ps 35:1-2 | Luke 13:1-5 | |

Day 37

Tuesday, 9 April 2019

SYMBOLISM

“..that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height— to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.” (Eph 3:17-19)



“Is it only for the adornment of your dwelling, as a beautiful piece of furniture, as an ornament, that you hang up richly painted icons in your house, without turning to them with the hearty faith, love and reverence due to holy things? Ask your heart if it is so. Icons in houses or in the temple are not intended for show, but for prayer before them, for reverence, for instruction. The images of the saints ought to be our home and Church teachers. Read their lives, and engrave them upon your heart, and endeavour to bring your life into conformity with theirs.

In making the sign of the cross, believe and constantly remember that your sins are nailed to the cross. When you fall into sin, immediately judge yourself sincerely, and make the sign of the cross over yourself, saying: Lord, You Who nailed our sins to the cross, nail also my present sin to Your cross, and “have mercy upon me according to Your great mercy”; and you will be cleansed from your sin.

It is impossible to represent and to think of the cross without love. Where the cross is, there is love; in the Church you see crosses everywhere and upon everything, in order that everything should remind you that you are in the temple of the God of love, in the temple of love itself, crucified for us.”

<https://orthodoxtacoma.com/mylifeinchrist02.html>

6th Tuesday of the Holy Great Fast

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|-------------|---|----------------|---------------|
| Vespers: | - | | |
| Prophecies: | Prov 8:12-21; Is 44:1-8; Job 32:17-33:33; 2 Kin 5:1-27 | | |
| Matins: | Ps 35:13 | Luke 4:22-30 | |
| Mass: | 1 Cor 14:18-28 | James 1:22-2:1 | Acts 19:11-20 |
| | Ps 42:1 | Luke 9:18-22 | |

THE DIVINE LITURGY

“And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, “Take, eat; this is My body.” Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, “Drink from it, all of you. For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.” (Matt 26:26-28)



“The Divine Liturgy is truly a heavenly service upon earth, during which God Himself, in a particular, immediate, and most close manner, is present and dwells with men, being Himself the invisible Celebrant of the service, offering and being offered. There is nothing upon earth holier, higher, grander, more solemn, more life-giving than the Liturgy. The temple, at this particular time, becomes an earthly heaven; those who officiate represent Christ Himself, the Angels, the Cherubim, Seraphim and Apostles. The Liturgy is the continually repeated solemnisation of God's love to mankind, and of His all-powerful mediation for the salvation of the whole world, and of every member separately: the marriage of the Lamb — the marriage of the King's Son, in which the bride of the Son of God is - every faithful soul; and the giver of the bride — the Holy [Spirit].

The Liturgy is the supper, the table of God's love to mankind. Around the Lamb of God upon the holy paten all are at this time assembled — the living and the dead, saints and sinners, the Church triumphant and the Church militant.

Why should it be wonderful if God Himself, the Creator of all things visible and invisible, transforms, transubstantiates bread and wine into His own most pure Body and His own most pure Blood? In these — in the bread and wine — the Son of God does not become again incarnate, for He was already once incarnate, and this is sufficient unto endless ages; but He is incarnate in the very same flesh in which He was before incarnate, in the same manner as He multiplied the five loaves and fed with these five loaves several thousands of people. There are a great many mysteries in nature which my mind cannot grasp, although they have concrete forms, yet they exist, with their mysteries. So also, in this Sacrament of the life-giving Body and Blood, it is a mystery for me how the bread and wine are made into the Body and Blood of the Lord Himself — but the mystery of the Body and Blood really exists, although it is incomprehensible to me. My Creator (I am only His clay, for God formed me of flesh and blood and endued me with a spirit), as the most wise, the infinitely Almighty God, has innumerable mysteries: I myself am a mystery, as the work of His hands. For my soul there is the Spirit of the Lord, and for my soul and body there are His Body and Blood.

When you receive the holy life-giving Mysteries, steadfastly represent to yourself Christ Himself under the form of the bread and wine; make upon them the mental inscription “Jesus Christ,” and with this mental inscription (whilst the sentient one already exists) send in thought into the depths of your heart, and there lay and mentally preserve the life-giving Guest. If thus, with such faith, you receive the Holy Mysteries, you will see that they will bring forth in you the deepest peace of your spiritual powers, and you will feel most wonderfully happy and light. The Lord loads us with benefits according to the measure of our faith; the Body and Blood show themselves to be life-giving, burning embers in the believer's heart, according to the measure of his heart's preparedness. The Church is heaven; the altar, the throne of life, from which God descends in the holy and most pure Mysteries to feed and give life to believers. “Great and marvellous are Your works, Lord God Almighty!” You prepare us beforehand for the contemplation of the throne, and of Him Who sits upon it, by seeing the earthly throne in the Church, and by the contemplation, with the eyes of faith, of Him Who sits upon it.

“I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world.”^c So it is, Master: You are with us throughout all days; we are not a single day without You, and we cannot live without Your presence near us! You are with us especially in the Sacrament of Your Body and Blood. Oh, how truly and essentially are You present in the Holy Mysteries!...Through the sacrament You are wholly with us, and Your Flesh is united to our flesh, whilst Your Spirit is united to our soul; and we feel this life-giving, most peaceful, most sweet union...”

<https://orthodoxtacoma.com/mylifeinchrist02.html>

6th Wednesday of the Holy Great Fast

| | |
|-------------|---|
| Vespers: | - |
| Prophecies: | Ex 10:1-11:10; Is 44:21-28; Prov 8:22-36; Job 34:1-37; Sirach* 10:1-31 [* Second Canonical Book] |
| Matins: | Ps 102:17,21 Mark 7:1-20 |
| Mass: | Rom 2:12-24 2 Pet 1:20-2:6 Acts 26:1-8 Ps 9:11-12 Luke 11:45-52 |

PREPARATION FOR HOLY COMMUNION

"I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and are dead. This is the bread which comes down from heaven, that one may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world." (John 6:48-51)



"In receiving the Holy Sacrament be as undoubtedly sure that you [commune] of the Body and Blood of Christ, as you are sure that every moment you breathe air. Say to yourself, "As surely as I constantly breathe the air, so surely do I now receive into myself, together with the air, my Lord Jesus Christ Himself, my breathing, my life, my joy, my salvation. He is my breath, before air, at every moment of my life; He is my word, before any other word; He is my thought, before any other thought; He is my light, before any other light; He is my meat and drink, before any other meat and drink; He is my raiment, before any other raiment; He is my fragrance, before any other fragrance; He is my sweetness, before any other sweetness; He is my father and mother, before any other father and mother; before the earth, He is the firmest ground, that nothing can ever shake and that bears me. As we, earthly creatures, forget that at all times we breathe, live, move, and exist in Him, and have hewed out "cisterns, broken cisterns," for ourselves, He has opened unto us, in His Holy Mysteries, in His Blood, the source of living water, flowing into life eternal, and gives Himself to us as food and drink, in order "that we may live by Him."

