

St. Demetrios Greek Orthodox Church
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THE ACOLYTE
SERVICE
HANDBOOK

Thank You to Fr. Christos Mars for creating such a wonderful resource for Acolytes and allowing us to customize it for our use here at St. Demetrios.

Acolyte PLEDGE

HEAVENLY HIGH PRIEST JESUS CHRIST—

I, an Acolyte of the Annunciation Cathedral, solemnly promise to serve You faithfully, obediently, and reverently. Let nothing separate me from You. If I am weak in my faith, strengthen me. Help me to devote myself to Your Holy Gifts. Guide me in the path that leads to Your Kingdom. Teach me to become a better Christian so that I may wear the Altar Boy's robe worthily and in humility. My prayer is to serve You in all my thoughts, words and deeds and to become a better Orthodox Christian so that in all I do I may testify to Your glory.

For blessed is the Holy Trinity, the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit now and forever and unto the ages of ages Amen.

FOR THOSE SERVING IN THE HOLY ALTAR

1. Remember that you serve in the holiest and most sacred part of the Church. Being in the Altar is a rare honor and privilege. You are close to Jesus Christ and His Holy Angels. You are at the Altar Table where the sacrificial offering of the precious Body and Blood of Christ is made.
2. Christ wants those who serve Him in the Altar to be reverent and clean in body and soul. Always be neat and make sure your hair is groomed. Please wear a tie with a dress shirt, dark colored slacks, and black or brown leather shoes are the proper attire.
3. Sunday Orthros begins at 9 a.m. with Divine Liturgy at 10:30 a.m.
All boys must be in the Altar by 10:20 a.m. but **NO LATER THAN** 10:30 A.M.
(For all other services please come 10 minutes early.)
4. When you enter the Altar, put your robe (sticharion), and bring your Orarion to him to have it blessed, and then vest yourself. Move and act with the utmost reverence.
Please do not talk, unless it is absolutely necessary. Avoid all noise.
5. Keep your hands crossed in front of you at. Do not swing your hands at your side while walking.
6. Please Pray along with the Priests and keep your mind on the service. Make the sign of the Cross with the Priest.
7. Make a reverent bow when the Priest censes you. **NEVER** have your back to the Priest when he is about to cense you.
8. Prepare to receive Holy Communion regularly, most especially on Great Feast days and the day upon which the Saint whom you honor is celebrated.
9. Antidoron **NEVER** gets thrown out! It is dedicated to God from the time it is brought to Church. Also, no one eats Antidoron simply because he is hungry.
10. Be sure you understand the symbolic meaning of everything within the Sanctuary. The Priest and Black robes will teach you. Be ready always to listen and to learn when he instructs you on the meaning of the services and of the symbolism.
11. Questions to the Priests should be made before or after the services. Feel free to ask him when in doubt of anything. He will be more than happy to speak with you. But there are parts where you should not interrupt such as, while the Priest is offering up prayer.
12. The Altar must at **ALL TIMES** be clean. Help to keep it spotless and ready for Divine Liturgy.

13. Remember that an Altar Boy joins the company of Angels, as he serves in the Holy of Holies, that is, the Sanctuary, the holiest part of the Church.

14. All Altar Boys must be registered and must participate in the Sunday Church School program.

The washroom should be used **ONLY** when absolutely necessary! Remove your Sticharion and your Orarion before entering. Always keep the washroom clean! The washroom is reserved for the Priests unless it is an emergency.

AN Acolyte PRAYER

O LORD, MAY I ALWAYS REMEMBER HOW...

MY **MOUTH** IS ABOUT TO BE USED TO SING YOUR PRAISES,
KISS YOUR HOLY ICONS, AND ABOVE ALL,
RECEIVE YOUR PRECIOUS BODY AND BLOOD;

MY **NOSE**, TO SMELL YOUR SWEET FRAGRANCES;

MY **EYES**, TO GAZE UPON YOUR HOLY IMAGES;

MY **EARS**, TO HEAR YOUR DIVINE WORDS;

MY **HANDS**, TO TOUCH YOUR HOLY THINGS;

MY **FEET**, TO WALK ON HOLY GROUND.

GIVE ME THE STRENGTH EVERYDAY TO PROPERLY USE MY
MOUTH, NOSE, EYES, EARS, HANDS, FEET AND MY ENTIRE BODY
. . . KEPT AWAY FROM **SIN** AND PROPERLY GIVING
GLORY TO YOU, MY **CREATOR**.

AMEN!!!

The Church Year

The Church Year of our Holy Orthodox Church begins on September 1st and continues through August 31st. It is divided into three periods based upon Easter, and all the seasons refer to it as their starting point. The three periods are: 1. *Triodion*, which lasts for ten weeks before Easter; 2. The *Pentecostarion* or Pentecost Season which begins with Easter and culminates after Pentecost Sunday; and 3. The Season of the Eight Tones (*Octoechos*) for the rest of the year.

The Triodion

The first period, the *Triodion*, derives its name from the fact that during this season the Canons that are sung contain only three odes or stanzas instead of the usual nine. The Sundays of the Triodion are: The Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee, the Sunday of the Prodigal Son, the Sunday of Meat-fare, Cheesefare Sunday, and the Sundays of the Great and Holy Lent: the Sunday of Orthodoxy, the Sunday of St. Gregory Palamas, the Sunday of the veneration of the Holy Cross, the Sunday of St. John of the Ladder, the Sunday of St. Mary of Egypt, and Palm Sunday, finally closing on Holy Saturday morning.

Pentecostarion

The second period is the *Pentecostarion*, the Paschal or Pentecost Season which begins on Easter Sunday and is followed by St. Thomas Sunday, Sunday of the Myrrh Bearing Women, the Sunday of the Paralytic, the Sunday of the Samaritan Woman, the Sunday of the Man Born Blind, the Sunday of the Holy Fathers of the First Ecumenical Council (325), and ends with the Sunday of Pentecost and the Monday of the Holy Trinity. This period focuses around the Resurrection of Christ and the coming of the Holy Spirit upon us.

Eight tones Season (Octoechos)

The third period is the season of the eight tones. The *Octoechos* deals with all the other Sundays of the year. This season begins on All Saints Sunday after Pentecost and ends on the fourth Sunday before Lent, the week before the Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee. The Octoechos is a liturgical book of the Orthodox Church and is also called the Parakletike, and has the hymns for the divine services during that period from Pentecost to the beginning of the Triodion. Its hymns are sung consecutively in the eight tones of Byzantine music which were composed by the hymnographers from the very first days of our Church. Occasionally, an important Feast Day replaces the *Octoechos* on the celebration of that feast on Sunday.

LORD OF THE POWERS BE WITH US. . .

THE TRIODION

Many canons in the Triodion contain only three canticles or odes, hence the name *Triodion*, meaning *Book of the Three Odes*. The period which the book covers extends from the Sunday of the Publican and Pharisee (the tenth before Pascha (Easter): twenty-two days before the beginning of Great Lent), and concludes with Holy and Great Saturday. The period of time between the Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee & Holy and Great Saturday is referred to as the “Triodion”. The first four Sundays of the Triodion (Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee to the Sunday of Cheesefare [Forgiveness Sunday]) are called Pre-Lent. It is a period set aside by the Church for the preparation for Great Lent. Each Sunday’s theme brings us to the understanding of what true

repentance is. From there we move into Great Lent, which consists of Six Sundays. (Sunday of Orthodoxy to Palm Sunday) This is also a time for preparation as we move closer to Holy Week and Christ Saving Passion. We prepare ourselves for Christ death, burial and Resurrection.

