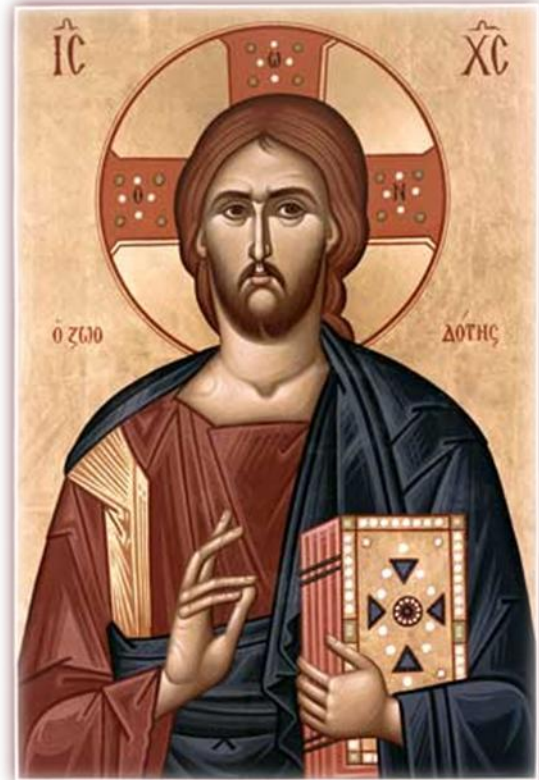


Holy Week – God’s plan for our Salvation.

The awesome Passion of our Lord, God, and Saviour, Jesus Christ

In this coming week, we celebrate the events at the end of our Lord’s life here on Earth. These events finish His purpose for becoming just like us.

Our Lord told His Apostles that He would be put to death, and that He would rise again. Never had anything like this ever happened, so the Apostles didn’t fully understand. It was after the Resurrection and Ascension of our Lord, and the coming down of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost that they were able to understand. Once the Holy Spirit filled their hearts and their minds, they became wise, strong and brave. They were then able to travel throughout the whole world preaching the good news. The word in Greek for Gospel is ‘Evangelion’, which means ‘Good message’ or ‘good news’.

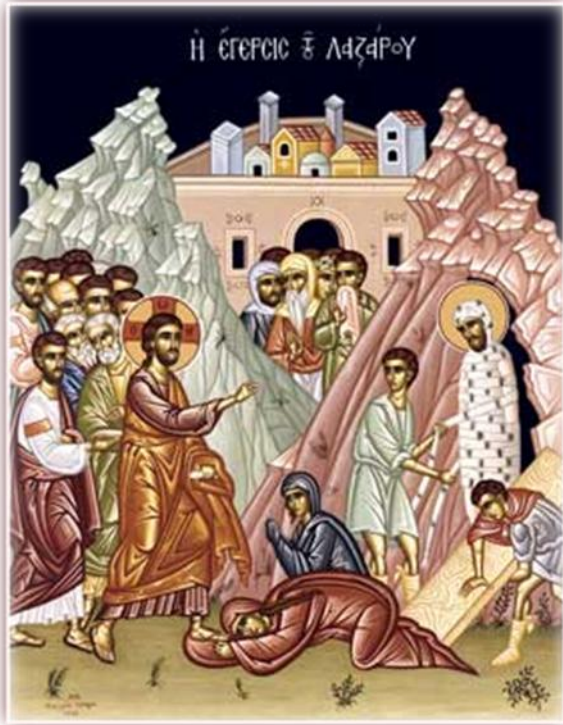


Why does our Lord do this for us? Great Lent is a period of 40 days where the church helps us to understand this question. Just before the start of Great Lent, we heard the story when Adam and Eve were told that they must leave paradise. The doors of Paradise were closed to them. This was a very sad day. They were being punished because they didn’t obey our Lord’s rule or commandment. In Paradise everything was perfect and all of their needs were taken care of. When they left paradise, they had to make their own clothes, they had to learn to grow their own food. They also had a limit on how long they would live. Because they broke the rule, and had to leave Paradise, they would eventually die.

Our Lord loves us so much that He wanted to open the doors of Paradise again for us. To do this, He had an important plan. In Holy Week, we see the plan take action....

The Saturday of Lazarus

There are two very special events that we celebrate before Holy Week starts: The Raising of Lazarus, and the Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday.