How long will it be before the Holy Mysteries of which we partake remind us that "we, being many, ... are one body"; and how long will there be no mutual hearty union between us, as members of the single body of Christ? How long shall we make our own laws of life, be inimical to each other, envy each other, torment, grieve, fret, judge and abuse each other? When will the Spirit of Christ abide in us, the spirit of meekness, humility, kindness, love unfeigned, self-denial, patience, chastity, abstinence, simplicity and sincerity, contempt for earthly things and entire aspiration after heavenly ones? Lord Jesus Christ! enlighten our spiritual vision and "let Your loving Spirit lead" us all "into the land of righteousness." Give us Your Spirit!

He who believes in the Saviour, and feeds upon His Body and Blood, has life eternal in himself; and this is the reason why every sin occasions painful suffering and disturbance of heart. But those who have not life eternal in them drink iniquity like water, and do not suffer because life eternal is not in their hearts.

Some believe that their whole welfare and their attitude before God consists in the reading of all the appointed prayers, without paying attention to the preparedness of their hearts for prayer to God, nor to their inward amendment. Many, for instance, thus read the prayers appointed before Holy Communion; whilst at this time we should, above all, look to the amendment and preparedness of the heart to receive the Holy Sacrament. If your heart is right in your bosom; if, by God's mercy, it is ready to meet the Bridegroom, then, thank God, it is well with you, even although you have not succeeded in reading all the appointed prayers. "For the kingdom of God is not in speech, but in power." Obedience to our mother, the Church, in everything is right; and if it is possible for one "to receive" prolonged prayer, let him pray long. But "all men take not this word." If long prayer is not compatible with fervour of spirit, then it is better to say a short but fervent prayer. Remember that the one word of the publican, said from a fervent heart, justified him. God does not look at the multitude of words, but upon the disposition of the heart. The chief thing is lively faith and fervent repentance for sins.

He who comes to the Holy Cup with any passion in his heart, the same is a Judas, and comes to kiss the Son of man flatteringly."

<https://orthodoxtacoma.com/mylifeinchrist02.html>

6th Thursday of the Holy Great Fast

| | | | |
|-------------|---|--------------|---------------|
| Vespers: | - | | |
| Prophecies: | 2 Kin 4:8-41; Is 45:1-10; Prov 9:1-11; Job 35:1-16; | | |
| | Sirach* 11:1-10 [* Second Canonical Book] | | |
| Matins: | Ps 9:13 | Luke 20:9-19 | |
| Mass: | 1 Tim 2:1-3:4 | Jude 1:19-25 | Acts 27:16-20 |
| | Ps 9:13-14 | John 6:47-71 | |

THE WORD OF GOD

“For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe. For you, brethren, became imitators of the churches of God which are in Judea in Christ Jesus.” (1 Thess 2:13-14)



“As you are aware, man, in his words, does not die; he is immortal in them, and they will speak after his death. I shall die, but shall speak even after my death. How many immortal words are in use amongst the living, which were left by those who have died long ago, and which sometimes still live in the mouths of a whole people! How powerful is the word even of an ordinary man! Still more so is the Word of God: It will live throughout all ages, and will always be living and acting.

The whole Gospel is the gospel of the kingdom to which Christians are predestined, and forms as though one single promise (all the parables, all the prophecies and miracles); the epistles of the Apostles reveal in greater detail the promises of Christian hope.

Every word of Holy Writ, every word of the Divine liturgy, of the morning and evening services, every word of the Sacramental prayers and of the other prayers, has in itself the power corresponding to it and contained in it, like the sign of the honourable and life-giving cross. Such grace is present in every word of the Church, on account of the Personal Incarnate Word of God, Who is the Head of the Church, dwelling in the Church. Besides this, every truly good word has in itself the power corresponding to it, owing to the all-filling simple Word of God. With what attention and reverence, with what faith, must we therefore pronounce each word! For the Word is the Creator Himself, God, and through the Word all things were brought into existence from non-existence.”

<https://orthodoxtacoma.com/mylifeinchrist02.html>

6th Friday of the Holy Fast

| | | | |
|-------------|---|----------------|---------------------------|
| Vespers: | - | | |
| Prophecies: | Gen 22:1-18; Is 45:11-17; Prov 9:12-18; Job 36:1-33; Job 37:1-24; Tobit* 1:1-3:23; Tobit 3:24-9:12; Tobit 10:1-14:15 | | |
| Matins: | Ps 51:7-8 | John 3:14-21 | |
| Mass: | 1 Cor 10:1-13 | 1 John 2:12-17 | Acts 8:9-17 |
| | Ps 34:5,4 | John 3:1-13 | [* Second Canonical Book] |

rites and customs of the church

“Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions which you were taught, whether by word or our epistle.” (2 Thess 2:15)



“I thank my all holy, all merciful, and most wise Mother, the Church of God, for salutarily guiding me during this temporal life, and for educating me for the heavenly citizenship; I thank her for all the offices of prayers, for the Divine services, for the sacraments and rites; I thank her for the fasts so beneficial to me both in spiritual and bodily respects (for through them I am healthy both in spirit and body, calm, vigilant, and light; without the fasts I should feel extreme heaviness, which I indeed experienced when not fasting); I thank my spotless Mother the Church of God for enrapturing me with her heavenly services, transporting my spirit to heaven, enlightening my intellect with heavenly truth, showing me the way to eternal life; for delivering me from the violence and ignominy of the passions, and making my life blessed.

Our faith and Church is like a most honoured, holy, godly, firm, venerable woman, who never grows old, and in whom ever dwells a young, living spirit, giving life to her true children. As we always behave with great respect to old people, honouring their grey hair and wisdom — the fruits of experience-and highly value each of their words, and apply them to our own life, so ought we especially to honour the Church, venerate her holiness, antiquity, her unshaken firmness, her divinely enlightened wisdom and spiritual experience, her soul-saving commandments and ordinances, her Divine services, sacraments and rites. How can we do otherwise than respect her, even if only for having saved in her bosom an innumerable multitude of people, transplanting them into the abode of eternal peace and joy, not forgetting them even after their death, but remembering them until now upon earth, eternally praising and glorifying their virtues as her true children? Where will you find a more grateful friend, a more tender mother? And therefore, may Christians attach themselves wholly and with all their hearts to the Church of Christ, that they may be firmly established unto the end of their temporal life! May they all be zealous of the fulfilment of all her commandments and ordinances, and may they obtain in her eternal salvation through Christ Jesus our Lord!

Through our attachment to perishable things, by thoughts and cares about them, we lose sight of objects of the greatest importance, of the objects really natural to our souls, constituting their true and eternal element; we hew out for ourselves “cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water,” and forsake “the Fountain of living waters”; we do not turn spiritual, holy, heavenly and life-giving thoughts into our life, into our blood, but continue to live by worldly, earthly, passionate thoughts and aspirations, which only oppress, torment, and slay us. Oh, if we could ever reason, as the Gospel teaches us, as the holy Church teaches us in her Divine services, and prayers, at the celebration of the sacraments and other offices, as the Holy Fathers did in their writings! Then even upon earth we should all become citizens of heaven, speaking heavenly things.