Let us pray for ourselves and one another, and our whole life to Christ our God!

The THEMES of each week during the PERIOD OF THE TRIODION ARE:

SUNDAYS OF PRE-LENT

1. SUNDAY OF THE PUBLICAN AND THE PHARISEE—The focus this Sunday is on the Gospel of Luke 18:10-14, in which two men went to the Temple to pray. One was a Pharisee, an externally decent and righteous man of religion, and the other was a publican, a sinful tax-collector who was cheating the people. Though the Pharisee was genuinely righteous under the Law, he boasted before God and was condemned. The publican, although he was truly sinful, begged for mercy, received it, and was justified by God. . There is NO fasting this week, in preparation for our great journey.)
2. SUNDAY OF THE PRODIGAL SON—On this Sunday in the preparation for Great Lent, Orthodox Christians are read Christ's parable about God's loving forgiveness (Luke 15:11-24). They are to see themselves as being in a foreign country far from the Father's house and to make the movement of return to God, where we truly belong. The parable gives assurance that the Father will receive them with joy and gladness in their journey through Great Lent, their journey home.
3. JUDGEMENT SUNDAY/MEATFARE SUNDAY— Judgment Sunday is also called “Meatfare Sunday” because it is the last Sunday, according to the fasting canons, that the faithful eat meat before Easter. During the following week, we do not fast on Wednesday and Friday (except for meat, of course). On this Sunday, we call to mind something that has not even happened yet: the Second Coming of Christ. Our Lord has promised us that He will come again, “to judge the living and the dead, and His Kingdom will have no end” (*from the Nicene Creed*). We call to mind the “criteria” of our entrance into Paradise, as our Lord said in today's Gospel: “I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.”
4. FORGIVENESS SUNDAY/CHEESEFARE SUNDAY— Last day of eating cheese products before Easter. People tend to just make it about *eating an apple...* yet, it's so much more than that. **Forgiveness Sunday** is the day the Church remembers the disobedience and expulsion of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. The disobedience was not following God's command of not eating from the Tree of Knowledge. The sin was not a matter of eating an apple, or whatever fruit it might have been: the sin was going against God's command.

SUNDAYS OF GREAT-LENT

5. SUNDAY OF ORTHODOXY— The 1st Sunday of Lent is dedicated to the times where the Church defeated *iconoclasm*. The heresy of *iconoclasm* was one started by Emperor Leo the Assyrian, who said that icons should not be allowed in Churches. Iconoclasts destroyed all kinds of icons. The 7th Ecumenical Council, held in Nicaea, declared that it is honorable and right to declare our Faith in such a way, depicting our Lord, the Theotokos and the Saints in icons. To commemorate this great day, Churches across the world have a special service that takes place at the end of the Divine Liturgy.
6. 2ND SUNDAY OF LENT—ST. GREGORY PALAMAS—*St. Gregory Palamas* was Archbishop of Thessaloniki in the 14th century, and defended the Faith against Barlaam the Calabrian (who was against monasticism). He taught that divine grace is not created, but the uncreated energies of God are poured out throughout creation; otherwise, humanity could never have authentic communication with God.

7. SUNDAY OF THE HOLY CROSS— In the middle of Great Lent, the Church gives its faithful a sign of victory, one that can bring strength to them in this time of fasting. The **Sunday of the Holy Cross** is one that brings everything into perspective, especially with the Gospel reading, the Lord saying to all His disciples: **"If anyone wishes to come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it; and whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it. For what does it profit a man, to gain the whole world and forfeit his life?"**
8. 4TH SUNDAY OF LENT—ST. JOHN OF THE LADDER—St. John “of the Ladder” was only 16 years old when he left Palestine and went to St. Catherine’s monastery (at Mt. Sinai, Egypt). He lived there for 50 years, where he wrote his famous book, *“The Ladder of Divine Ascent”*. This is a “spiritual ladder”; Christians follow certain rules so that they can get closer to God, and symbolically climb to heaven. He had struggles, like any person does, but he won over those struggles that the Devil put for him. That’s why we celebrate his memory on this Sunday of Lent: St. John is a perfect example of how a person could be faithful all of their life, and be together with God in the Kingdom of Heaven.
9. 5TH SUNDAY OF LENT—ST. MARY OF EGYPT—St. Mary of Egypt was anything *but a Saint* throughout the first part of her life. From a very young age, she was a prostitute. Being from Egypt, she decided that she wanted to see the Holy Land and the Tomb of Christ (also known as the *Church of the Holy Sepulchre*). As she went to enter the Church, a force kept her from entering. She was unable to enter, while so many others did. She realized that God had done this to have her stop her sinning. She promised to God that day she would stop. She repented with a pure heart, and she was allowed to enter. She went for Confession, received Holy Communion, and then went to the desert to live for years in repentance. Years later, she was visited by a Priest-monk, Zosimas (later a Saint in our Church). He gave her Holy Communion, and they discussed her trials and tribulations. Although she suffered much, she was so happy to be with Christ. Later that same day, she fell asleep in the Lord.

BEHOLD, THE BRIDEGROOM COMES. . .

HOLY WEEK

The most Holy of Weeks in the Orthodox Church. Holy Week is referred to as “Great and Holy Week.” Orthros (Matins) services for each day are held on the preceding evening. Thus, the Matins service of Great Monday is sung on Palm Sunday evening, and so on. This permits more of the faithful to attend, and shows that during Holy Week the times are out of joint—Matins ends up being served in the evening, and in some places Vespers is served in the morning.

Fasting during Great and Holy Week is very strict. Dairy products and meat products are strictly forbidden. On most days, no alcoholic beverages are permitted and no oil is used in the cooking. Friday and Saturday are observed as strict fast days, meaning that nothing should be eaten on those days.

Let us pray for ourselves and one another, and our whole life to Christ our God!

The THEMES of each day during the PERIOD OF HOLY WEEK ARE:

1. SATURDAY OF LAZARUS— The Gospel of St. John tells us that a few days before this Saturday, Jesus was informed that his friend, Lazarus, was very ill. Jesus did not rush to Lazarus, but waited for him to pass away. Four days after Lazarus’ death, Jesus appeared at the house of Lazarus. Upon his arrival, Mary and Martha (Lazarus’ sisters) met Him and asked Him why He didn’t save their brother. Even though they said this, they still believed that they would see Lazarus again at the General Resurrection (when all the people who passed away will be brought back to life, and be judged at the Second Coming). After this encounter,

Jesus went to see Lazarus' tomb. It is here we find the shortest verse in the Bible: "Jesus wept." (John 11:35) This shows us that Jesus was a human being: He had emotions, just like everyone else, and He felt the pain of a friend being lost. Yet, Jesus does not cry like those who have no hope; rather, He shows everyone that He is "the Resurrection and the Life," (John 11:25) by commanding Lazarus to come out of the tomb. People initially didn't believe; yet, in moments everyone saw Lazarus come out from the tomb! This miracle shows us that Jesus is also God, having power over the living and the dead. *From this day until Thomas Sunday, we do not perform memorials in Church.*