The Raising of Lazarus is an incredible event! Lazarus was a close friend of Jesus. Lazarus was very sick and he was dying. His sisters tried to get Jesus to come to their house to heal him. Jesus knew that Lazarus was sick, but Jesus did not go to see Lazarus right away. Why did Jesus wait? God had a plan. It was for God's glory that Lazarus should die!

When Jesus arrived at Lazarus's house, he was not there. Lazarus was dead and was buried. Jesus asked Martha and Mary to bring Him to the place where Lazarus was buried.

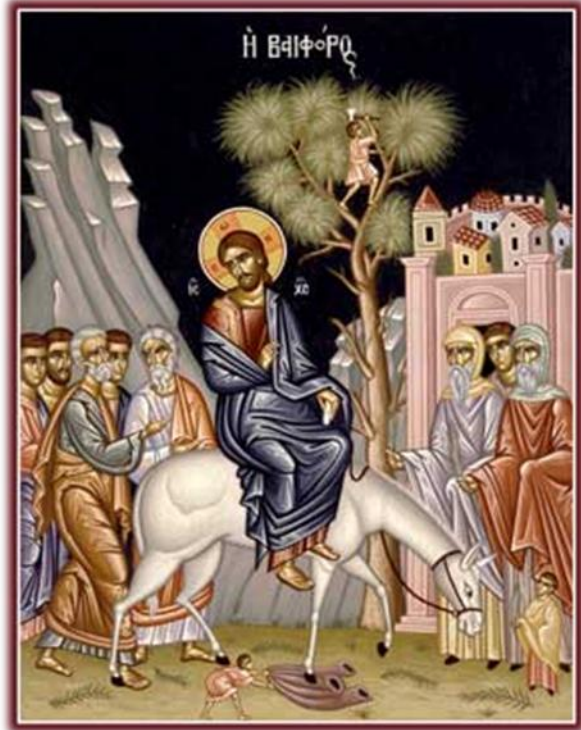
Jesus prayed, then He commanded that tomb be opened. And what happened next? Jesus said in a loud voice, "Lazarus, come forth"! He was ordering Lazarus to come out of the tomb! And everyone that was there gave thanks to God and were amazed.

Never before had someone dead 4 days been raised from the dead back to life!

The Entry of the Lord into Jerusalem

Our Lord entered into the holy city of Jerusalem. He was not riding in a Limo, nor a fancy wagon, nor was He even riding a horse. He came in humility riding upon a young donkey.

When the people heard that Jesus was coming, they went out of the city to see Him. Many of the people had heard about the great miracle with Lazarus, and they want to see who this Jesus was! And the people welcomed Him as a king and they set palm branches on the ground in front of him. Some people even took of their jackets and set them on the ground too. And the people cried out to Jesus “Lord save us, we beg you”!



Sometimes we talk about the Old Testament. This is a book filled with stories of holy people who lived before Jesus. We call these people Prophets. In their writings, they said many things that one day the Messiah, the Christ, the Son of God, would come.

One of these sayings, we call a prophecy, was the King would come to the people, sitting on a young donkey. There is no doubt that when the people saw Jesus coming into the city of Jerusalem, they remembered this saying.

When Jesus entered into Jerusalem, there were many people there that loved Him.

But, there were also people there that hated Him. On the holy day of Palm Sunday, we receive Jesus into our hearts, just as those people long ago welcomed Him into the city.

Great and Holy Week

All of Jesus' teachings give us hope and show us how to deal with bad people or bad things. During Holy week, we will hear how Jesus dealt with those that hated Him, or did bad things to Him.



During Holy Week we hear the last teachings from our Lord. His time is nearly done and His job is almost finished.

