

*Welcome to St. Olympia Orthodox Church,
a young and, God willing, growing community of worshipers.*

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Fr. Alexy Karlgut, Dean/Administrator, 607-759-1833*

Please join us for prayer and fellowship.

Upcoming Services:

Saturday, April 27

Great Vespers: 5pm

Sunday, April 28

Divine Liturgy: 10am

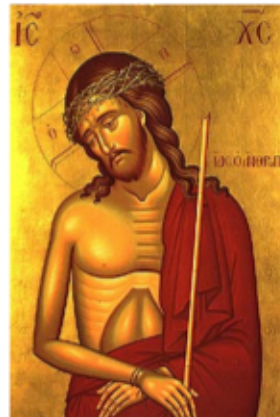
**Coffee and fellowship will
follow the service**

**SEE HOLY WEEK
SCHEDULE!**

*The above services are at
St. Olympia Church
34 North Main Street
Norwood, NY, 13668*

*Mailing Address
St. Olympia Orthodox
Church PO Box 122
Canton, NY 13617*

HOLY WEEK!!! (Monday to Friday)



Bridegroom Services, The Last Supper



**Great and Holy Friday: The Crucifixion
(PASCHA is almost here)**

Holy Week: A Liturgical Explanation for the Days of Holy Week **By the Very Rev. Alexander Schmemmann**

MONDAY, TUESDAY, WEDNESDAY: THE END

These three days, which the Church calls Great and Holy have within the liturgical development of the Holy Week a very definite purpose. They place all its celebrations in the perspective of End Times; they remind us of the eschatological meaning of Pascha. So often Holy Week is considered one of the “beautiful traditions” or “customs,” a self-evident “part” of our calendar. We take it for granted and enjoy it as a cherished annual event which we have “observed” since childhood, we admire the beauty of its services, the pageantry of its rites and, last but not least, we like the fuss about the Paschal table. And then, when all this is done we resume our normal life. But do we understand that when the world rejected its Savior, when “Jesus began to be sorrowful and very heavy... and his soul was exceedingly sorrowful even unto death,” when He died on the Cross, “normal life” came to its end and is no longer possible. For there were “normal” men who shouted “Crucify Him” who spat at Him and nailed Him to the Cross. And they hated and killed Him precisely because He was troubling their normal life. It was indeed a perfectly “normal” world which preferred darkness and death to light and life.... By the death of Jesus the “normal” world, and “normal” life were irrevocably condemned. Or rather they revealed their true and abnormal inability to receive the Light, the terrible power of evil in them. “Now is the Judgment of this world” (John 12:31). The Pascha of Jesus signified its end to “this world” and it has been at its end since then. This end can last for hundreds of centuries, but this does not alter the nature of time in which we live as the “last time.” “The fashion of this world passeth away...” (I Corinthians. 7:31).

Pascha means passover, passage. The feast of Passover was for the Jews the annual commemoration of their whole history as salvation, and of salvation as passage from the slavery of Egypt into freedom, from exile into the promised land. It was also the anticipation of the ultimate passage—into the Kingdom of God. And Christ was the fulfillment of Pascha. He performed the ultimate passage: from death into life, from this “old world” into the new world into the new time of the Kingdom. And he opened the possibility of this passage to us. Living in “this world” we can already be “not of this world,” i.e. be free from slavery to death and sin, partakers of the “world to come.” But for this we must also perform our own passage, we must condemn the old Adam in us, we must put on Christ in the baptismal death and have our true life hidden in God with Christ, in the “world to come....”

And thus Easter is not an annual commemoration, solemn and beautiful, of a past event. It is this Event itself shown, given to us, as always efficient, always revealing our world, our time, our life as being at their end, and announcing the Beginning of the new life.... And the function of the three first days of Holy Week is precisely to challenge us with this ultimate meaning of Pascha and to prepare us to the understanding and acceptance of it.

1. This eschatological (which means ultimate, decisive, final) challenge is revealed, first, in the common troparion of these days:

Troparion—Tone 8

*Behold the Bridegroom comes at midnight,
And blessed is the servant whom He shall find watching,
And again unworthy is the servant whom He shall find heedless.
Beware, therefore, O my soul, do not be weighed down with sleep,
Lest you be given up to death and lest you be shut out of the Kingdom.
But rouse yourself crying: Holy, Holy, Holy, are You, O our God!
Through the Theotokos have mercy on us!*