2. PALM SUNDAY— This day celebrates Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem as King of Israel. Jesus showed that He was the triumphant but humble Messiah prophesied by Zechariah. We too receive palm branches on this day to show that we too accept Jesus as King, and that we are willing to follow Him to the Cross.
3. PALM SUNDAY EVENING— This is actually the Orthros Service for Holy Monday. The service helps us understand Christ's passage from death to life—and how each of us can also become free from sin and death. We commemorate: **Christ the Bridegroom**: we sing the hymn "Behold the Bridegroom comes..." warning us to be prepared for Christ's coming. **The Blessed Joseph**: Joseph was sold into slavery by his brothers but later became a powerful ruler. In the same way, Christ was rejected, betrayed and crowned with glory in God's kingdom. **The Barren Fig Tree**: Christ cursed and withered this tree because it bore no fruit. The tree is like those who have heard God's word but fail to bear fruit by not obeying it.
4. HOLY MONDAY— This is actually the Orthros Service for Holy Tuesday. This service urges us to be spiritually prepared to receive Christ. We should take time to reflect on **The parable of the Ten Virgins**: The maidens who filled their lamps with oil were prepared to receive the bridegroom. Those with empty lamps were shut out of the marriage feast. So each of us should light our lives with faith and be ready to receive Christ.
5. HOLY TUESDAY— This is actually the Orthros Service for Holy Wednesday. This service asks us to repent for our sins and forgive others. **Hymn of Kassiane**: We remember the sinful woman who anointed Christ in anticipation of His death. Her repentance and love of Christ is the theme of the Hymn of Kassiane chanted this evening. We, too, may be forgiven if we confess our sins and obey God's will.
6. HOLY WEDNESDAY— The Sacrament of Holy Oil or Unction is celebrated on this day when we confess our sins and seek to be reconciled with God. The priest anoints us with holy oil that we may be healed physically and spiritually. Holy Wednesday is also the Orthros Service for Holy Thursday. It celebrates the Last (Mystical) Supper Jesus ate with his disciples. The service on this day recalls: **The Washing of the Disciples' Feet**: Jesus washing of His disciples feet set an example of humility and love for the earliest members of the church. **The Last Supper**: Jesus offered Himself as the true food for all of us at the Last (Mystical) Supper. The bread and wine of this meal become the Body and Blood that gives us eternal life. **The Betrayal**: Jesus announced that a traitor (Judas Iscariot) was among the Twelve. He pointed out the betrayer by handing him part of the meal. **Christ's Vigil in the Garden**: Before he was arrested, Jesus prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane and endured the agony of His impending death.
7. HOLY THURSDAY—In the morning a Vespers Liturgy is celebrated. The Amnos or Lamb which is consecrated at this Liturgy is used throughout the rest of the year as the reserve sacrament for Holy Communion for the sick and for those who cannot come to Church. We celebrate this day the Last (Mystical) Supper and we to become partakers of Christ's Body and Blood. In the Evening we commemorate the Passion of Christ. Our Lord went to the Cross and died to take away our sins. The power of death and the reality of evil rule the world on this dreadful day. Yet, Jesus Christ's death marks the beginning of His and our victory over death's power. **The Twelve Passion Gospel Readings**: These

narratives from the four Gospels relate the events of Jesus' Holy Passion, and His last instructions to the disciples.

8. HOLY FRIDAY—**The Hours**: Friday Morning services retell the story of Christ's passion with the addition of prophecies, psalms and hymns. These services, or Royal Hours helps us keep vigil at the side of the crucified Christ, and relate Jesus' suffering to our won redemption. The **Apokathilosis**: Friday afternoon service of Vespers marks the beginning of Holy Saturday. The priest takes the body of Christ down from the Cross and wraps it in a white cloth and places it on the Altar as a sign of His burial by Joseph of Arimathea. Later a cloth icon depicting Christ's sacred Body, called the Epitaphios is carried in procession and placed in a flowered bier that represents Christ's tomb. This is called the Kouvouklion. **The Lamentations**: On Holy Friday evening, the Orthros of Holy Saturday is sung. We lament Jesus' underserved death for our salvation. With both sorrow and joy we sing the Lamentations (Praises) to Him who is symbolically buried, yet who we already know is the risen Lord and Giver of Life. At this service the Epitaphios is taken in a candlelight procession around the Church.
9. HOLY SATURDAY—Saturday Morning we celebrate the Vespers service and the Divine Liturgy of St. Basil the Great. Today's Liturgy anticipates the resurrection. It includes readings from the Old Testament and prophecies. This is the Blessed Sabbath, a day of strict fasting, but a day of hope and waiting. We know that because Christ died, death is no longer the end of life. Christ descended into hell that death itself might be destroyed. Anticipating Christ's victory over the power of death we sing: "Arise, O God, judge the earth. For to You belong all the nations!"
10. MIDNIGHT—**HOLY PASCHA, EASTER SUNDAY**: On Saturday at midnight, Easter Orthros and Divine Liturgy are celebrated. Today we celebrate our Lord's Glorious Resurrection. At midnight in a darkened Church, the faithful receive the resurrection light from the priest. The congregation hears the good news of Christ's triumph from the Gospel. The joyous hymn of Christ's resurrection is triumphantly chanted—"Christ is Risen." The Paschal Liturgy and sermon of St. John Chrysostom invite us to take part in the feast of the resurrection and to receive Holy Communion.
11. EASTER SUNDAY—**Agape Service**: In the afternoon we gather to celebrate the "Agape" a paschal Vespers service when we embrace and forgive our fellow Christians, sharing with others Christ's gift of new life. We also hear the reading of the Gospel in many languages symbolizing the spreading of the Word throughout the nations

LET THE "EASTER LIGHT" BURN BRIGHT. . .

THE PENTECOSTARION

The period of 50 days between Pascha & Pentecost is referred to as the "Pentecostarion". The period of forty days between Pascha Sunday and the day of the Ascension is known as the period of Pascha (or Easter). It is a period set aside by the Church for the specific celebration of Christ's glorious resurrection. It is a celebration of "rebirth". . . .The rebirth of God's creation which surrounds us, and the rebirth of the spirit within each and every one of us! This period is not merely a ritualistic celebration but a celebration which can be seen, felt, heard and talked about. It is a very **REAL** celebration which **CAN** make our entire being jump with **JOY**. It is a celebration which offers us **HOPE**. It is a celebration which offers us the **TRUE FREEDOM** found only in Jesus Christ!

Let us join hands and, together as one, shout out "Christ is Risen" and: "Truly He is Risen".

The THEMES of each week during the PERIOD OF THE PENTECOSTARION ARE:

2. SUNDAY OF ST. THOMAS—The Church brings to our mind the unbelief of Thomas followed by his belief after seeing the scars of Christ. (The first week is called the New Week, Renewal Week, or **BRIGHT** Week. It is a week of **REBIRTH**. There is **NO** fasting this week.)
10. SUNDAY OF THE MYRRH-BEARING WOMEN—Who came to anoint Jesus' body, but found an **EMPTY** tomb. We also commemorate Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus.
3. SUNDAY OF THE PARALYTIC—The healing of the paralytic who was afflicted for many years. This event bears witness to Christ's authority over the human body: He who can overcome death in His own body has power over all human flesh.
4. SUNDAY OF THE SAMARITAN WOMAN—Christ talks about the water of eternal life which will never make us thirst again. The woman here is St. Photini.
5. SUNDAY OF THE BLIND MAN—The theme of **LIGHT!** Commemoration of the healing of the blind man which leads us to the reality of the healing of our own spiritual blindness.
6. ASCENSION THURSDAY—The departure of the **PHYSICAL LORD**. The feast of Pascha is over the day before which is referred to as the "**APODOSIS**" or Leave-taking of Easter.