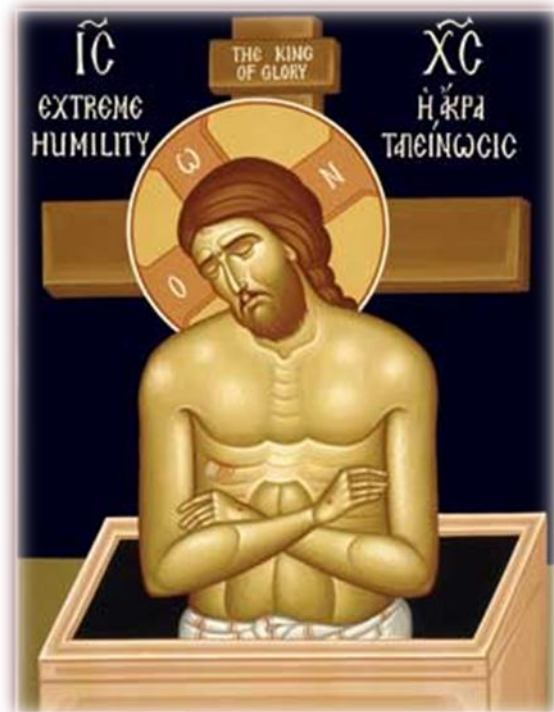
Holy and Great Monday

On the first three days of Holy Week, we have special services dedicated to the Bridegroom. We remember the words of Jesus when He tells us about Heaven. In this service, we have a very special icon of Jesus that we set in the middle of the Church. This icon is called “Extreme Humility”. When we look at the icon, we become very sad, our hearts ache because we begin to see what our Lord suffered for us.

On Monday, we read an interesting story in the Gospel about a fig tree that was cursed, then it dried-out. When a fruit tree gets all dried out, it will never give any fruit.

Jesus is teaching us hear about those people that do not have faith. He is also teaching us about those people that do not believe in Him. Without faith we will dry up too! Instead of fruit, Jesus is saying that we won't be able to do any good.

Another lesson on this day is about the Holy Prophet Joseph. He was a very good man who was betrayed by his brothers when he was a boy. He went through many hard tests, but God had great plans for Joseph. Just like he was a savior to his people, he is a symbol about Jesus' coming and how he will save us.



Holy and Great Tuesday

The lesson on this day is about the Kingdom of Heaven. Jesus tells us a story about ten young girls that will take part in a wedding. Each one of them has a lamp that is filled with oil. A curious thing happens to five of the girls. Their lamps run out of oil. They are forced to go and buy more oil. It is during the time that they are away that the Bridegroom comes and the wedding celebration begins. The doors to the celebration are closed, so that when the five young girls return, they can not enter into the party.



Jesus is using this story to teach us a lesson that we need to be prepared to serve our Lord. The poor situation where the girls ran into trouble is not so much about the oil in the lamps, but it is something much more. If we are not careful, than we too will miss the celebration!

Holy and Great Wednesday

On this day we remember the story of the sinful woman who fell down at our Saviour's feet and washed them with her tears. She poured myrrh, which is an expensive perfume on His feet.



She teaches us a wonderful lesson in how we should feel very badly for our sins and the bad things that we do. And we are glad when we see that our Lord will forgive us when we are truly sorry.

Also on this day we hear that Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve disciples, meets with the Jewish leaders and agrees to betray, or turn-in our Lord for thirty pieces of silver.

It is because of this betrayal that we fast every Wednesday.

Holy and Great Thursday

On this day we remember the Last Supper where our Lord taught us about Holy Communion.

Jesus and His disciples came to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover. This is the holiest of all Jewish holidays. It celebrates the day when God saved the Jewish people from the Egyptians. Part of this celebration was to have a special meal. Jesus and His disciples were sitting at the table to have this meal.



It was at this time that Jesus blessed the bread and said: “Take, eat; this is my body.” He gave thanks and then gave them the cup of wine and said: “Drink ye all of it, for this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for the remission of sins”. These are the exact same words we hear every Sunday

during Divine Liturgy. Our Lord Himself taught us this prayer and taught us how important it is to receive Holy Communion.

On Holy Thursday, we also hear the story of how our Lord washed the Disciples feet. They loved the Lord and could not believe that He was going to wash their feet. Our Lord is teaching them a lesson that they should love one another and server each other.

We hear how Jesus taught and prepared His Disciples that His time to be captured was going to happen very soon and that He will be killed. But He also tells them He will rise again after three days. Jesus is preparing His friends for what will happen. They will be very sad when Jesus is captured and Crucified, but they will be glad after His Resurrection because they will remember that Jesus said all of these things would happen.

