

HOLY WEEK SERVICES

FROM SATURDAY OF LAZARUS TO THE AGAPE SERVICE



Holy Week Study Guide

Priest:
Rev. Fr. Dean
Kouldukis

Address:
1804 13th Ave.
Seattle, WA 98122

Telephone:
(206) 323-8557

Email:
parishoffice@
assumptionseattle.org

Web:
assumptionseattle.org

Saturday Vespers:
4:00 pm

Sunday Morning:
Orthros: 8:45 am

Divine Liturgy:
10:00 am

The services of Holy Week are solemn, yet joyful, poetic and filled with meaning. Before each service, psalms from the Old Testament are read. These passages have prophetic messages regarding Jesus Christ and inspiration for the faithful who are struggling to become more Godlike.



SATURDAY OF LAZARUS - DIVINE LITURGY - 10:00 a.m.

PALM SUNDAY - DIVINE LITURGY - 10:00 a.m.

PALM SUNDAY EVENING - NYMPHIOS (BRIDEGROOM) SERVICE - 7:00 p.m.

Matthew 21:18-43. THEME: Beginning of the sufferings of Jesus. The Gospel lesson centers upon the plotting of the priests and elders to trap Jesus into convicting Himself; Jesus, in parables, tells of His coming betrayal and crucifixion. The hymnology refers to the parable of the fig tree, which, in failing to bear fruit, was symbolic of fallen creation which had failed to bear spiritual fruit. Also, the hymnology refers to the story of Joseph in Genesis who, like Jesus, suffered before he was greatly rewarded.

HOLY MONDAY MORNING - PRE-SANCTIFIED DIVINE LITURGY - 10:00 a.m.

The faithful come to the Presanctified Divine Liturgy to be fed spiritually and to receive Holy Communion which was pre-sanctified on Palm Sunday.

HOLY MONDAY EVENING - NYMPHIOS (BRIDEGROOM) SERVICE - 7:00 p.m.

Matthew 22:15-46, 23:1-39. THEME: Watchfulness, preparation. The Gospel tells of the Pharisees trying to trick Jesus; but they are severely and forcefully reprimanded by Jesus, who calls them hypocrites. The hymnology refers to the parable of the Ten Virgins, thus reminding the faithful of the need for preparation and watchfulness.

HOLY TUESDAY MORNING - PRE-SANCTIFIED DIVINE LITURGY - 10:00 a.m.

The faithful come to the Presanctified Divine Liturgy to be fed spiritually and to receive Holy Communion which was pre-sanctified on Palm Sunday.

HOLY TUESDAY EVENING - NYMPHIOS (BRIDEGROOM) SERVICE - 7:00 p.m.

John 2:17-50. THEME: True repentance is exemplified by the sinful woman who anointed Jesus' feet with precious myrrh. The beautiful Hymn of Kassiani is sung, during which the faithful prayerfully resolve to imitate the woman in her true repentance and love for Christ. Jesus, in the reading, foretells His coming trials and his inward turmoil. One hymn sums up the tone of the evening—"The harlot spread out her hair before the Master, Judas spread out his hands to the lawless men; the one to receive forgiveness, the other to receive the silver..."

HOLY WEDNESDAY MORNING - PRE-SANCTIFIED DIVINE LITURGY - 10:00 a.m.

The faithful come to the Presanctified Divine Liturgy to be fed spiritually and to receive Holy Communion which was pre-sanctified on Palm Sunday.

HOLY WEDNESDAY AFTERNOON - HOLY UNCTION - 4:00 p.m. (Family Unction Service).

Epistles: James 5:10-16, Romans 15:1-7, 1 Corinthians 12:27-31, 13:1-8, 2 Corinthians 6:16-7:1, 2 Corinthians 1:8-11, Galatians 5:22-6:2, 1 Thessalonians 5:14-23.

Gospels: Luke 10:25-37, Luke 17:1-10, Matthew 10:1, 5-8, Matthew 8:14-23, Matthew 25:1-13, Matthew 15:21-28, Matthew 9:9-13.

THEME: Spiritual and physical healing. Both Epistle and Gospel lessons deal with healing, forgiveness, prayer, and our need for a Physician for both our physical and spiritual ills. The faithful receive the sacrament of Holy Unction during the service; they are anointed with holy oil for the healing of body and soul.

HOLY WEDNESDAY EVENING - BRIDEGROOM SERVICE WITH UNCTION - 7:00 p.m.

HOLY THURSDAY MORNING - SERVICE OF THE NIPTER (WASHING OF THE FEET) - 9:30 a.m.

The early Church had a ceremony of the Washing of the Feet annually on Great Thursday in imitation of the event at the Last Supper. In time, the service fell into disuse except in certain areas. It is now being recovered by many dioceses throughout the Orthodox world. The service is dramatic and moving. It is conducted with special solemnity at the Patriarchate of Jerusalem and at the Monastery of St. John the Theologian on the island of Patmos.

HOLY THURSDAY MORNING - VESPERS & DIVINE LITURGY OF ST. BASIL THE GREAT - 10:00 a.m.