Everything that the Church puts into our mouths and hearing is truth, the breathing or teaching of the Holy [Spirit]. Reverence every thought, every word of the Church....“I am the vine,” says the Lord, “you are the branches,” that is the One Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church. Therefore, as the Lord is holy, so also the Church is holy; as the Lord “is the way, the truth, and the life,” so also is the Church, because the Church is one and the same with the Lord, “His body, of His flesh, and of His bones,” or His “branches,” rooted in Him — the living vine, and nourished by Him and growing in Him. Never represent the Church as apart from the Lord Jesus Christ, from the Father and the Holy [Spirit].

<https://orthodoxtacoma.com/mylifeinchrist02.html>

6th Saturday of the Holy Great Fast

| | | | |
|-------------|-----------|---------------|--------------|
| Vespers: | - | | |
| Prophecies: | - | | |
| Matins: | Ps 79:8-9 | Matt 9:1-8 | |
| Mass: | Eph 4:1-7 | 1 Pet 1:13-21 | Acts 27:9-26 |
| | Ps 32:1-2 | Mark 10:46-52 | |

SUNDAY'S HOLY GOSPEL
HEALING THE MAN BORN BLIND

Day 42

Sunday, 14 April 2019

6TH SUNDAY
OF THE HOLY GREAT FAST

1 Now as [Jesus] passed by, He saw a man who was blind from birth. 2 And His disciples asked Him, saying, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" 3 Jesus answered, "Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but that the works of God should be revealed in him. 4 "I must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day; [the] night is coming when no one can work. 5 "As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world." 6 When He had said these things, He spat on the ground and made clay with the saliva; and He anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay. 7 And He said to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (which is translated, Sent). So he went and washed, and came back seeing. 8 Therefore the neighbors and those who previously had seen that he was blind said, "Is not this he who sat and begged?" 9 Some said, "This is he." Others [said], "He is like him." He said, "I am [he]." 10 Therefore they said to him, "How were your eyes opened?" 11 He answered and said, "A Man called Jesus made clay and anointed my eyes and said to me, 'Go to the pool of Siloam and wash.' So I went and washed, and I received sight." 12 Then they said to him, "Where is He?" He said, "I do not know." 13 They brought him who formerly was blind to the Pharisees. 14 Now it was a Sabbath when Jesus made the clay and opened his eyes. 15 Then the Pharisees also asked him again how he had received his sight. He said to them, "He put clay on my eyes, and I washed, and I see." 16 Therefore some of the Pharisees said, "This Man is not from God, because He does not keep the Sabbath." Others said, "How can a man who is a sinner do such signs?" And there was a division among them. 17 They said to the blind man again, "What do you say about Him because He opened your eyes?" He said, "He is a prophet." 18 But the Jews did not believe concerning him, that he had been blind and received his sight, until they called the parents of him who had received his sight. 19 And they asked them, saying, "Is this your son, who you say was born blind? How then does he now see?" 20 His parents answered them and said, "We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind; 21 "but by what means he now sees we do not know, or who opened his eyes we do not know. He is of age; ask him. He will speak for himself." 22 His parents said these [things] because they feared the Jews, for the Jews had agreed already that if anyone confessed [that] He [was] Christ, he would be put out of the synagogue. 23 Therefore his parents said, "He is of age; ask him." 24 So they again called the man who was blind, and said to him, "Give God the glory! We know that this Man is a sinner." 25 He answered and said, "Whether He is a sinner [or] [not] I do not know. One thing I know: that though I was blind, now I see." 26 Then they said to him again, "What did He do to you? How did He open your eyes?" 27 He answered them, "I told you already, and you did not listen. Why do you want to hear [it] again? Do you also want to become His disciples?" 28 Then they reviled him and said, "You are His disciple, but we are Moses' disciples. 29 "We know that God spoke to Moses; [as] [for] this [fellow], we do not know where He is from." 30 The man answered and said to them, "Why, this is a marvelous thing, that you do not know where He is from; yet He has opened my eyes! 31 "Now we know that God does not hear sinners; but if anyone is a worshiper of God and does His will, He hears him. 32 "Since the world began it has been unheard of that anyone opened the eyes of one who was born blind. 33 "If this Man were not from God, He could do nothing." 34 They answered and said to him, "You were completely born in sins, and are you teaching us?" And they cast him out. 35 Jesus heard that they had cast him out; and when He had found him, He said to him, "Do you believe in the Son of God?" 36 He answered and said, "Who is He, Lord, that I may believe in Him?" 37 And Jesus said to him, "You have both seen Him and it is He who is talking with you." 38 Then he said, "Lord, I believe!" And he worshiped Him. 39 And Jesus said, "For judgment I have come into this world, that those who do not see may see, and that those who see may be made blind." 40 Then [some] of the Pharisees who were with Him heard these words, and said to Him, "Are we blind also?" 41 Jesus said to them, "If you were blind, you would have no sin; but now you say, 'We see.' Therefore your sin remains." John 9:1-41

6th Sunday of the Holy Great Fast

| | | | |
|-------------|------------|----------------|---------------|
| Vespers: | Ps 17:3,5 | Luke 13:22-35 | |
| Prophecies: | - | | |
| Matins: | Ps 26:2-3 | Matt 23:1-39 | |
| Mass: | Col 3:5-17 | 1 John 5:13-21 | Acts 27:27-37 |
| | Ps 143:7,1 | John 9:1-41 | |

Day 43

Monday, 15 April 2019

WHAT DO YOU SEE?

“The lamp of the body is the eye. Therefore, when your eye is good, your whole body also is full of light. But when your eye is bad, your body also is full of darkness.” (Luke 11:34)



“Some people tell me that they are scandalized because they see many things wrong in the Church. I tell them that if you ask a fly, “Are there any flowers in this area?” it will say, “I don’t know about flowers, but over there in that heap of rubbish where you can find all the filth you want.” And it will go on to list all the unclean things it has been to.

Now, if you ask a honeybee, “Have you seen any unclean things in this area?” it will reply, “Unclean things? No, I have not seen any; the place here is full of the most fragrant flowers.” And it will go on to name all the flowers of the garden or the meadow.

You see, the fly only knows where the unclean things are, while the honeybee knows where the beautiful iris or hyacinth is.

As I have come to understand, some people resemble the honeybee and some resemble the fly. Those who resemble the fly seek to find evil in every circumstance and are preoccupied with it; they see no good anywhere. But those who resemble the honeybee only see the good in everything they see. The foolish person thinks foolishly and takes everything in the wrong way, whereas the person who has good thoughts, no matter what he sees, no matter what you tell him, maintains a positive and good thought.” - St. Paisios of Mt. Athos

<http://stioannis.org/quotes/>

7th Monday of the Holy Great Fast

| | | | |
|-------------|---|------------------------------|--------------|
| Vespers: | - | | |
| Prophecies: | Prov 10:1-16; Is 48:17-49:4; Job 38:1-38 | | |
| Matins: | Ps 32:10-11 | Luke 16:19-31 | |
| Mass: | Rom 14:10-15:2 Ps 86:12-13 | James 2:5-13 John 5:31-47 | Acts 9:22-31 |

LOVE FOR THE LITURGY

“For the Lord is great and greatly to be praised; He is to be feared above all gods. Honour and majesty are before Him; Strength and beauty are in His sanctuary. Give to the Lord the glory due His name; Bring an offering, and come into His courts. Oh, worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness!