Holy and Great Thursday – the prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane

After the Last Supper, our Lord took His Disciples to pray at a quiet place called the Garden of Gethsemane. His Disciples were tired and they lay down to take a nap. Our Lord went away from them to pray. He knew what was about to happen and He was praying for strength to accept this. He shows us through his sadness that He is also a man. God sent an angel to Him to stay with Him and help Him during this hard time.

In His prayer, He accepts the plan that God has made and He says: “Thy will be done.” He takes all of the sins of the world on His shoulders.

He is sad because He knows that He will be arrested, and slapped, and hit, and treated very badly. It is His great love for us that is the reason He is to be put on trial and Crucified.



Judas goes to the Jewish leaders and leads them to the Garden of Gethsemane. Jesus is betrayed by Judas.

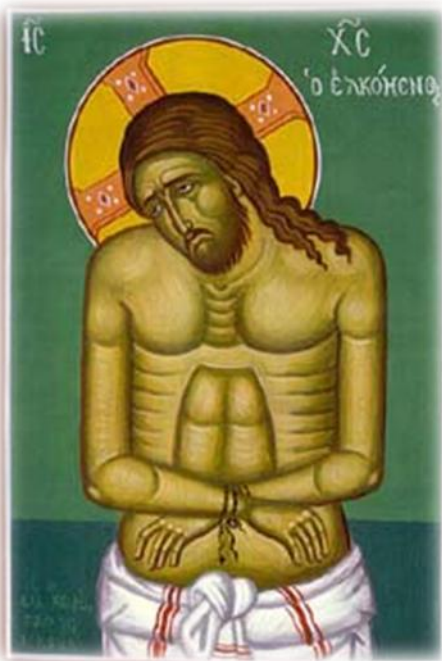
Holy and Great Friday

On this day, the twelve Gospels are read. These are the stories that tell us about Christ's passion- His Crucifixion, death, and burial.

We walk with our Savior after He is taken away from the Garden of Gethsemane by the guards. We hear how the Disciples ran away because they were afraid. We hear of the trial of Jesus where He is accused of doing things He never did. We see how much the Jewish leaders hated Him and said things about Him that were not true.

We hear how Peter denied our Lord three times, bringing him to great sorrow and repentance.

Jesus is treated very badly and is led away to see the Roman ruler, named Pontius Pilate. Pilate wants to let Jesus go, but the Jewish leaders want to get rid of Jesus. They wanted a King that would lead their armies. They weren't ready to accept Jesus' message.



Instead of loving Jesus, they hit Him. Instead proclaiming Him as their Lord, they shouted to crucify Him.

Our Saviour is led out to Golgotha where He will be crucified. He is nailed to the cross and a sign is placed on the top. The sign says: Jesus Christ, King of the Jews.

Holy and Great Friday- Jesus is crucified

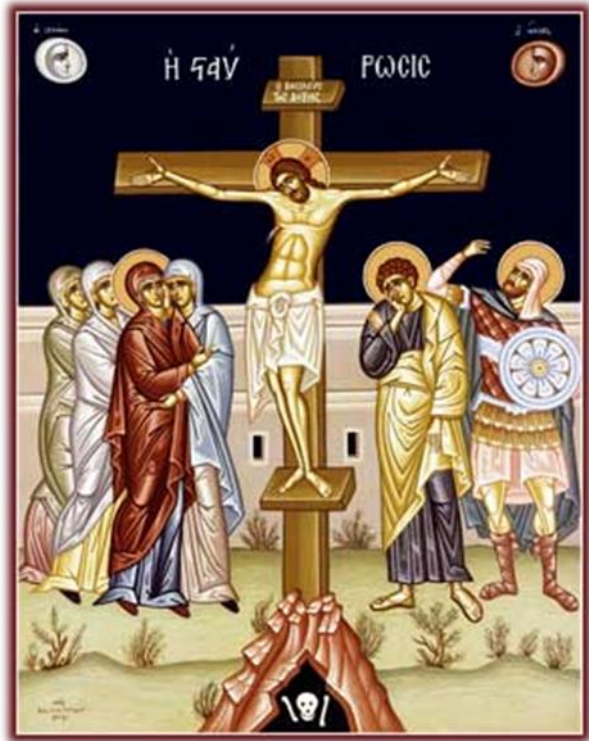
Jesus is nailed to the cross and on His left and right are other crosses.