Midnight is the moment when the old day comes to its end and a new day begins. It is thus the symbol of the time in which we live as Christians. For, on the one hand, the Church is still in this world, sharing in its weaknesses and tragedies. Yet, on the other hand, her true being is not of this world, for she is the Bride of Christ and her mission is to announce and to reveal the coming of the Kingdom and of the new day. Her life is a perpetual watching and expectation, a vigil pointed at the dawn of this new day. But we know how strong is still our attachment to the “old day,” to the world with its passions and sins. We know how deeply we still belong to “this world.” We have seen the light, we know Christ, we have heard about the peace and joy of the new life in Him, and yet the world holds us in its slavery. This weakness, this constant betrayal of Christ, this incapacity to give the totality of our love to the only true object of love are wonderfully expressed in the exapostilarion of these three days:

*“Thy Bridal Chamber I see adorned, O my Savior
And I have no wedding garment that I may enter,
O Giver of life, enlighten the vesture of my soul
And save me.”*

2. The same theme develops further in the Gospel readings of these days. First of all, the entire text of the four Gospels (up to John 13: 31) is read at the Hours (1, 3, 6 and 9). This recapitulation shows that the Cross is the climax of the whole life and ministry of Jesus, the Key to their proper understanding. Everything in the Gospel leads to this ultimate hour of Jesus and everything is to be understood in its light. Then, each service has its special Gospel lesson :

On Monday:

At Matins: Matthew 21: 18-43—the story of the fig tree, the symbol of the world created to bear spiritual fruits and failing in its response to God.

At the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts: Matthew 24: 3-35: the great eschatological discourse of Jesus. The signs and announcement of the End: “Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away....”

*“When the Lord was going to His voluntary Passion,
He said to His Apostles on the way:
Behold, we go up to Jerusalem,
And the Son of Man shall be delivered up
As it is written of Him.
Come, therefore, and let us accompany Him,
With minds purified from the pleasures of this life,
And let us be crucified and die with Him,
That we may live with Him,
And that we may hear Him say to us:
I go now, not to the earthly Jerusalem to suffer,
But unto My Father and your Father
And My God and your God,
And I will gather you up into the heavenly Jerusalem,
Into the Kingdom of Heaven....”*
(Monday Matins)

On Tuesday:

At Matins: Matthew 22: 15-23, 39. Condemnation of Pharisees, i.e. of the blind and hypocritical religion, of those who think they are the leaders of man and the light of the world, but who in fact “shut up the Kingdom of heaven to men.”

At the Presanctified Liturgy: Matthew 24: 36-26, 2. The End again and the parables of the End: the ten wise virgins who had enough oil in their lamps and the ten foolish ones who were not admitted to the bridal banquet; the parable of ten talents “. . . **Therefore be ye also ready, for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of Man cometh.**” And, finally the Last Judgment.

On Great and Holy Wednesday, the hymns of the Bridegroom Service remind us of the sinful woman who poured precious ointment on Christ’s head at Simon the leper’s house (Matthew. 26:7).

The disciples complained about the wasteful extravagance, for the myrrh could have been sold and the money given to the poor. On this same day Judas agreed to betray the Lord for thirty pieces of silver. Because the betrayal took place on Wednesday, Orthodox Christians fast on most Wednesdays during the year.

On the other hand, the Savior declared that the woman’s actions would be remembered wherever the Gospel is preached (Matthew. 26:13), for she had anointed Him in preparation for His burial (Matthew. 26:12).

3. These Gospel lessons are explained and elaborated in the hymnology of these days: the stichiras and the triodia (short canons of three odes each sung at Matins). One warning, one exhortation runs through all of them: the end and the judgment are approaching, let us prepare for them:

*“Behold, O my soul, the Master has conferred on thee a talent
Receive the gift with fear;
Lend to him who gave; distribute to the poor
And acquire for thyself thy Lord as thy Friend;
That when He shall come in glory,
Thou mayest stand on His right hand
And hear His blessed voice:
Enter, my servant, into the joy of thy Lord.”*
(Tuesday Matins)

4. Throughout the whole Lent the two books of the Old Testament read at Vespers were Genesis and Proverbs. With the beginning of Holy Week they are replaced by Exodus and Job. Exodus is the story of Israel's liberation from Egyptian slavery, of their Passover. It prepares us for the understanding of Christ's exodus to His Father, of His fulfillment of the whole history of salvation. Job, the Sufferer, is the Old Testament icon of Christ. This reading announces the great mystery of Christ's sufferings, obedience and sacrifice.

5. The liturgical structure of these three days is still of the Lenten type. It includes, therefore, the prayer of Saint Ephraim the Syrian with prostrations, the augmented reading of the Psalter, the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts and the Lenten liturgical chant. We are still in the time of repentance, for repentance alone makes us partakers of the Pascha of Our Lord, opens to us the doors of the Paschal banquet. And then, on Great and Holy Wednesday, as the last Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts is about to be completed, after the Holy Gifts have been removed from the altar, the priest reads for the last time the Prayer of Saint Ephraim. At this moment, the preparation comes to an end. The Lord summons us now to His Last Supper.