Tremble before Him, all the earth.” (Ps 96:4,6,8-9)



It is said about the holy lady, Tunt Samira of California (-2015), “During the whole service, she was always on her feet (unless it was a reading or the sermon), her eyes were closed and hands raised in reverence...Fervently, whisperingly, constantly and at great length she prayed the Jesus prayer, for her fellow parishioners, for the whole world... Whenever you would look at her you’d think she was in a different world... Even on the occasions when she had extreme breathing issues and was hooked up onto an oxygen tank, these fervent, reverent and love-filled supplications never ceased.”

It was also said of Tunt Samira, “She dearly loved the liturgy and sorrowed greatly when she was too sick to attend”. Nothing upset her more when she was sick than because she was missing the liturgy, and not because couldn’t spend her time doing worldly things or resting comfortably at home.”

In the life of Bishop Makarios of Qena (-1991) we read, “Everytime Bishop Makarios prays the Mass, you feel as if he is enjoying a delicious meal with great admiration. He prays fervently and thoughtfully, contemplating on each word, even on the prayers that are cited secretly (eg, during the Pauline reading).” His Grace used to pray the Fraction prayers with great passion, tears, a high level of spirituality, and with a heavenly voice.”

Pope Shenouda said about St Kyrillos VI, “In the history of our Church there has never been anyone like Pope Kyrillos who was able to pray as many liturgies. He prayed in excess of twelve thousand liturgies. This has never happened in the history of any Pope of the Popes of Alexandria, or the world, or even any monks. He was definitely extraordinary in his prayers.

If we want to make a portrait of Pope Kyrillos the best one would be his picture being surrounded by a cloud of incense, or one of him standing aside the altar; for the incense was ever-present in his life in every evening service, as well as every morning liturgy. He celebrated a daily liturgy. He never stayed away from the altar or the incense throughout his life, except for the very last period after becoming sick and being restricted by his poor health.

Whenever he was faced by any problem, he would take it to the altar and mention it during the liturgy. He would not talk about his problems with people, but rather with God during the liturgy; this was truly his life.”

7th Tuesday of the Holy Great Fast

| | | | |
|-------------|--|---------------|---------------|
| Vespers: | - | | |
| Prophecies: | Prov 10:17-32; Is 49:6-10; Job 38:37-39:30; Sirach* 5:1-15 | | |
| Matins: | Ps 38:18-19 | Luke 17:1-10 | |
| Mass: | 1 Cor 14:5-17 | 2 Pet 3:8-15 | Acts 22:17-24 |
| Psalm | Ps 51:2-3 | John 12:36-43 | |

[* Second Canonical Book]

THE BEAUTY OF ORTHODOXY I

“And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence.” (Col 1:18)



“Our view of Orthodox faith and worship is misconstrued – we think of it as dry, constraining, even bitter. To understand it, we need to go back to the grass roots – what is Orthodoxy? What are its main characteristics? This article is the first in a series on “The Orthodox Life.”

To understand Orthodoxy and its main characteristics, we need to go back even further. Orthodoxy does not survive in a vacuum; it is the LIFE of the Orthodox Church.

So, we must first ask, “What is the Church”? What does it mean to us in our lives? The Church as we know it is that which was left to us by our Lord Jesus Christ, that we may continue to live in His life and light and promise, within the teachings He gave to His disciples. We have this life and these teachings today because of the Church. The Church is much wider and bigger than a building – it is the Body of Christ, which incorporates us all into Him, with Him as the head.

We must look at the model of the Church as it started in the first century with the Apostles: how did they understand the Church? We must use Scripture, for that’s what we rely on most. Many people have a misunderstanding about Orthodoxy – they think we do not rely enough on Scripture, but instead rely only on dogma. That is completely wrong; Scripture is the foundation and cornerstone of our Church, and the basis of all our understanding, faith and tradition. Look at what Acts 2:30-43 says about the early Church: “And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine, in fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.” That is the Church, then and now.

First, the Apostles’ doctrine – that is what the Lord taught them, to teach to us. It is important as the foundation of the Church. Second, fellowship is mentioned. We are all members in one body, as St. Paul said. Much of Christianity is about standing together in Christ. That fellowship might be through praying together in services and liturgies, it may be serving as one body or in ministry. It’s anything we do together under the umbrella of the Church, even when being social. Third, the breaking of bread – it can be literally the sharing of meals in fellowship, or it can be the ritual sacramental breaking of bread, as Christ taught us in the Eucharist. Finally, prayer: it’s a fundamental characteristic of the Church. We do it communally, ritually, individually, collectively. So that is the Church: the Apostles’ doctrine, fellowship, breaking of bread, and prayers.

Where did that go? The body is fragmented; look at the Catholic Church, Protestant churches and the various offshoots of that. In the first century, there was only One Church, with Christ as its head. It had various centers and sees, but when they came together in ecumenical councils to face heresies, they were “universal” (or “catholic”, which literally means “incorporating all”). Through those early councils, we saw the One Church functioning as one Body, but then schisms came about and we were fragmented...

Orthodoxy is based upon a very REAL relationship with God. I once met a gentleman who came to the Coptic Orthodox Church when he was first a charismatic Christian. When he first came, he only realized the “bells and smells” of the Church – the incense, the deacons, the cymbals, etc. But Orthodoxy is more than that outward appearance; its main characteristics lie far beneath that outward surface. If you go to the depths, you see these outward appearances and manifestations, but in their glory and with understanding.

What are these characteristics of Orthodoxy? First, Orthodoxy is firmly founded in Scripture. All the teachings of the Church are founded in Scripture. Some members of the church have an aversion to pursuing Scripture, to study the Bible, to dig deeper. Our church’s rituals are 70-80% based directly from Scripture – the Agpeya prayers, the language and institution of the Liturgy, their words come directly from the Bible. Also, we believe in a factual and literal reading of the Bible. There are three schools concerning Scripture: (1) the Bible is completely literal; (2) the Bible is completely symbolic (i.e., it can be ignored); and (3) the Bible is sometimes literal and sometimes symbolic. The third option is not really an option – we cannot pick and choose what to believe and what not to. Our interpretation is that every word of the Bible has meaning, importance and significance.

Second, there is Tradition, which is from the teachings and interpretation of the Fathers on Scripture. Thus, even Tradition (with a capital “T”) comes from Scripture. If you look at the writings of the Church Fathers, you will find they mention every verse in the Bible except for 12 verses. The Church Fathers interpreted the Bible and handed it down to us, so that we may progress and hand it down. We also have Apostolic succession, which is the lineage of our priesthood. We can trace back this priesthood, knowing when and by whom each priest was ordained all the way back to St. Mark. For example, I know I was ordained by His Holiness, and we know who ordained him, and so on, all the way back to St. Mark, who received his mandate of priesthood through Christ Jesus Himself.