We now look toward the feast of Pentecost (50 days after Pascha).

7. SUNDAY OF THE HOLY FATHERS—Of the 1st Ecumenical Council. We pay homage to the collective triumph of the Church over false doctrine.
8. SUNDAY OF PENTECOST—The descent of the Holy Spirit upon the 12 disciples, filling them with power, strength, wisdom and courage to spread the **GOOD NEWS** of Jesus Christ to the entire world. Pentecost is the celebration of the birth of the Christian Church!!!
9. SUNDAY OF ALL SAINTS—The period of the Pentecostarion is now complete with today's commemoration of "All Saints."

Explanation of Vestments

Text modified from www.goarch.org

As you may already know, there are three major orders of clergy in our Orthodox Church: the Deacon, the Priest, and the Bishop. All three have vestments that are common to them all. With each elevation, from Deacon to Priest and from Priest to Bishop, there are some additions that occur in the vestiture.

Clergy usually vest in what is called the Sacristy, the room where the vestments are kept. Many times, the clergy vest in the Altar. As they put on each vestment particular to their position, they recite certain prayers as appropriate for each item.

The Sticharion or Tunic (Deacon, Priest, Bishop)

This is the basic vestment of the clergy and must be worn for the celebration of the Divine Liturgy and baptism. This is usually a long, straight robe with wide sleeves and is called "a robe of salvation and a tunic of happiness." It symbolizes a pure and peaceful conscience and spiritual joy.

The Orarion or Sash (Deacon only)

This is a wide and long band of material that is the distinctive sign of the Deacon. It falls over the left shoulder and winds around, about waist height and over the left shoulder again. As the Deacon prays, he holds the front part of it up while the back part just hangs. The *Orarion* symbolizes the wings of angels.

The Epimanika (Deacon, Priest, Bishop)

These are two cuffs, one for the right hand and one for the left which are worn by the Deacon, by the Priest and by the Bishop. Thus, they are common to all the clergy. They symbolize the tying of Christ's hands and wrist at the time he was flogged, and also serve to remind us that all things that we do with our hands, we should do for the glory of God. They also have a practical purpose; to hold the wide sleeves of the *Sticharion* in place.

The Epitrachelion or Stole (Priest, Bishop)

This is the distinctive sign of the Priesthood and is placed over the head on the shoulders and hangs down in front. It symbolizes the grace of the priesthood that the priest receives on the day of his ordination, thus it is worn by Priests and Bishops. In effect it is a development of the *Orarion*, actually being an *Orarion* doubled with both ends hanging in front and reaching the full length of the *Sticharion*.

The Zone or Zoni (Priest, Bishop)

This is a ceremonial belt or sash that today fastens at the back but in times past fastened in the front, much like a common belt. The *Zoni* is worn by the Priest and the Bishop. It symbolizes the power of the grace of the Priesthood and has the practical function of holding the *Epitrachelion* or stole in place against the *Sticharion* or tunic.

The Epigonateon (Priest, Bishop)

The square or diamond shaped *Epigonateon* is suspended, hanging over the right knee. It is worn by Priests who have received the privilege to wear it and by Bishops too. It symbolizes the sword of the Holy Spirit and the power of the heavenly powers, the angels which may be embroidered on some of them. It denotes that the Priest wearing it has a title of distinction given to him by the Church.

The Phelonion or Chasuble (Priest only)

Resembling a cape, the *Phelonion* rests on the shoulders of the Priest and is put on through a head opening. It is about arms length in the front and reaches the edge of the tunic or *Sticharion* in the back. It sort of looks like a bell. On the back is usually an embroidered Cross or icon symbolizing the seamless robe of Christ, it stands for righteousness. With the *Phelonion*, a Priest's liturgical attire is completed.

The Cross (Priest, Bishop)

A Priest is allowed to wear an ornately decorated Cross, if he has received the title and distinction from the Church.

The Sakkos (Bishop only)

The *Sakkos* is a richly embroidered liturgical vestment worn by the Bishop. It is one of the principal vestments worn by a Bishop and replaces the *Phelonion* of the Priest yet carries the same meaning: the seamless robe of Christ.

The Omophorion or Palium (Bishop only)

This is one of the articles worn by the bishop that is symbolic of the wayward lamb carried on the shoulders of the Good Shepherd. It falls over the shoulders and hangs in front and the back. There is a shorter one that hangs only in front and is worn after the reading of the Gospel.

The Mitre (Bishop only)

A *Mitre* is the Bishop's ceremonial crown and is worn only with the complete liturgical vestments. It denotes his apostolic sovereignty.

The Pectoral Cross and the Engolpion (Bishop only)

The *Pectoral Cross* and the *Engolpion* are worn by the Bishop during the Divine Liturgy. The cross denotes the self-denial of the Shepherd of the flock. The *Engolpion* is the distinctive sign of the office of the bishop and is usually oval in shape and suspended from a chain.

The Pateritsa or Pastoral Staff (Bishop only)

This staff, made of a precious metal and having at the top a cross with serpents turned inward towards it, denotes the power of God's Holy Spirit and especially the cross as an instrument of support for all the faithful. It is pastoral in nature and is there for all the people to see and to know that the Cross can lead them, chastise the disorderly, and gather the dispersed. It reminds us of Moses who held up the Cross in the wilderness as the snakes came to bite the people. As long as they looked at the cross, they suffered no harm. The serpents on top, turn inwardly toward the Cross as reminders of the Lord's saying: "Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves; so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves."

The Kalimafkion (Deacon, Priest, Bishop)

The *Kalimafkion* is the black cylindrical head covering or hat worn by the Deacon, Priest or Bishop. It is tall and has a flat top. If it is covered with a black veil, called an *Epanokalimafkion*, then the *Kalimafkion* with the *Epanokalimafkion* is worn only by the Bishop or Archimandrite Priests.