Holy Thursday

From *The Orthodox Faith* - Volume II: Worship
By Protopresbyter Thomas Hopko

The vigil on the eve of Holy Thursday is dedicated exclusively to the Passover Supper which Christ celebrated with his twelve apostles. The main theme of the day is the meal itself at which Christ commanded that the Passover of the New Covenant be eaten in remembrance of Himself, of His body broken and His blood shed for the remission of sins. In addition, Judas' betrayal and Christ's washing of His disciples feet is also central to the liturgical commemoration of the day.

In cathedral churches it is the custom for the bishop to re-enact the foot washing in a special ceremony following the Divine Liturgy. At the vigil of Holy Thursday, the Gospel of Saint Luke about the Lord's Supper is read. At the Divine Liturgy the Gospel is a composite of all the evangelists' accounts of the same event. The hymns and the readings of the day also all refer to the same central mystery.

When Thy glorious disciples were enlightened at the washing of their feet before the supper, then the impious Judas was darkened by the disease of avarice, and to the lawless judges he betrayed Thee, the Righteous Judge. Behold, O lover of money, this man because of avarice hanged himself. Flee from the insatiable desire which dared such things against the Master! O Lord who deals righteously with all, glory to Thee (Troparion of Holy Thursday).

In the regions of the Master, at the Table of Immortality, in the high place, with minds lifted up, come, O ye faithful, let us eat with delight (Ninth Ode of the Canon of Matins).

The Divine Liturgy of Saint Basil is served on Holy Thursday in connection with Vespers. The long gospel of the Last Supper is read following the readings from Exodus, Job, Isaiah and the first letter of the Apostle Paul to the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 11). The following hymn replaces the Cherubic Hymn of the offertory of the liturgy, and serves as well as the Communion and Post-Communion Hymns.

Of Thy mystical supper, O Son of God, accept me today a communicant, for I will not speak of Thy mystery to thine enemies, neither like Judas will I give Thee a kiss, but like the thief will I confess Thee: Remember me, O Lord, in Thy kingdom.

The liturgical celebration of the Lord's Supper on Holy Thursday is not merely the annual remembrance of the institution of the sacrament of Holy Communion. Indeed the very event of the Passover Meal itself was not merely the last-minute action by the Lord to "institute" the central sacrament of the Christian Faith before His passion and death. On the contrary, the entire mission of Christ, and indeed the very purpose for the creation of the world in the first place, is so that God's beloved creature, made in His own divine image and likeness, could be in the most intimate communion with Him for eternity, sitting at table with Him, eating and drinking in His unending kingdom. Thus, Christ the Son of God speaks to His apostles at the supper, and to all men who hear His words and believe in Him and the Father who sent Him:

Fear not, little flock, it is Your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom (Luke 12:32). You are those who have continued with Me in My trials; as My Father appointed a Kingdom for Me, so do I appoint for you that you may eat and drink at My table in My Kingdom . . . (Luke 22:28-31).

In a real sense, therefore, it is true to say that the body broken and the blood spilled spoken of by Christ at His last supper with the disciples was not merely an anticipation and preview of what was yet to come; but that what was yet to come—the cross, the tomb, the resurrection on the third day, the ascension into heaven—came to pass precisely so that men could be blessed by God to be in holy communion with him forever, eating and drinking at the mystical table of His kingdom of which there will be no end.

Thus the “Mystical Supper of the Son of God” which is continually celebrated in the Divine Liturgy of the Christian Church, is the very essence of what life in God’s Kingdom will be for eternity.

Blessed is he who shall eat bread in the Kingdom of God (Luke 14.15).

Blessed are those who are invited to the Marriage Supper of the Lamb (Revelation 19.9).

Holy Friday

Matins of Holy Friday are generally celebrated on Thursday night. The main feature of this service is the reading of twelve selections from the Gospels, all of which are accounts of the passion of Christ. The first of these twelve readings is Jn 13.31–18.1. It is Christ’s long discourse with his apostles that ends with the so-called high priestly prayer. The final gospel tells of the sealing of the tomb and the setting of the watch (Mt 27.62–66).

The twelve Gospel readings of Christ’s passion are placed between the various parts of the service. The hymnology is all related to the sufferings of the Saviour and borrows heavily from the Gospels and the prophetic scriptures and psalms. The Lord’s beatitudes are added to the service after the sixth gospel reading, and there is special emphasis given to the salvation of the thief who acknowledged Christ’s Kingdom.