The bishops of the Church were successors of the Apostles themselves, and their priesthood was recognized, and by the authority of the Holy Spirit, they were given to interpret and teach Scripture, which then became the basis for the authority of the ecumenical councils. We, today, are that same Church, but we are in today’s environment.” – Bishop Angaelos

<http://becomeorthodox.org/the-beauty-of-orthodoxy-1/>

Continued in The Beauty of Orthodoxy – Part I.

7th Wednesday of the Holy Great Fast

Vespers: -
 Prophecies: Prov 10:32-11:13; Is 58:1-11;
 Job 40:1-41:34

Matins: Ps 57:1 Luke 14:28-35
 Mass: Rom 10:4-13 James 1:13-21 Acts 19:23-26
 Ps 51:2-3 John 6:35-45

Day 46

Thursday, 18 April 2019

THE BEAUTY OF ORTHODOXY I (CONTINUED)

“But as for me, I will come into Your house in the multitude of Your mercy; in fear of You I will worship toward Your holy temple” (Ps 5:7).



“In the Coptic Church, we receive a very ascetic attitude toward worship, thought and prayer. Our very powerful fathers – Sts. Cyril, Athanasius, Pakhoum, Shenouda, Macarius – were very ascetic. There is this tale people tell about ascetics – they fled persecution and went to the wilderness to escape. But what people will not tell you is that they withstood persecution and attacks by the Berbers, their walls were burned down, they were beaten and yet they persisted and survived. Monastic life in the Coptic Church is one of the most thriving monastic movements in the Christian Church today. Throughout many other churches and denominations, monasteries are shutting down because of the lack of people entering monastic life. We, on the other hand, are opening more and more monasteries, and it’s not just a numbers game. This is an indication of the spirituality we have received through our Church.

Some people say, “The Church is dead.” That is not true – that which is dead does not give fruit. That which is dead does not produce. That which is dead does not bring forth life from death. These monasteries themselves are life in the deserts that are full of death and nothingness, but the prayers of the monks and nuns have brought the desert to life.

Because our church has these ascetic and ecumenical qualities, there is an interesting marriage between the two. The strength of teaching with the humility of monasticism. While our worship, praise, prayers and rituals are so full of life and expression in the hymnology (from the ecumenical side), at the same time, they have undertones of respect, honour and calmness that come from the ascetic side. Coming from that are our strong pursuits of contemplation and meditation and solitude.

As you know, because our rituals are so rich, we have a strong dependence on the worship and praise. Some people think of “praise and worship” as a twentieth-century phenomenon of the charismatic movement. Our Fathers have been worshiping in the catacombs since the first century, and in the monasteries since the fourth century. Our midnight praise is nearly the same as what our Fathers prayed in the fourth century. Look at some of our beautiful, joyful hymns that bring the words to life. That is alive, it’s not dead.

Why is the Coptic Orthodox Church so different from other churches, as people are so quick to point out? People say we look like we do not want to “move” or partake with anyone. We are different because we have characteristics that are different from other churches, that are true and pure and handed down to us. And we do not compromise on those – not our dogma, theology, or teaching – because, quite simply, they are not ours to compromise on. If I lend you my car, and then someone says, “This car is a boring bishop’s car. Let’s make it youthful, with spinning wheels, tints, spoilers, revved up engine, etc.” You could not do that – it’s not your car with which to do that. We have received the teachings of our fathers only to hand them on to those who come after us, and they were initially given to us by the Lord and founded in Scripture. If we did not have this safeguard, anyone could change anything in the Church.

The Church IS progressive in the way it delivers the message. We give you this lecture talking your language, on your terms, using the latest technology and the means around us. That is fine – our Lord Himself spoke the people’s language and used parables. So we can use these tools to be progressive in the way we deliver this message – but we cannot change the content, for it is not ours to change.” – Bishop Angaelos

<http://becomeorthodox.org/the-beauty-of-orthodoxy-1/>

7th Thursday of the Holy Great Fast

| | | | |
|-------------|---|----------------|-----------------|
| Vespers: | - | | |
| Prophecies: | Prov 11:13-26; Is 65:8-16; Job 42:1-6; 2 Kin 6:8-7:20 | | |
| Matins: | Ps 63:1 | Matt 20:20-28 | |
| Mass: | 2 Cor 4:5-18 | 1 John 3:13-24 | Acts 25:23-26:6 |
| | Ps 122:1-2 | Mark 12:18-27 | |

THE BEAUTY OF ORTHODOXY II

“Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.” (Acts 20:28)



“If something is going to change in the Church, it will be changed through the prayers and decision of His Holiness the Pope and the Holy Synod. This safeguard is a good thing; if we want to change things, they can be discussed and changed, but they must go through a stringent test and procedure, because these things are not just being changed for you today. They are being changed for the Church to come, so we take these matters very seriously.

Today in the Coptic Orthodox Church, we have over 90 bishops, forming many Synod subcommittees, discussing everything from ecumenical relations, to Christian education, rituals, theology, and many other topics. Within these subcommittees, measures are discussed and changes are proposed through amendments. If the amendment is accepted, it becomes part of the Church. Thus, we do have vehicles for moving ahead. Why should changing something in the Church be easier than changing your national constitution? Constitutional amendment requirements are very stringent, because they change who you are and how your citizenship is defined. Likewise, changing the Church changes who you are. Our Church is so rich; we want to be careful with this and proceed carefully.

If you look at the Church in the Middle Ages when it fragmented, you have extreme teachings: the Catholics taught infallibility of the Pope, filioque, Immaculate Conception – these all became extreme ideas. The Protestants came to protest against these extremes, and went all the way to the other side. Thus, the Catholics believe in Papal infallibility; the Protestants on the other side say no priesthood. Catholics had indulgence for salvation on one side; the Protestants said they did not need that because they were all “saved”. The Catholics said St. Mary was conceived without sin through Immaculate Conception; the Protestants came around and said she was just a vessel, gave birth, and her virginity was useless after that. There was the extreme position, and reaction to the extreme position.

If you look at the Orthodox Church, it has always been moderate among these extremes. The Catholics believe in Papal infallibility; the Protestants reject priesthood; but the Orthodox say our priesthood is from Christ, handed down to the Apostles, and no one is infallible. We are human beings; we recognize that, so we have safeguards in place. Moderate. Again, on one side, Catholics say indulgences; on the other side, Protestants say everyone is “saved”; the Orthodox say we have the foundation of salvation through the blood of Jesus Christ on the Cross, but we have to work at it to make it part of our own, to partake in the salvation. Again, one side believes in Immaculate Conception, the other side believes St. Mary was merely a vessel and had no use after that; as Orthodox, we believe the Savior had to come from a lineage of humanity, bearing that human sin. Therefore, St. Mary was a human – a holy human, prepared to bear God, the Theotokos. She remained an ever-virgin and our faithful intercessor. You see, the Orthodox view is a moderate view that has not changed, through the first, ninth, and twenty-first centuries. We should be proud that we do not change at the whim of individuals, but the mechanism is there if anything needs to be changed.” – Bishop Angaelos

<http://becomeorthodox.org/the-beauty-of-orthodoxy-2/>

Continued in The Beauty of Orthodoxy – Part II.

