

Planning Holy Week and *Pascha* at Home



Beloved Members and Friends of Holy Cross,

Christ is in our midst!

This year, for the first time in our history as a parish, we will be celebrating Holy Week and *Pascha* in our homes rather than together as a community at Holy Cross. All the services will be live-streamed, and we will be participating from our homes, our “little churches”, as we are called to observe a physical distance that the current pandemic has forced upon us.

Our identity as Orthodox Christians is deeply connected to the liturgical life and rhythms of the Church. This year, our liturgical rhythm is being challenged. Each of us must dig deeply into the storehouses of our souls and memories to find sustenance, while we experience this new virtual faith experience. When we are in our homes and online, remember that the first witnesses of the Resurrection of Christ were just three women. Remember that Christ appeared only to two travelers on the Road to Emmaus. Remember that Christ first appeared to the disciples when they hid behind locked doors.

During Holy Week, we will also remember the caregivers and workers in our hospitals and nursing homes. Offer prayers for those who have fallen ill and those who have succumbed to the Coronavirus. Pray for those who are searching for treatments and a cure. Pray for those who are ensuring that the basic necessities of life are still available to us. In any way we are able, we must find ways to celebrate and support them.

The festal hymns of our Church are in the present tense. Events of the past are happening “today,” when we celebrate them. In a few days, we will sing “It is the day of Resurrection.” The Resurrection of Christ happens whether we are at church or at home. Our physical separation from church should not diminish the joy of this Great Feast and the gift of eternal life we have been given through Christ’s Crucifixion and Resurrection.



Live-streamed services: <https://www.holycrosspgh.org/church-live-stream>

All of us are at home without the normal distractions of work, school and other social obligations, we should make every effort to view as many of the live-streamed services as possible, beginning with Liturgy on Lazarus Saturday, April 11th at 8:15am Matins/ Divine Liturgy 9:30am and concluding with the Vespers of Love (Agape Service) on Sunday, April 19th at 12noon. ***You can follow all the services of Holy Week using your Holy Week book*** – most of us have personal copies that we've purchased at Holy Cross over the years. Also we are blessed to have the texts all on-line. Please click on each service to open a PDF in a web browser, with which you can follow along at home. The prayers are available in both Greek and English.

Our worship is very physical, whether in Church or at home.

Lazarus Saturday, April 11, 2020

8:30 am [Orthros](#)

9:30 am [Divine Liturgy](#)

5:00 pm [Vespers for Palm Sunday](#)

Palm Sunday, April 12, 2020

8:15 am [Orthros](#)

9:30 am [Divine Liturgy](#)

5:00 pm [Orthros of Great Monday](#) (first Bridegroom Service)

Great and Holy Monday, April 13, 2020

9:00 am [Presanctified Liturgy](#)

6:30 pm [Orthros of Great Tuesday](#) (second Bridegroom service)

Great and Holy Tuesday, April 14, 2020

9:00 am [Presanctified Liturgy](#)

6:30 pm [Orthros of Great Wednesday](#) (third Bridegroom service)

Great and Holy Wednesday, April 15, 2020

9:00 am [Presanctified Liturgy](#)

6:30 pm [Orthros of Great Thursday](#)

(There will not be a Holy Unction service this year. We may reschedule to hold this service at another time, after restrictions are lifted, and the faithful are able to attend.)

Great and Holy Thursday, April 16, 2020

9:00 am [Vesperal Liturgy of St. Basil](#) (the Mystical Supper)

6:30 pm [Orthros of Great Friday](#) (the Twelve Gospels/the Holy Passion)

Great and Holy Friday, April 17, 2020

9:00 am [Royal Hours](#)

3:00 pm [Unnailing Vespers](#) (Η Αποκαθήλωσις)

6:30 pm [Praises/Lamentations at the Tomb](#) (Εγκώμια-Επιτάφιος Θρήνος)

Great and Holy Saturday, April 18, 2020

9:00 am [Vesperal Liturgy of St. Basil](#) (First Resurrection/Πρώτη Ἀνάσταση)
(For Saturday evening services, see the listing below)

Great and Holy Sunday of Pascha, April 19, 2020

On Great Saturday evening: 10:00 pm [Midnight Office/Nocturnes with the Canon of Great Saturday](#).

10:30 pm Chanting of *Come, receive the light* and the proclamation of the Resurrection. This will be followed immediately by the [Orthros](#) and [Divine Liturgy](#) of the Resurrection.

On Sunday at 12:00 noon will be the [Agape Vespers](#)

Practices you can implement to make your home into a little church:

During Holy Week, icons need to be front and center in our homes. An icon of Christ should be on our kitchen table with some flowers around it to remind us that this is Holy Week. A candle or oil lamp should be nearby and kept lit. If you have a hand censer, light it and burn incense, especially before live-streamed services begin. During a live-streamed Liturgy or other services, do at home what you would do in church at Holy Cross. Don't merely watch the Liturgy as you might a football game or a movie – participate by singing along with the chanter, standing up at the Entrance with the Gospel Book and when the Gospel is read, as well as at the Great Entrance when the gifts of bread and wine are carried in procession; standing and saying the Creed and the Lord's Prayer aloud together, kneeling when we pray for the descent of the Holy Spirit. During Holy Communion, try to remain as quiet as possible, and say the Jesus Prayer: "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy upon me a sinner." At the conclusion of the service, there is usually a short sermon. Take advantage of this opportunity to deepen your knowledge of the faith.