The faithful participate in the Vespers and Divine Liturgy of St. Basil and they receive Holy Communion. The “reserved sacrament,” the Holy Communion which is kept for emergencies for the whole year, is prepared in this Liturgy. The readings make reference to Jesus’ “Mystical Supper”.

HOLY THURSDAY EVENING - SERVICE OF THE HOLY PASSION OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST – 6:00 p.m.

THEME: Holy Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ and twelve Gospel readings take place which relate the entire story of Jesus’ last moments before his death on the Cross; also the anguish of His Mother, and the tomb given to Him by Joseph of Arimathea. After the fifth Gospel reading, the Procession of the Cross takes place inside the Church while the congregation sings, “Today is hung upon the Tree He Who suspended the land in the midst of waters...” the readings are:

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| 1. St. John 13:31-18:1 | 7. St. Matthew 27:33-54 |
| 2. St. John 18:1-29 | 8. St. Luke 23:32-49 |
| 3. St. Matthew 26:57-75 | 9. St. John 19:25-37 |
| 4. St. John 28:28-19:16 | 10. St. Mark 15:43-47 |
| 5. St. Matthew 27:3-32 | 11. St. John 19:38-42 |
| 6. St. Mark 15:16-32 | 12. St. Matthew 27:62-66 |

HOLY AND GREAT FRIDAY MORNING - THE ROYAL HOURS - 10:00 a.m.

The Great Hours are read. Psalms and Prophecies that foretold Jesus’ suffering. The Kouvouklion (funeral bier) will be decorated with flowers immediately following the service.

HOLY AND GREAT FRIDAY AFTERNOON - SERVICE OF THE APOKATHELOSIS - 3:00 p.m.

1 Corinthians 1:18-31, 2:1-2, Matthew 27:1-38, Luke 23:39-43.

In this service, the priest removes the “iconic body of Christ” from the Cross and carries it into the sanctuary. The *Epitaphion*, on which is embroidered the body of Christ, is carried around the

church in solemn procession, while the people kneel in prayer. It is then set in the *Kouvouklion*, the funeral bier, which is decorated with flowers.

HOLY AND GREAT FRIDAY EVENING - ENGOMIA (LAMENTATIONS) - 6:00 p.m.

Ezekiel 37:1-14, 1 Corinthians 5:6-8, Galatians 3:3-14, Matthew 27:62-66.

THEME: Burial of Christ. The Lamentations, or Engomia (Praises), tell of the death of Christ, but they contain the underlying feeling of joy in the coming Resurrection. The Old Testament reading relates the story of the resurrection of the dry bones. The Epistle speaks of the sacrifice which Jesus made for us, and the Gospel reading focuses on the fact that Pilate sent guards to seal and guard the tomb so that no trickery could take place. During this service, the entire congregation sings the “Lamentations”, or “Engomia”, and follows the Procession of the *Epitaphios* around the Church, singing “Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal, Have mercy upon us.” Finally, the faithful meditate upon Jesus’ last words on the Cross - “Do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves.” They leave the church receiving a carnation from the *Kouvouklion* (funeral bier).

HOLY SATURDAY MORNING - VESPERS & DIVINE LITURGY OF ST. BASIL THE GREAT - 10:00 a.m.

Romans 6:3-11, Matthew 28:1-20.

THEME: The descent of Christ into Hades. The Epistle lesson compares the death and resurrection of Christ to baptism. The Gospel tells of the three Marys who go to the tomb to find that Christ is risen. This is a Vespers Divine Liturgy of St. Basil. After the Epistle reading, the priest goes down the middle aisle of the Church, scattering bay leaves over the faithful as a sign of Christ’s victory over death, and sings, “Arise, O Lord, and judge the earth; For You shall inherit in all the nations.”

HOLY SATURDAY NIGHT - MATINS, RESURRECTION SERVICE AND DIVINE LITURGY - 11:00 p.m.

Prior to midnight, the odes of the Lamentations of the previous night are sung. At midnight, the Orthros of the Resurrection Service begins in complete darkness. The priest brings out the light from the altar, singing, “COME YE AND RECEIVE THE LIGHT FROM THE UNWANING LIGHT...” Everyone joins in as the light is passed from person to person until the Church is ablaze with light. The priest then reads the Gospel lesson which concludes with “He is risen—He is not here!” (Mark 16:1-8). Then the priest leads the people in singing the Resurrection Hymn, “Christ is Risen.” Then the jubilant Matins Service and Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom begins, which is filled with beautiful odes and praises of the Resurrection: it ends with the inspiring sermon of St. John Chrysostom. Red eggs are given to the people, symbolizing new life and the victory of our Lord over death.

SUNDAY - PASCHAL VESPERS SERVICE (AGAPE SERVICE) - 1:00 p.m.

John 20:19-25. The Gospel lesson is read in various languages to illustrate the universality of the Good News of the Resurrection. The Agape Service is a joyous religious celebration, inspired by love and forgiveness; Our Lord’s Resurrection is joyfully sung and proclaimed to all.