7th Friday of the Holy Great Fast

| | | | |
|-------------|---|---------------|--------------|
| Vespers: | - | | |
| Prophecies: | Gen 49:33-50:26; Prov 11:27-12:22; Is 66:10-24; Job 42:7-17 | | |
| Matins: | Ps 32:10-11 | Luke 16:19-31 | |
| Mass: | 2 Tim 3:1-4:5 | James 5:7-16 | Acts 15:1-18 |
| | Ps 98:8-9 | Luke 13:31-35 | |

Day 48

Saturday, 20 April 2019

THE BEAUTY OF ORTHODOXY II (CONTINUED)

“In that day there will be an altar to the Lord in the midst of the land of Egypt, and a pillar to the Lord at its border.” (Isa 19:19)



“Some people think of Orthodoxy as “boring”, because it does not change its teachings frequently... Some people think of Orthodoxy as “radical.” They say we are “radical” because we don’t change, while the world changes on a whim. We dare to be different from the world, to maintain that which has given us its character since the beginning. Well, if that is “radical,” then perhaps we are. We are “radical” in delivering the message. Some churches debate whether to use languages other than the national language of the church; last year, I prayed a liturgy in Europe where nine different languages were used! We deliver the message as we need to deliver it and as it becomes effective, so that it may become active in your life in order for you to benefit. We do, however, need to give you the sense of the authenticity of the Church, which is why we preserve the teachings of the Church.

We have the obligation to preserve and deliver what the truth is; you have the obligation to try to understand it, don’t just shut it out. You must give it serious thought, and try to have it make sense. We give you the message, which is the message of Scripture. We have been granted so much by the Church, with all of this teaching, the safeguards, and forward thinking.

I want to throw one challenge to you: we all make fun of being Egyptian – timing, organization, food, and so on. But we should give credit where it is due and not have stereotypical responses. What makes you different from the Jewish community, the Greek community, the Chinese community where you live? They have pride in who they are, while we – sorry to say – are always apologetic. We are Christian, which is a blessing and grace in itself. We are part of the Orthodox Church, whose teachings are affirmed in the one Church. We are part of the Coptic Church, which lived through 2000 years of persecution, and is still blossoming, flourishing and alive despite the persecutions. We should be proud of this identity that the Church has given us. Not a worldly, arrogant pride, but the holy pride in the Church. You are Coptic Orthodox, be thankful for your faith. Live it and be proud of it; people have lost their lives – millions of people have died so that you can share in that same faith.

That’s my church – that’s your church. That’s what we should be proud of. Do not be arrogant – we are not better than anyone else. But we are blessed. Work with your talents, do not bury them. Be thankful for belonging to the Church and to each other – look at the Copts in your lives; the servants, the priests. They are dedicated to your service. We should lose the cynicism and look at the positive. Our Church was established by Christ Himself, brought to us by St. Mark, protected by the Fathers, strengthened by the saints and martyrs, living until today as true as possible to the original message, and delivered in a way we can comprehend it.

Be thankful for this church of which you are part. Live it and be proud of it – not a worldly, arrogant pride, but be proud that you are the children of God. Live the lives of those who protect the Church in faith, in strength, and in every word that proceeds from the mouth of God. Glory be to God and His Church forever, Amen.” – Bishop Angaelos

<http://becomeorthodox.org/the-beauty-of-orthodoxy-2/>

Lazarus’ Saturday

| | | | |
|-------------|--|----------------|------------------|
| Vespers: | - | | |
| Prophecies: | Gen 49:1-28; Is 40:9-31; Zeph 3:14-20; Zech 9:9-15 | | |
| Matins: | Ps 88:2-4 | Luke 12:16-21 | |
| Mass: | 1 Cor 2:1-8 | 1 Pet 1:25-2:6 | Acts 27:38-28:10 |
| | Ps 129:8,2 | John 11:1-45 | |

Day 49

Sunday, 21 April 2019

7TH SUNDAY OF THE HOLY GREAT FAST

Gospel of the Palm Sunday Liturgy

Mark 11:1-11

1 Now when they drew near Jerusalem, to Bethphage and Bethany, at the Mount of Olives, He sent two of His disciples; 2 and He said to them, "Go into the village opposite you; and as soon as you have entered it you will find a colt tied, on which no one has sat. Loose it and bring [it]. 3 "And if anyone says to you, 'Why are you doing this?' say, 'The Lord has need of it,' and immediately he will send it here." 4 So they went their way, and found the colt tied by the door outside on the street, and they loosed it. 5 But some of those who stood there said to them, "What are you doing, loosing the colt?" 6 And they spoke to them just as Jesus had commanded. So they let them go. 7 Then they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their clothes on it, and He sat on it. 8 And many spread their clothes on the road, and others cut down leafy branches from the trees and spread [them] on the road. 9 Then those who went before and those who followed cried out, saying:

"Hosanna! 'Blessed [is] He who comes in the name of the Lord!'

10 Blessed [is] the kingdom of our father David That comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!" 11 And Jesus went into Jerusalem and into the temple. So when He had looked around at all things, as the hour was already late, He went out to Bethany with the twelve. Glory be to God forever. Amen.

Palm Sunday

Events:

- Our Lord Jesus Christ entered Jerusalem as a King, sitting on a donkey, a colt, the foal of a donkey.

Rites:

- Procession of the Cross during the prayers of Raising of Incense (Matins)
- The Liturgy of Palm Sunday in which the four Gospels relating to the entry of Our Lord Jesus Christ into Jerusalem are read and the praises of the children 'Hosanna to the Son of David' and a hymn 'Evlogemenos' is chanted.
- The funeral service for the departed is conducted after the completion of the Holy Liturgy and Communion. Funerals are not performed during Passion week as the focus is on the pains and sufferings of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

Monday Eve

Events:

- Our Lord Jesus Christ returned to Bethany.

Rites:

- The Pascha prayers begin in the second chorus of the Church (outside the camp – Jerusalem) and the Church is decorated with black cloths suitable for the Passion of Christ.
- Every hour includes:
 - The Prophecies
 - 'Thok Te Ti-Gom' ('To You is the Power and the Glory') 12 times
 - The Psalm, the Gospel's introduction and the Gospel in the sad tune
 - Commentary introduction and conclusion
 - The Litanies
 - The Blessing
- 5 hours at night and 5 hours during the day of the Pascha prayers (1st, 3rd, 6th, 9th and 11th hour prayers).