THE SACRED VESTMENTS OF THE ORTHODOX CLERGY

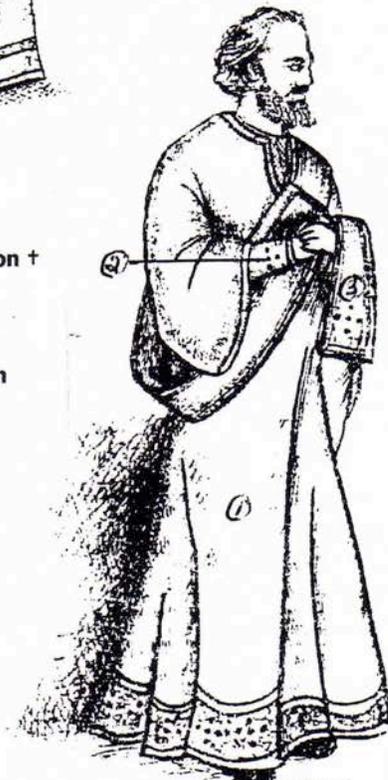
The pictures below portray a Bishop, a Priest, and a Deacon, each in his Liturgical Vestments



- 1-----Sticharion
- 2-----Epitrachelion †
- 3-----Epimanikia
- 4-----Epigonation
- 5-----Saccos
- 6-----Omophorion †
- 7-----Mitre
- 8-----Pectoral Cross
- 9-----Egolpion
- 10-----Ravdos



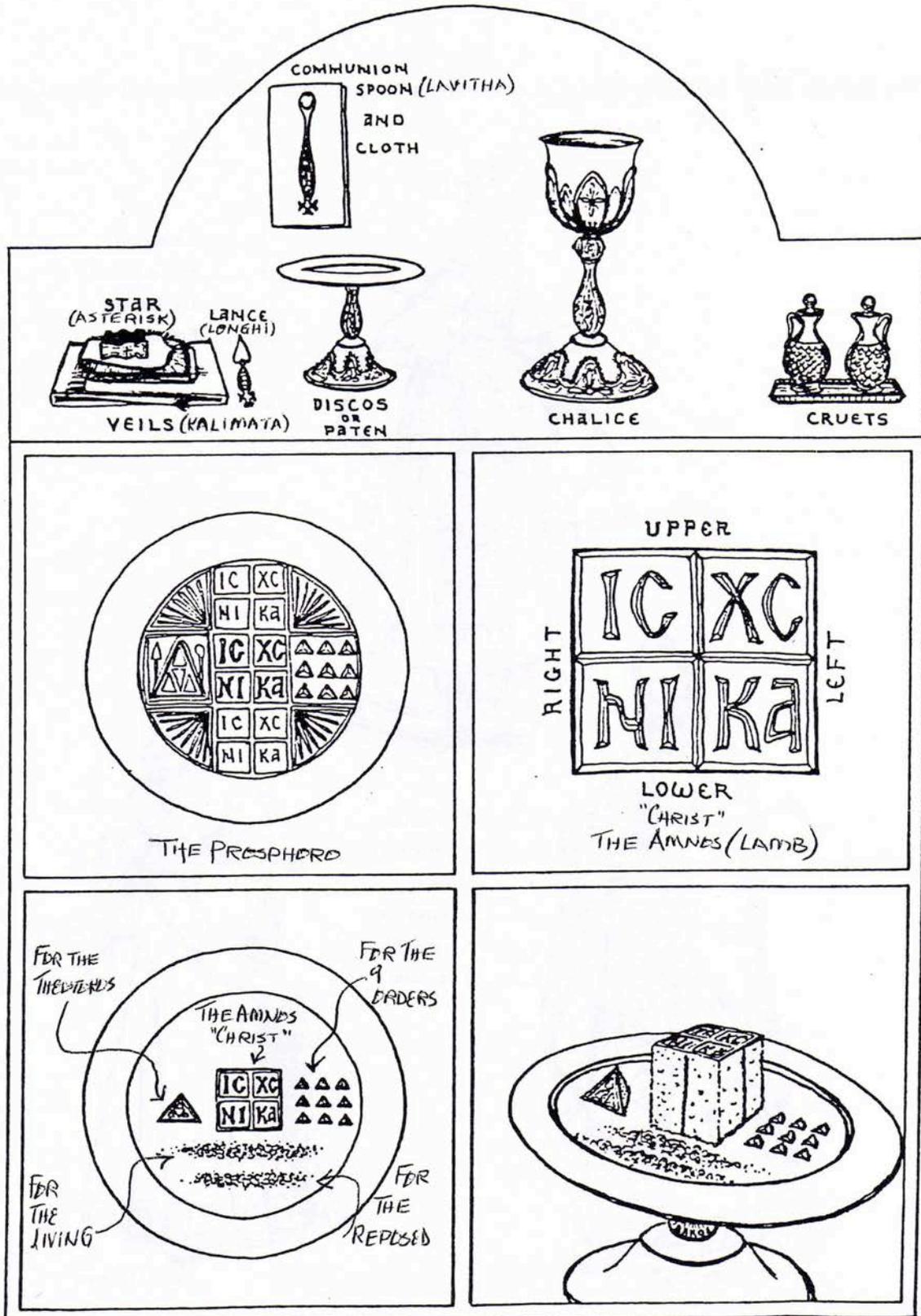
- 1-----Sticharion
- 2-----Epitrachelion †
- 3-----Zoni
- 4-----Epimanikia
- 5-----Epigonation
- 6-----Phelonion



- 1-----Sticharion
- 2-----Epimanikia
- 3-----Orarion †

DR. Nick Caputo

THE PROSKOMIDE



Explanation of the Altar Boy Vestments

Sticharion or Robe

The long robe or *Sticharion* that is similar to that of the Deacon is a reminder of the role the Altar Boy has in the service in the Altar. It symbolizes the cleanliness of mind and heart that the server brings each time he enters the altar.

Orarion or Sash

The *Orarion* or sash is also similar to that of the Deacon but is worn differently. It is shaped in a cross at the back with two parts hanging down the front. Sometimes the *Orarion* could be of a different design with one part hanging in back and a similar one in the front with a wide opening for the head. In both instances it denotes the calling of the Altar Boy to be a server much as the Angels of God serve Him attentively and willingly. It is sometimes the custom or tradition to give a small cross to the boy who has been tonsured a reader and an Altar Boy. If you received one, you are to wear it each time you are to serve in the Altar.

Explanation of the Sacred Vessels

Every Altar boy has seen the Priest vest himself and arrange the sacred vessels for the Divine Liturgy and other services. The two most important of these is the **Chalice** and the **Paten**. The Chalice will contain the Sacred Blood of Christ. It is frequently made of gold or gold-plated silver, at least inside the bowl of the cup. The Paten is usually a piece that matches the Chalice and is the small dish, usually one small stem so that it can be held easily. During the Service of Preparation or *Proskomide*, the bread that will become the Body of Christ is placed there with the appropriate prayers along with a piece for the Virgin Mary, the Angels and Saints, pieces for the living and for those who have departed this life. The Paten symbolizes, according to some, the cave where Christ was born and the manger where Christ was laid.

The **Spear** and the **Spoon** are also found alongside of the Chalice and the Paten for they are used during the services. The Spear is used to cut the *Prosforon* during the Service of Preparation. It denotes the Spear that the soldiers used when they pierced Christ in the side out of which came blood and water. The Spoon is used for Holy Communion to the faithful.

The **Asterisk or Star** is a ceremonial instrument consisting of two gold plated metal strips held together in the middle and bent at a right angle and set upon the Paten, and is covered with the appropriate ceremonial cloth cover. Along with serving the practical purpose of keeping the cloth cover from touching the bread to be consecrated into the Body of Christ, it symbolizes the star that led the Magi to Bethlehem and stood over the manger where Christ lay as a new born child.

The **Cloth Coverings** or **Kalimata** are the veils cut in the shape of a cross and are used to cover and protect the chalice and the Paten. There is a larger one which is used to cover both of these during the Divine Liturgy and is worn on the shoulders of the Priest or the Deacon during the Great Entrance. This cloth is called the **Aer**.