The Hours of Holy Friday repeat the Gospels of Christ’s passion with the addition at each Hour of readings from Old Testamental prophecies concerning man’s redemption, and from letters of Saint Paul relative to man’s salvation through the sufferings of Christ. The psalms used are also of a special prophetic character, e.g., Ps 2, 5, 22, 109, 139, et al. There is no Divine Liturgy on Good Friday for the same obvious reason that forbids the celebration of the eucharist on the fasting days of lent...

Holy Saturday

The first service belonging to Holy Saturday—called in the Church the Blessed Sabbath—is the Vespers of Good Friday. It is usually celebrated in the mid-afternoon to commemorate the burial of Jesus.

Before the service begins, a “tomb” is erected in the middle of the church building and is decorated with flowers. Also a special icon which is painted on cloth (in Greek, *epitaphios*; in Slavonic, *plascchanitsa*) depicting the dead Saviour is placed on the altar table. In English this icon is often called the winding-sheet.

Vespers begins as usual with hymns about the suffering and death of Christ. After the entrance with the Gospel Book and the singing of Gladsome Light, selections from Exodus, Job, and Isaiah 52 are read. An epistle reading from First Corinthians (1.18–31) is added, and the Gospel is read once more with selections from each of the four accounts of Christ’s crucifixion and burial. The prokeimena and alleluia verses are psalm lines, heard often already in the Good Friday services, prophetic in their meaning:

They divided my garments among them and for my raiment they cast lots (Psalm 22.18).

My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me (Ps 22.1).

Thou hast put me in the depths of the Pit, in the regions dark and deep (Ps 88.6).

After more hymns glorifying the death of Christ, while the choir sings the dismissal song of Saint Simeon, the priest vests fully in his dark-colored robes and incenses the winding-sheet which still lies upon the altar table. Then, after the Our Father, while the people sing the troparion of the day, the priest circles the altar table with the winding-sheet carried above his head and places it into the tomb for veneration by the faithful.

The noble Joseph, when he had taken down Thy most pure body from the Tree, wrapped It in fine linen and anointed It with spices, and placed It in a new tomb (Troparion of Holy Saturday).

The Matins of Holy Saturday are usually celebrated on Friday night. They begin in the normal way with the singing of God is the Lord, the troparion The Noble Joseph, and the following troparia:

When Thou didst descend to death O Life Immortal, Thou didst slay hell with the splendor of Thy Godhead! And when from the depths Thou didst raise the dead, all the powers of heaven cried out: O Giver of Life! Christ our God! Glory to Thee!

The angel standing by the grave cried out to the women: Myrrh is proper for the dead, but Christ has shown himself a stranger to corruption.

In place of the regular psalm reading the entire Psalm 119 is read with a verse praising the dead Saviour chanted between each of its lines. This particular psalm is the verbal icon of Jesus, the righteous man whose life is in the hands of

God and who, therefore, cannot remain dead. The Praises, as the verses are called, glorify God as “the Resurrection and the Life,” and marvel at his humble condescension into death.

There is in the person of Jesus Christ the perfect unification of the perfect love of man toward God and the perfect love of God toward man. It is this divine human love which is contemplated and praised over the tomb of the Savior. As the reading progresses the Praises become shorter, and gradually more concentrated on the final victory of the Lord, thus coming to their proper conclusion:

I long for Thy salvation, O Lord, Thy law is my delight (Ps 119.174).

The mind is affrighted at Thy dread and strange burial.

Let me live, that I may praise Thee, and let Thy ordinances help me (119.175).

The women with spices came early at dawn to anoint Thee.

I have gone astray like a lost sheep, seek Thy servant, for I do not forget Thy commandments (119.176).

By Thy resurrection grant peace to the Church and salvation to Thy people!

After the final glorification of the Trinity, the church building is lighted and the first announcement of the women coming to the tomb resounds through the congregation as the celebrant censes the entire church. Here for the first time comes the clear proclamation of the good news of salvation in Christ’s resurrection.

The canon song of Matins continues to praise Christ’s victory over death by His own death, and uses each of the Old Testament canticles as a prefigurative image of man’s final salvation through Jesus. Here for the first time there emerges the indication that this Sabbath this particular Saturday on which Christ lay dead—is truly the most blessed seventh day that ever existed. This is the day when Christ rests from His work of recreating the world. This is the day when the Word of God “through Whom all things were made” (Jn 1.3) rests as a dead man in the grave, saving the world of His own creation and opening the graves:

This is the most blessed Sabbath on which Christ sleeps, but to rise again on the third day (Kontakion and Oikos).