On the cross on His right is the thief that repents for all wrong that he has done. He asks our Lord to remember him in His kingdom. We hear these words many times in the year as we chant them in the Divine Liturgy.

Our Savior forgives the one thief and promises that he will be in paradise with our Lord.

In this icon of the Crucifixion, we see the Apostle John and our Most Holy Lady, the Theotokos. She is very sad. Jesus shows His love for His mother and tells the Apostle to take care of her. We also see the Roman soldier,

Longine(Longinus). He was standing near the Cross. He saw the events of the crucifixion – the sky becoming dark as night, the earthquake, and our Lord’s humility – he cries out that this is truly the Son of God.



Our Lord completes his work when He gives up His spirit.

Our Lord is taken down from the cross. Saints Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus take His body and wrap Him in a cloth and then place Him in a new tomb.

A large stone is rolled in front of the door of the tomb, and soldiers are ordered to keep guard.

It is because the Lord’s crucifixion took place on Friday that we keep this day as a fasting day throughout the year.

Holy and Great Saturday

In the Old Testament, we read that the Lord created everything in 6 days, and on the Seventh day He rested. This seventh day was called the Sabbath. This is Saturday. The body of Jesus is resting in the tomb, while His soul has gone to Hades, to rescue the souls of the righteous that have been waiting for Him.

A special service on Holy Friday evening is served to remember the Lord's burial. This is the service of the Lamentations, we call it Epitaphios.

The next morning the Small Resurrection service is celebrated. There are many lessons from the Old Testament that are read to prepare us for our Lord's glorious Resurrection. During the service on Holy Saturday morning, the priest will come out from the Altar, through the Royal Doors and will throw flowers into the air. During this time the choir chants "Arise O God, judge the earth...". We now prepare for our Lord's Resurrection.



The Gospels tell us about the Resurrection. This was an event like none other. As the birth of our Lord was announced by the Angels to the Shepherds, so was the Resurrection announced to the Myrrh-bearers, those holy women who came to the tomb early in the morning to anoint our Lord's body. The angel was surrounded by a very bright light and he asked the women why they are looking for one Who is living in the tomb. He told them that Jesus was not there, but has risen as He promised.

The Angel then told the women to go and tell the good news to the Disciples.

The Resurrection service in Church is the most happy of all the services. We will hear many times the words: "Christ is Risen", and we will respond "truly He is risen"! This is our hope and it is for this reason that we celebrate this feast for 40 days.

In Christ's Resurrection all things are made bright and all creation rejoices!

Questions for family discussion

This can be a nice way for families to spend some time together discussing topics relevant to Holy Week. To help open other topics with you children, use icons as you review each question.

The Raising of Lazarus:

Who are the women bowing before Jesus? In the center of the picture, there are shown a group of people covering their faces. Why are they doing this?

Entry into Jerusalem:

Can you find Zaccheus? Why is Christ seated side-ways on the donkey? Did you know in colder countries the faithful use pussy willows instead of palm branches?

The Bridegroom:

Who is the Bridegroom? In the Gospel lesson about the Bridegroom, how many maidens are in the story? What are they carrying and where are they going?

Washing the Disciples' Feet:

How many disciples were present? Who asks Jesus to wash his whole body? What is so special about this event?

Mystical Supper: *Can you find St John resting on the bosom of Christ? How about Judas? He's usually the only one reaching for the food and is shown in profile, which signifies his two-faced betrayal. What Holy Sacrament was given to us from the Last Supper?*

Christ on the Cross:

What were the last words of our Lord? Can you find the blood and the water that spilled out from Christ's side? Who was crucified with Jesus? What was written above His head? In which three languages? Did you know the Roman Soldier is a Saint? What is his name?

Christ being taken down from the Cross:

Can you find St. Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea? They cared for Christ's body and received permission to take Him down from the cross. Who is holding Jesus' head?

The Empty Tomb:

What name is given to the women who were first to go to the tomb of Christ? What did they take with them? What is left behind where Jesus was laid?

The Resurrection:

Can you find Adam and Eve being raised from their tombs? How about those departed who are standing to the sides of Christ - Saint John the Baptist (right) and King David (left). Abel, the son of Adam (left) and the first man to die, is present and depicted wearing a shepherd's robe. Why are there keys and broken locks under the Cross? Who is that person that is tied-up and is under the cross?