The **Red Communion Cloth** is a square cloth used as the Priest administers Holy Communion to the faithful and it covers the Chalice following the giving of Holy Communion. It should be in place on the Altar Table prior to the Divine Liturgy along with the Spoon that is used for Holy Communion.

All of the above are usually in place prior to the Divine Liturgy on the **Prothesis** or **Preparation Table**. Here is where the solemn preparation of the Elements takes place. It is usually on the left side of the Altar and it can be either a separate small table or piece of furniture or built into the wall. It symbolizes the Manger of Christ, and is decorated with an ornate table cloth, an icon of the birth of Christ or that of the Extreme Humility.

Close by the Preparation Table is found the **Censer** on which incense is placed on a burning charcoal offering a sweet smelling smoke. It symbolizes the prayers that are offered and rise to heaven. The Censer has four chains which denote the four evangelists and twelve bells which denote the gospel message of the twelve Disciples of Christ.

Also found on the Preparation Table are the **Cruets**; one holding wine and the other water. These are to be kept full at all times and are used in the Preparation Service.

The Altar Bread (Prosforon) and the Altar Boy

The Altar Bread that is used for the Divine Liturgy is a round loaf of bread and is usually brought to the Preparation Table to be cut and used for the Service. Along with it, there are names to be remembered and prayed for at the proper time. When you unwrap the bread, make sure you do not misplace the names, but take them and place them on the right side of the Preparation Table.

If you are instructed to cut the remaining bread for distribution to the faithful after the Divine Liturgy, make sure that you cut them all the same size, cutting them neatly and cleaning up after you have finished. Do not place the crumbs in the bowl with the bread. Put them aside and they can be disposed of properly. You may want to cover the bread to keep it safe and have it ready to take to the Priest at the appropriate time in the Divine Liturgy.

At the end of the service, you will be called by the Priest to bring the *Antidoron*, the bread that has been cut for distribution to the faithful. Make sure you stand directly in front of the Priest and close enough to him so that he does not get off balance as he is reaching and taking the amount needed for distribution each time.

The Altar Boy and the Censer

The censer is the vessel in which incense is placed on a burning piece of charcoal as a sacrifice of the faithful and the offering of prayer to God. Care should be taken:

*In lighting of the charcoal, care must be shown since most of the charcoal we use in our Church services is quick lighting. When you light it, it sparks until the whole of the top is lit. So when you take it in the tongs hold it to the tip of the flame and make sure that the sparks from it do not fall on anything that will catch fire. Make sure that any sparks that have fallen are extinguished.

*Place the charcoal in the censer.

*Ask your Priest the amount of incense he prefers.

*Whenever you go in procession make sure you have some incense along with you to add as needed.

***MOST IMPORTANTLY,
NEVER GIVE THE CENSER TO THE PRIEST**

**Services
With a Hierarch
Presiding**

Great Vespers with a Hierarch Presiding

All Altar Boys are to be in the Altar no later than 10 min before service begins

1. 2 Altar Boys or seminarians are to be in the Narthex to wait for the Hierarch and receive his bags. When the Hierarch arrives, they will bring his things to the Altar.
2. The procession will involve all the Altar Boys with candles, Exepteria, and Crosses who will lead the Priests down the middle isle and they are to face one another. When the Priests begin to make their way back towards the Altar, the Altar Boys will lead them back up to the Solea, where they will form a wide "V" leaving enough room for all the Priests.
3. After the Priests have entered the Altar, the Altar Boys are to come 2 by 2 and bow in front of the Altar, then to the Hierarch, then they will re-enter the Altar.
4. During the Great Litany have the censor and Altar Boys ready to lead the Priest down middle isle.
5. The Small Entrance will take place with the censor, and **ALL** the Altar Boys.
6. **IF THERE IS ARTOCLASIA THEN:** You will need to move the Artoclasia table to the middle of the Solea at the "Kataxivwson, Kuvrie. . ." (Grant, O Lord...). There may be a procession that will be **1** time around. Ask Father if there are any questions.
7. At the end of the Vespers Service, you will need Altar Boys to hold the Artoclasia, if there is any, and you will need someone to help the Hierarch with his vestments, and taking them back to the car.

The Divine Liturgy with a Hierarch Presiding

When there is a Hierarchical Divine Liturgy, it is imperative that you arrive no later than 15 minutes prior to the start of the liturgy. For example, if the liturgy is scheduled to begin at 9:30AM you should be in your robes (sticharion) and have your belts (orarion) blessed no later than 9:15 AM.

When a Hierarch is celebrating the Divine Liturgy, know that it is the same Divine Liturgy that is celebrated each Sunday. Therefore, all the information and instructions that are in your Liturgical Book apply to the Hierarchical Service with some exceptions.

Please note the following exceptions:

Three older boys will be assigned added responsibilities if the Hierarch does not have a Deacon with him or if there are no seminarians to assist the Hierarch.

Their responsibilities will be as follows:

- A. The 1st server should be responsible for the *Trikiro*, which is the Hierarch's candle holder with three candles.
- B. The 2nd server should be responsible for the *Dikiro*, which is the Hierarch's candle holder with two candles.
- C. The 3rd server should be responsible for the Hierarch's pastoral staff.

These three servers are to be alert and attentive to what the directions are to be from the Hierarch or the Priests. If there is a Deacon, it may be that only two Altar boys are needed for these responsibilities. Always be attentive to the Clergy for last minute instructions.

Here are some instances where you need to be alert:

- A. In some instances, when the Hierarch enters the Church, the Altar Boys are to be leading the procession into the church and they go and stand in their usual place in front of the Royal Doors. Your Group Leader will advise you if this is to take place. *(Refer to Vespers with a Hierarch Sheet)*
- B. When the Hierarch is standing at the throne, and is preparing to begin the prayers for the *Kairon* (the service of Preparation for the clergy), the *Dikiro-Trikiro* holders are on either side of him at the throne: the *Trikiro* is always to the right of the Hierarch and the *Dikiro* opposite, no matter where the Hierarch is standing, but especially at the throne.
- C. When the Hierarch moves to each Icon to venerate it, it is also expected that the *Dikiro-Trikiro* will move with him.

Matins-Orthros Service

During the Matins-Orthros Service, the Hierarch may be at the throne with the *Dikiro-Trikiro* holders on either side, the *Trikiro* to the right of the Hierarch and the *Dikiro* opposite. If he is at the throne, he will proceed shortly to the middle of the *Solea* for the service of *Kairon*. The Candle holders are to lead him to this position.

Following the prayers that he shall offer, he will approach each icon saying a prayer, and ending by kissing the Icon. The Candle holders are to move with him as he does this. He will go first to the Icon of Christ and then to the opposite side to the Icon of the Theotokos, the Virgin Mary; then to the Icon of St. John the Baptist and finally to the Icon of the St. Demetrios. At the conclusion, he will offer a final prayer from the middle, take the *Trikiro*, which is on his right, bless the congregation, hand the *Trikiro* back and enter the Altar. The Altar Boys are to enter the Altar, the *Trikiro* through the South Door, and the *Dikiro* through the North Door.

Two Altar Boys should be with the Hierarch assisting him as he vests. The Vestments should have been laid out on a table in proper order by the clergy and the Altar Boys may assist the Hierarch with his vesting, as he desires. (You may also be asked to read the prayers of vesting).