Again, the canon ends on the final note of the victory of Christ.

Lament not for Me, Mother, beholding Me in the grave, the son whom you have born in seedless conception, for I will arise and be glorified, and will exalt with glory, unceasingly as God, all those who with faith and love glorify you (Ninth Ode of the Canon).

As more verses of praise are sung, the celebrant again vests fully in his somber vestments and, as the great doxology is chanted, he once more censes the tomb of the Savior. Then, while the congregation with lighted candles continually repeats the song of the Thrice Holy, the faithful—led by their pastor carrying the Gospel Book with the winding-sheet of Christ held over his head—go in procession around the outside of the church building. This procession bears witness to the total victory of Christ over the powers of darkness and death. The whole universe is cleansed, redeemed and restored by the entrance of the Life of the World into death.

As the procession returns to the church building, the troparia are sung once again, and the prophecy of Ezekiel about the “dry bones” of Israel is chanted with great solemnity:

“And you shall know that I am the Lord, when I open your graves, O my people. And I will put my spirit within you and you shall live . . .” (Ezekiel 37.1–14).

With the victorious lines of the psalms calling God to arise, to lift up his hands, to scatter his enemies and to let the righteous rejoice; and with the repeated singing of Alleluia, the letter of the Apostle Paul to the Corinthians is read: **“Christ our paschal lamb has been sacrificed”** (1 Corinthians 5.6–8). The Gospel about the sealing of the tomb is read once more, and the service is ended with intercession and benediction.

The Vespers and Matins of the Blessed Sabbath, together with the Divine Liturgy which follows, form a masterpiece of the Orthodox liturgical tradition. These services are not at all a dramatic re-enactment of the historical death and burial of Christ. Neither are they a kind of ritual reproduction of scenes of the Gospel. They are, rather, the deepest spiritual and liturgical penetration into the eternal meaning of the saving events of Christ, viewed and praised already with the full knowledge of their divine significance and power.

The Church does not pretend, as it were, that it does not know what will happen with the crucified Jesus. It does not sorrow and mourn over the Lord as if the Church itself were not the very creation which has been produced from his wounded sides and from the depths of his tomb. All through the services the victory of Christ is contemplated and the resurrection is proclaimed. For it is indeed only in the light of the victorious resurrection that the deepest divine and eternal meaning of the events of Christ’s passion and death can be genuinely grasped, adequately appreciated and properly glorified and praised.

(End of Part 1)

PARISH CURRENT NEEDS!
Holy Mother Olympia, Pray to God for us!

Protecting our stained-glass windows!

Our newly-revealed 12-foot tall 19th century stained-glass windows need protection. Please consider sponsoring a Plexiglas storm window for \$700 installed or donating what you can toward this project in support. We have four stunning windows that we would like to cover before they get vandalized and six additional ones that we'd like to winterize.

Providing area rugs for our sanctuary and altar area!

We are also in need of sponsors for carpets. Now that the moldy, hole-y 1970s carpet has been ripped out and the floor refinished, we need some area rugs. We've ordered four thick oriental-style wool rugs at a tremendous discount. Two 9'6" x 13'6" rugs are already covered and two need "adoption" at \$575. Also a 4'6" x 6'6" oval (\$128), a 2' x 3' rug for before the altar. (\$30) and a 2' x 12' non-slip rug pad (\$42.50).

You may donate directly at saintolympiaorthodoxchurch.org or if you would like more information, please contact Jessica Suchy-Pilalis.

UPCOMING DIOCESAN & PARISH EVENTS

HOLY WEEK SCHEDULE!

Friday, May 3

3:00 PM – Holy Friday Vespers – *Taking Christ's Body Down from the Cross*

7:00 PM – Holy Saturday Matins – *Lamentations*

Saturday, May 4

10:00 AM – Vespers Divine Liturgy – *Descent into Hades*

11:30 PM – Resurrection Matins and Divine Liturgy – Holy Pascha!

Sunday, May 5, Holy Pascha

2:00 PM – Agape Vespers (*Vespers of Love*) – followed by Parish Feast



By raising Lazarus from the dead before Thy passion, Thou didst confirm the universal resurrection, O Christ God! Like the children with the branches of victory, we cry out to Thee, O Vanquisher of Death: Hosanna in the highest! Blessed is he that comes in the name of the Lord!

Troparion of Lazarus Saturday

Sunday Sitting on Thy throne in heaven, and carried on a foal on earth, O Christ God, accept the praise of angels and the songs of children who sing: Blessed is he who comes to recall Adam!

Kontakion of Palm Sunday