We must remain rooted in the Scriptures throughout Holy Week.

Read the Scripture readings for each day of Holy Week, beginning on Lazarus Saturday. If you have a Holy Week book, look through the Scripture readings of each service in advance. If you do not have a Holy Week book, here is a brief list of just a few of the Scripture readings during Holy Week that you could read each day individually, or as a family:

The Saturday of Lazarus: John 11:1-45

Palm Sunday: Philippians 4:4-9; Matthew 21:1-17

The 1st Bridegroom Service (Sunday night): Matthew 21:18-43

The 2nd Bridegroom Service (Monday night): Matthew 22:15-46/23:1-39

The 3rd Bridegroom Service (Tuesday night): John 12:17-50

Great and Holy Wednesday Evening - Luke 22:1-39

Great and Holy Thursday Morning: Matthew 26:1-20/John 13: 3-17/Mt. 26:21-39/Luke 22:43-44/Mt. 26:40-27:2

Great and Holy Thursday Evening: 12 Passion Gospels
John 14-17/ Jn. 18:1-28/Matthew 26:57-75/Jn. 18:28-19:16/Mt.27:3-32/Mark 15:16-32/Mt. 27:33-54/Luke 23:32-49/Jn. 19:25-37/Mk. 15:43-47/Jn. 19:38-42/Mt. 27:62-66

Great and Holy Friday Afternoon: Matthew 27:1-38/Luke 23:39-43/Mt. 27:39-54/John 19:31-37/Mt. 27:55-61

Great and Holy Friday Evening – Matthew 27:62-66
Prophecy of Ezekiel 37:1-14

Great and Holy Saturday Morning: Prophecy of Jonah (the whole book)/
Prophecy of Daniel 3:1-57
Epistle – Romans 6:3-11 / Gospel: Matthew 28:1-20

Pascha: John 20:1-17

Agape Vespers : John 20:19-25

Do we actually know where the Lord Jesus was crucified, buried and rose from the dead? Yes, we do!

Here are several short videos from Drive thru History: the Gospels about the Crucifixion of Jesus, His Resurrection, and Church of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem, the amazing Church that was built over both the hill of Golgotha where He was crucified and the sacred Tomb from which He rose from the dead:



[The Crucifixion of the Lord Jesus](#)

[Do we know where Jesus was crucified?](#)

[The Risen Lord Jesus appears to the women at the Tomb](#)

This year, for the first time in nearly 700 years – since 1349, when the world was ravaged by the Black Death (Bubonic Plague) – the Church of the Holy Sepulcher will be closed to the public for worship during Holy Week and *Pascha*.



Links to several short videos of celebrations of Holy Week and Pascha from around the world:

[Pascha from Nafplion, Greece with Rick Steves](#)

[Orthodox Christians in Ghana, Africa singing *Christ is Risen!*](#)

[A flash mob in Beirut, Lebanon sings *Christ is Risen!* in Arabic and Greek](#)





Here are links to two short children's videos that tell the story of Pascha:

[The Beginners Bible: The Easter Story](#)

[Superbook, Episode 11: He is Risen!](#)

There are many other cartoon Bible stories for small children that can be found online simply by searching with Google.



Activities to bring Holy Week and Pascha into your home:

1. Decorate the front door of your home or other places in and around your house with old palm crosses, flowers, Easter lilies and signs expressing the joy of Pascha.

2. **Hard boil and dye red eggs (red for the blood of Christ)**

<https://www.marthastewart.com/968094/red-easter-eggs-bread>

3. **Learn to make *prosforo* – the Bread of Offering** that we make for each Liturgy for Communion. Although you may not have a seal at home to make the actual Eucharistic bread we use during Liturgy, it could still be made and then eaten as *antidoron* after viewing a live-streamed celebration of the Liturgy on Lazarus Saturday, Palm Sunday, Holy Thursday morning, Holy Saturday morning and Saturday night after Resurrection Services.

[Here](#) is a link to a cute video for children (and adults) about learning how to make *prosforo*.

[Here](#) is a more detailed website.

If you would like further guidance, you may contact Nicholas Diamant at frspa@comcast.net or call him at 412-833-2563.

4. **Learn to make a Pascha sweet bread called *tsoureki* in Greek.**

Here are a couple of places online that might be helpful to you:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9ZGtryOawJA>

<https://www.mygreekdish.com/recipe/tsoureki-recipe-traditional-greek-easter-bread/>



We are given an opportunity this year to bring Holy Week and *Pascha* into our homes – something we should do every year!

May the Crucified and Risen Lord Jesus guide us, guard us, keep us and protect us during this difficult time!

May nothing ever rob us of the joy that comes from knowing that death has been conquered and that ***Christ is Risen!***

With love in the Risen Christ,

Fr. Michael