Prior to the beginning of the Divine Liturgy, and after the Hierarch has vested, an Altar Boy should be standing close by with a pitcher of warm water, a small basin and a towel. He will pour water over the Hierarch's hands, as the Hierarch recites the prayer and takes the towel to wipe his hands.

Doxology

NOTE: This is not always done. As the chanters begin the Doxology, the Hierarch will take the censer, which should be ready for him, and his staff, and begin censuring the altar, the Iconostasis, and the congregation. The boy who is holding the staff should always be on the left side of the Altar Table, near the Royal Doors being ready to receive or to give the staff as needed.

If there is not a Deacon, two Altar Boys will serve as the *Dikiro-Trikiro* holders. It may be that there is one deacon and one Altar Boy who serve as holders of the *Dikiro-Trikiro*. They should be stationed, as the Hierarch begins the censuring, at the back of the Altar Table, opposite the Hierarch. They are to move to the right when he moves to the right. They are then to proceed and exit the Altar from the North Door and stand directly in front of the royal Doors, facing the Hierarch as he continues censuring, bowing each time he does.

When the Hierarch has finished censuring, the holders will remain where they are and lead the Hierarch to his throne, standing on either side of him, the *Dikiro* holder to the left, the *Trikiro* holder to the right. **(If the Hierarch does not cense, he this step will still need to be done.)**

Small Entrance

When the Hierarch walks to the center of the Solea for the Small Entrance, the Servers move before him and stand near him so that he can receive the candles from them, bless the people and then give them the candles once again. He will give his staff to one of the Servers or Clergy to hold.

Once the Deacon, or Priest enters the Altar, he will need the censer. Have it ready to give to him. At this time, the *Dikiro-Trikiro* Holders should be behind the Altar Table, facing the Hierarch. He will begin to cense the Altar. As he does so and moves to the right, the candle holders also move to their right and stay opposite him.

The *Dikiro-Trikiro* holders are to exit from the North Door and stand directly in front of the Royal Doors facing him, as he exits to cense the Icons and the congregation.

Each time the Hierarch swings the censer, the holders of the *Dikiro-Trikiro* are to bow slightly as a sign of reverence and respect. After the Hierarch has finished censuring completely, the *Dikiro-Trikiro* holders enter the Altar by their respective doors, one to the North and one to the South.

Trisagion (Thrice Holy) Hymn

During the singing of the hymn and after the Hierarch has said: "For You are Holy, our God and to You we offer the Trisagion hymn..." " [Oti a{gio" ei\ oj hmw'n, kai; soi; th;n dov{xan ajnapevmpomen..." , the two *Dikiro-Trikiro* holders are to exit the Altar **without candles**, one from the North Door and one from the South door and stand on the *Solea* facing the Hierarch. When he exits and has finished the prayers of blessing that he will say, he will hand the candles to each of them. As he does so, kiss his hand, as you should every time you hand him the candles, step back, wait for him to re-enter the Altar and then go into the Altar yourselves.

Gospel Reading

At the Gospel Reading, the candle holders are to take their respective candles and go and lead the procession for the Gospel Reading, standing wherever the Gospel is to be read. Customarily it the pulpit, other times it may be the Hierarch's Throne (*ask the Priest before the Gospel Reading*).

At the conclusion of the Gospel Reading, the Candles will lead the Clergy to the Hierarch who is standing at the Royal Doors. The Candles will stand on either side of the Royal Doors. The candles are to stand at the Royal Doors while the *Dikiro-Trikiro* holders go with the Gospel.

Great Entrance

At the Great Entrance, the *Dikiro-Trikiro* holders do just as they did for the earlier censuring. They are to be opposite the Hierarch and exit the Altar as previously instructed. When they re-enter the Altar, they are to take part in the procession with the candles, the Exepteria (fans), the Cross, and the Censer. The procession may take the usual scheme as you do on each Sunday at each Divine Liturgy.

The following differences occur with the Hierarch celebrating:

A server with the Hierarch's staff leads the procession, followed by the *Dikiro-Trikiro* holders, candles, Exepteria, Cross, Censer and Priests.

When the procession reaches the Solea, the Server with the censer proceeds to the right side of the Hierarch in front of the Royal Gate.

As the Deacon or the Priest faces the Hierarch, the Server hands the censer to the Hierarch and stands below waiting to receive it when he has finished censuring the Paten. The Hierarch will then receive the Paten, say prayers and then place the Paten on the Altar Table.

After the Hierarch has placed the Paten on the Altar Table, the Server gives him the censer once again; the Hierarch censes the Holy Chalice and gives the censer to the Server. This is why it is important that the server be to the right of the Hierarch.

When the Hierarch has finished his prayers for the Chalice, and has placed the Chalice on the Altar Table, the clergy enter the Altar, and then the Server with the censer immediately enters, goes to the right side of the Altar and waits to give the censer to the Hierarch, censuring the veil first and then handing it to the Hierarch. When he receives it again, the server takes it and puts it in its proper place.

After the Server with the censer re-enters the Altar, the *Dikiro-Trikiro* holders re-enter the Altar and be prepared to hand them to the Hierarch with either the *Trikiro* or the *Dikiro* (*Depending on the preference of the Hierarch*) to bless the people.

All remaining participants in the procession bow and re-enter the Altar as normally done.

The remainder of the Liturgy is the same as shown in your Liturgical Book.

Be prepared and have a pitcher of water and a towel should the Hierarch or Priests wish to wash their hands. It is suggested that the towel is always over your right shoulder and the pitcher in your right hand with the basin to your left.

ADDITIONAL NOTES

Memorial Service

If the Hierarch is to officiate a Memorial Service, normal Memorial Service procedures take place **plus** you will need to have the Hierarch's Staff ready as well as the *Dikiro-Trikiro* holders. Remember, the Trikiro will be to the Hierarch's RIGHT.

Many times the Memorial table will need to be moved in front of the Royal Gates as the Hierarch will officiate the Memorial Service from there.

Artoclasia

If the Hierarch is to officiate an Artoclasia Service, normal procedures take place as above. However, when the Priest censures the Artoclasia the *Dikiro-Trikiro* holders will be opposite the priest that is censuring. As with all Artoclasia services the table with the Artoclasia will need to be moved in front of the Royal Gates as the Hierarch will officiate the Artoclasia Service from there. It is also possible that the Hierarch will officiate the service from the throne. If this is the case the same procedures will take place as described above.

Dismissal

The dismissal by the Hierarch usually occurs at the Royal Gate. The *Dikiro-Trikiro* holders come out and stand next to the Hierarch making sure the Trikiro is to his RIGHT. Occasionally, the dismissal is done from the Throne. Again, the *Dikiro-Trikiro* holders stand next to the Hierarch making sure the Trikiro is to his RIGHT. The Antidoron holders are to take their proper places for distribution of the Antidoron.

After Services

The *Dikiro-Trikiro* holders blow out their candles, make sure they are in proper order and clean, then put them in their proper place.

One Altar Boy (*must be tonsured as a reader*) should assist Father with the prayers as he finishes the remainder of Holy Communion.

All other Altar Boys are to clean up the Altar area. This includes making sure the censer is extinguished, cleaned and ready for the next service; bread crumbs picked up and properly distributed outside; all robes and belts properly hung in the closet (*whether it is yours or not*); trash cans emptied; and ask the Priests if there is anything else they would like done.