Day 50

Monday, 22 April 2019

Gospel of the First Hour of Monday of the Holy Pascha - Mark 11:12-24

12 Now the next day, when they had come out from Bethany, He was hungry. 13 And seeing from afar a fig tree having leaves, He went to see if perhaps He would find something on it. When He came to it, He found nothing but leaves, for it was not the season for figs. 14 In response Jesus said to it, "Let no one eat fruit from you ever again." And His disciples heard [it]. 15 So they came to Jerusalem. Then Jesus went into the temple and began to drive out those who bought and sold in the temple, and overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves. 16 And He would not allow anyone to carry wares through the temple. 17 Then He taught, saying to them, "Is it not written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations'? But you have made it a 'den of thieves.'" 18 And the scribes and chief priests heard it and sought how they might destroy Him; for they feared Him, because all the people were astonished at His teaching. 19 When evening had come, He went out of the city. 20 Now in the morning, as they passed by, they saw the fig tree dried up from the roots. 21 And Peter, remembering, said to Him, "Rabbi, look! The fig tree which You cursed has withered away." 22 So Jesus answered and said to them, "Have faith in God. 23 "For assuredly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, 'Be removed and be cast into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that those things he says will be done, he will have whatever he says. 24 "Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive [them], and you will have [them].

Glory be to God forever. Amen.

Monday of the Holy Pascha

Events:

- Our Lord Jesus Christ cursed the fig tree that had no fruit, while on His way from Bethany to Jerusalem. He spent the rest of the day cleansing the Temple and teaching.

Rites:

- 5 hours of the Pascha prayers (1st, 3rd, 6th, 9th and 11th hour prayers).

Tuesday Eve

Events:

- In the evening, Our Lord Jesus Christ returned to Bethany.

Rites:

- 5 hours of the Pascha prayers (1st, 3rd, 6th, 9th and 11th hour prayers).

Day 51

Tuesday, 23 April 2019

Gospel of the Eleventh Hour of Tuesday Eve of the Holy Pascha - Mark 13:32-14:2

32 "But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.

33 "Take heed, watch and pray; for you do not know when the time is.

34 "[It] [is] like a man going to a far country, who left his house and gave authority to his servants, and to each his work, and commanded the doorkeeper to watch.

35 "Watch therefore, for you do not know when the master of the house is coming--in the evening, at midnight, at the crowing of the rooster, or in the morning--

36 "lest, coming suddenly, he find you sleeping.

37 "And what I say to you, I say to all: Watch!"

14:1 After two days it was the Passover and [the] [Feast] of Unleavened Bread. And the chief priests and the scribes sought how they might take Him by trickery and put [Him] to death.

2 But they said, "Not during the feast, lest there be an uproar of the people."

Glory be to God forever. Amen.

Gospel of the Third Hour of Tuesday of the Holy Pascha - Matthew 23:37-24:2

37 "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under [her] wings, but you were not willing!

38 "See! Your house is left to you desolate;

39 "for I say to you, you shall see Me no more till you say, 'Blessed [is] He who comes in the name of the Lord!'" "

24:1 Then Jesus went out and departed from the temple, and His disciples came up to show Him the buildings of the temple.

2 And Jesus said to them, "Do you not see all these things? Assuredly, I say to you, not [one] stone shall be left here upon another, that shall not be thrown down."

Glory be to God forever. Amen.

Tuesday of the Holy Pascha

Events:

- On the way from Bethany to Jerusalem, the disciples saw that the fig tree was withered.
- Our Lord Jesus Christ spent the day with the disciples in the temple, teaching them by parables, telling them about the destruction of Jerusalem and the second coming

Rites:

- In the 'Thok Te Ti-Gom' praise of the 11th hour, the words 'My Good Saviour' are added after 'My Lord Jesus Christ.'
- Psalm 45:6 'Pek-ethronos' ('Your throne O God is forever and ever') is chanted.
- 5 hours of the Pascha prayers (1st, 3rd, 6th, 9th and 11th hour prayers).

Wednesday Eve

Events:

- Our Lord Jesus Christ returned to Bethany to spend the night there.

Rites:

- The Church prohibits the exchanging of a kiss from Tuesday evening, so as not to share with Judas Iscariot the sign of the delivery of the Lord.
- 5 hours of the Pascha prayers (1st, 3rd, 6th, 9th and 11th hour prayers).

Day 52

Wednesday, 24 April
2019

Gospel of the Ninth Hour of Wednesday of the Holy Pascha - Matthew 26:3-16

3 Then the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders of the people assembled at the palace of the high priest, who was called Caiaphas,

4 and plotted to take Jesus by trickery and kill [Him].

5 But they said, "Not during the feast, lest there be an uproar among the people."

6 And when Jesus was in Bethany at the house of Simon the leper,

7 a woman came to Him having an alabaster flask of very costly fragrant oil, and she poured [it] on His head as He sat [at] [the] [table].

8 But when His disciples saw [it], they were indignant, saying, "Why this waste?

9 "For this fragrant oil might have been sold for much and given to [the] poor."

10 But when Jesus was aware of [it], He said to them, "Why do you trouble the woman? For she has done a good work for Me.

11 "For you have the poor with you always, but Me you do not have always.

12 "For in pouring this fragrant oil on My body, she did [it] for My burial.

13 "Assuredly, I say to you, wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done will also be told as a memorial to her."

14 Then one of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests

15 and said, "What are you willing to give me if I deliver Him to you?" And they counted out to him thirty pieces of silver.

16 So from that time he sought opportunity to betray Him.

Glory be to God forever. Amen.

Wednesday of the Holy Pascha

Events:

- Our Lord Jesus Christ spent the day in Bethany.
- A woman poured fragrant oil on Our Lord's blessed head.
- The betrayal of Judas Iscariot who agreed on a price with the chief priests, to deliver Our Lord Jesus Christ to them with the sign of a kiss.

Rites:

- No exchanging of a kiss.
- 5 hours of the Pascha prayers (1st, 3rd, 6th, 9th and 11th hour prayers).

Holy Thursday Eve

Events:

- Our Lord Jesus Christ spent the night in Bethany.

Rites:

- No exchanging of a kiss.
- 5 hours of the Pascha prayers (1st, 3rd, 6th, 9th and 11th hour prayers).
- In the 3rd hour, Psalm 55:21, 1 'Av-etchee-non' ('His words were softer than oil') is chanted.

Day 53

Thursday, 25 April 2019

Gospel of the Covenant Thursday Liturgy Matthew 26:20-29

20 When evening had come, He sat down with the twelve.

21 Now as they were eating, He said, "Assuredly, I say to you, one of you will betray Me."

22 And they were exceedingly sorrowful, and each of them began to say to Him, "Lord, is it I?"

23 He answered and said, "He who dipped [his] hand with Me in the dish will betray Me.

24 "The Son of Man indeed goes just as it is written of Him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been good for that man if he had not been born."

25 Then Judas, who was betraying Him, answered and said, "Rabbi, is it I?" He said to him, "You have said it."

26 And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke [it], and gave [it] to the disciples and said, "Take, eat; this is My body."

27 Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave [it] to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you.

28 "For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.

29 "But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom."

Glory be to God forever. Amen.

Holy Thursday

Events:

- Our Lord Jesus Christ celebrated the Passover with His disciples. The word 'Passover' is Hebrew which means 'to cross over,' indicative of the passing of the destroying angel from the Israelites to kill the first born of the Egyptians.
- Our Lord Jesus Christ washed the feet of the disciples.
- Our Lord Jesus Christ established for us the Lordly Supper, the Eucharist, with His disciples.

Rites:

- The prayer of the Morning (1st) hour, the Raising of Incense. Procession of Judas from the southern side to the northern side (the opposite direction) and Psalm 55:21,1 'Av-etchee-non' ('His words were softer than oil') is chanted.
- The 3rd, 6th and 9th hours of the Pascha prayers are prayed as usual.
- The service of the 'Lakan' which contains readings concerning Our Lord washing the feet of His disciples.
- The service of the Divine Liturgy (The Catholic Epistle, Acts, Synaxarium, Prayer of Reconciliation, Commemoration of the Saints are not prayed).
- The 11th hour of the Pascha prayers are prayed instead of Psalm 150.

Good Friday Eve

Events:

- Our Lord Jesus Christ prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane.
- Our Lord Jesus Christ is arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane.

Rites:

- The words, 'My strength and my praise is the Lord who became my Holy Salvation,' are added to the praise of 'Thok Te Ti-Gom.'
- In the 1st hour of the Pascha prayers, the Paraclete chapters are read.
- The 3rd, 6th, 9th and 11th hours of the Pascha prayers are prayed as usual. The four Gospels are read in each hour.

Day 54

Friday, 26 April 2019

Gospel of the Sixth Hour of Good Friday of the Holy Pascha - Matthew 27:27-45

27 Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the Praetorium and gathered the whole garrison around Him. 28 And they stripped Him and put a scarlet robe on Him. 29 When they had twisted a crown of thorns, they put [it] on His head, and a reed in His right hand. And they bowed the knee before Him and mocked Him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" 30 Then they spat on Him, and took the reed and struck Him on the head. 31 And when they had mocked Him, they took the robe off Him, put His [own] clothes on Him, and led Him away to be crucified. 32 Now as they came out, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name. Him they compelled to bear His cross. 33 And when they had come to a place called Golgotha, that is to say, Place of a Skull, 34 they gave Him sour wine mingled with gall to drink. But when He had tasted [it], He would not drink. 35 Then they crucified Him, and divided His garments, casting lots, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet:

"They divided My garments among them,
And for My clothing they cast lots."

36 Sitting down, they kept watch over Him there. 37 And they put up over His head the accusation written against Him: THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS. 38 Then two robbers were crucified with Him, one on the right and another on the left. 39 And those who passed by blasphemed Him, wagging their heads

40 and saying, "You who destroy the temple and build [it] in three days, save Yourself! If You are the Son of God, come down from the cross." 41 Likewise the chief priests also, mocking with the scribes and elders, said, 42 "He saved others; Himself He cannot save. If He is the King of Israel, let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe Him. 43 "He trusted in God; let Him deliver Him now if He will have Him; for He said, 'I am the Son of God.' " 44 Even the robbers who were crucified with Him reviled Him with the same thing. 45 Now from the sixth hour until the ninth hour there was darkness over all the land.

Glory be to God forever. Amen.

Good Friday

Events:

- The trial of Our Lord Jesus Christ, condemning Him to be crucified.
- The Crucifixion of Our Lord Jesus Christ at the 6th hour.
- Our Lord Jesus Christ's words on the Cross.
- Our Lord Jesus Christ's death on the Cross at the 9th hour.
- The piercing of Our Lord Jesus Christ with a spear, water and Blood flowed from His side. The body of Our Lord was taken down from the Cross at the 11th hour.
- The burial of Our Lord Jesus Christ in a new tomb at the 12th hour.

Rites:

- The 1st, 3rd, 6th, 9th and 11th hours of the Pascha prayers are prayed in the second chorus.
- In the 6th hour, 'Tay-sho-ree' ('This is the pure golden censor') & 'Fay etaf enf' ('He who lifted Himself') are chanted before the Pauline Epistle. The priest prays the segments of the 6th hour from the Agpia, then the 'O-mo-no-ge-nees' hymn is chanted. After the 6th hour is prayed, the Right thief's creed is read.
- In the 9th hour, 'Te-sho-ree' ('This is the golden censor') & 'Fay etaf enf' ('He who lifted Himself') are chanted before the Pauline Epistle. The priest prays the segments of the 9th hour from the Agpia, then continues as usual.
- The prayers of the 12th hour are prayed in the first chorus, when the veil of the sanctuary is opened and the Altar is decorated with white cloths suitable for the Joyous Saturday.
- In the 12th hour, the prophecies are read, Lamentations 3:1-66 and Jonah 1:10-2:7. Psalm 45:6 'Pek-ethronos' ('Your throne O God is forever and ever') is chanted.
- After the 12th hour, once the litanies are prayed, 'Lord have mercy' is recited 100 times on each side (East, North, West, South), ending with 12 times towards the East.
- The procession with the icon of the Cross is performed followed by the hymn of Golgotha and the burial.

Day 55

Saturday, 27 April 2019

Gospel of the Joyous Saturday Liturgy - Matthew 28:1-20

1 Now after the Sabbath, as the first [day] of the week began to dawn, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to see the tomb. 2 And behold, there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat on it. 3 His countenance was like lightning, and his clothing as white as snow. 4 And the guards shook for fear of him, and became like dead [men]. 5 But the angel answered and said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. 6 "He is not here; for He is risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay. 7 "And go quickly and tell His disciples that He is risen from the dead, and indeed He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him. Behold, I have told you." 8 So they went out quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to bring His disciples word. 9 And as they went to tell His disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, "Rejoice!" So they came and held Him by the feet and worshiped Him. 10 Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid. Go [and] tell My brethren to go to Galilee, and there they will see Me." 11 Now while they were going, behold, some of the guard came into the city and reported to the chief priests all the things that had happened. 12 When they had assembled with the elders and consulted together, they gave a large sum of money to the soldiers, 13 saying, "Tell them, 'His disciples came at night and stole Him [away] while we slept.' 14 "And if this comes to the governor's ears, we will appease him and make you secure." 15 So they took the money and did as they were instructed; and this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day. 16 Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, to the mountain which Jesus had appointed for them. 17 When they saw Him, they worshiped Him; but some doubted. 18 And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. 19 "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 "teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, [even] to the end of the age." Amen.

Glory be to God forever. Amen.

**Joyous Saturday
(The Apocalypse)**

Events:

- Our Lord Jesus Christ descended to Hades and restored the souls of the righteous to Paradise.

Rites:

- The hymns are chanted, half in sad tune and half in joyous tune.
- Many praises are read.
- The Book of Revelation is read.
- The Liturgy of Joyous Saturday (The Pauline Epistle, Catholic Epistle and Acts are read but not the Synaxarium).
- The Psalm and Gospel are prayed, half in sad tune and half in joyous tune.
- The Prayer of Reconciliation is not prayed, the Commemoration of the Saints is prayed, and at the end of the Liturgy, Psalm 150 is not chanted.

EASTER SUNDAY

Ekhristos Anestee
Alithos Anestee

Christ is Risen
Indeed He is Risen



Icon from
St Mary & St Mina's Coptic Orthodox Cathedral
Sydney - Australia



The Church

What is the Church?
Why do we need her?

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Website: www.copt.org.au

Email: info@copt.org.au