Once the Hierarch has finished distributing the Antidoron, he may require help removing his vestments and putting them away properly.

Holy Week in the Orthodox Church

Text modified from www.goarch.org



A Daily Account of the Solemn Services During Holy Week in the Orthodox Church

Holy Week in the Eastern Orthodox Church institutes the sanctity of the whole calendar year of the Church. Its center of commemorations and inspiration is Easter wherein the glorified Resurrection of Jesus Christ is celebrated. Every Sunday is dedicated in the Eastern Orthodox Church to the Resurrection of the Lord. One hundred days also are dedicated to Easter, 50 before it for preparation, and another 50 after it for commemorating the glorification of the Lord. Easter is considered the "Feast of Feasts".

The 50 days before Easter, known as a part of the period of Triodion(1) "three" + "odes" are the period for strengthening faith in the Lord. The means are well-known to people of spiritual experience. They are **repentance**, which means to change from indifference to full devotion; **prayer**, which is considered the soul of faith, and through which faith emerges from theory into life, and **self-control**, which governs our relationships with our fellowman. These means are practical indicators of our vivid faith in God. With this preparation we are invited to enter the sanctuary of Holy Week, not as spectators, but as participants in the commemoration and enactment of the divine Acts that changed the world. A Christian must always be well-trained and well-armed to fight against those who try to corrupt his spirit and take away his freedom. The Christian must keep his own spiritual kingdom intact and his freedom of religion and uprightness vivid in order to be a part of the Kingdom of God, where the compassions of the Lord and His Resurrection will be experienced. There is no other place where the Kingdom of God can be expanded except the heart of man; and there is no other gate whereby we can enter the Kingdom but that of "repentance". This was the proclamation of the new era of Jesus Christ, who said, "*Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand*", Matthew 3:2.

The 50 days which follow Easter are signified by the *Pentecostarion (2) (Gr. Pentikonta 50)*. They are dedicated to the spiritual enjoyment of the participants in the deep belief that Almighty God is our Companion in our everyday life and thoughts. It starts with the celebration of the Lord's Resurrection. During this period, the Church of Christ, which is His Mystical Body, was instituted and strengthened. His disciples and Apostles were the witnesses of the appearances of the Risen Lord; they were the recipients of the Holy Spirit, Who changed completely their attitude of fear, Who made the Apostles into piercing heralds and ambassadors of the New Message of salvation in the name of Christ, the Savior. This was an experience, teaching and inspiration they handed down as the treasure of the Christian Faith. Christians are called to commemorate the same divine Events and to enact them in their hearts and minds, based on the realization that "*Christ is Risen*".

The entire Christian confession is contained in the words "Christ is Risen". St. Paul, referring to this fact, clearly and emphatically says: "*If Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain*", I Corinthians 15:14. This is the reason why, from the beginning, the Church of Christ set forth as the center of its worship and faith the Resurrection of its Lord. From the earliest days after Pentecost the Apostles designated "the first of the Sabbath" of each week for the remembrance, of the Resurrection of our Lord. This day was called the "Lord's Day" in the Revelation of John, who said: "*I was the Spirit on the Lord's day*" (1:10). It was this tradition which the writers and hymnologists of the Orthodox Church had in mind when they wrote hymns and odes for eight consecutive Sundays (Lord's days) having for their subject the Resurrection of Christ as the basic belief of redemption and of worship. The fifth article of the Ecumenical Creed of Faith, the Nicene Creed, refers to this belief, as well.

The Resurrection of Christ, in relation to the Crucifixion, constitutes the essence of the Christian Easter, which is the center of the celebrations of worship of God in the Orthodox Church. Herein will be presented the events and services of the Passion Week recorded in the New Testament as they exist in the Eastern Orthodox Church today. The Passion Week, from the triumphant entrance of our Lord into Jerusalem until His Resurrection, contains a series of events in the life of Christ the Savior linking prophecy with its fulfillment.

Daily Observances of Holy Week:

"In Remembrance of a Pledge of Resurrection"

Saturday Morning of St. Lazarus

Saturday before Palm Sunday;

The service consists of Orthros [Matins] and the Divine Liturgy

On this day the rising from the dead of St. Lazarus, the righteous friend of Christ, is celebrated. Holy Week begins with the phrase: *"Six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany"*, John 12:1. His arrival coincided with the Jewish Passover. It started on the 15th of the month of Nissan in commemoration of the freeing of the Hebrew people under the leadership of Moses, from the slavery of the Egyptians by the miraculous act of God. The Church relates preparation and redemption to the events of this week.

Six days before the Passover a feast was given for Christ in Bethany of Judea where Christ had stopped on His way to Jerusalem. Lazarus, His friend, and his sisters were present. A short time earlier Christ had risen Lazarus from the dead, thereby gaining the respect and faith of the people, but also the hatred of the fanatics. The Church names this day the "Saturday of Lazarus" in remembrance of the resurrection of Lazarus and its promise of universal resurrection for all men. The Church connects this celebration, by anticipation, with the Entrance of Christ into Jerusalem: "We carry the Symbols of victory and cry Hosanna in the highest".

The readings are Hebrews 12:28-13:8 and John 11:1-45.

"Blessed is He that cometh in the Name of the Lord....."

Palm Sunday Morning

**Palm Sunday services is held in the morning
and consists of Orthros [Matins] and the Divine Liturgy**

Palm Sunday celebrates the glorious and brilliant feast of the Entrance of Jesus into Jerusalem. Zechariah had prophesied the entrance of the Messiah into Jerusalem, saying: *"Rejoice greatly ... O daughter of Jerusalem; behold, the King comes unto Thee; he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass"*, Zech. 9:9. The contemporary Jews associated this prophecy with the expected Messiah. This action of Christ testifies to His nature as Savior, but with the definite declaration that His Kingdom: was not of this world. The news that Christ was in Bethany provoked a general enthusiasm of acceptance, but also of indignation among the High Priests, who had decided to kill Christ. The main road leading to Jerusalem was covered with palm trees. The multitudes, with palm branches in their hands, spread their cloaks on the road as a show of respect, crying out- *"Hosanna to the Son of David,- blessed is He that comes in the name of the Lord"*. All the actions and words of the people and, of Christ had a Messianic meaning readily recognized by the Jews of that time. As usual, Christ went immediately to the Temple, where He prayed and taught. That evening He departed for Bethany.

A custom of distributing branches of palms to the people in the Church prevails to this day, commemorating the victory of Christ against the evil powers.

The Epistle reading is Phil. 4:4-9, and the Gospel reading is John 12:1-18.

"Behold the Bridegroom cometh in the midst of the night...."

Palm Sunday Evening

**The service is Orthros(3) [Matins] of Great Monday
and is sung by anticipation on Palm Sunday evening**

Monday of Holy Week (sung by anticipation now on Palm Sunday Evening) commemorates the blessed and noble Joseph and the fig tree, which was cursed and withered by the Lord. The withering of the fig tree was a miracle of special symbolism, since the tree had leaves, but no fruit. It is symbolic of the many people who claim ethical and religious identity, but who in reality have empty lives that yield no fruit. This was also the case with some of the Pharisees of that period. Jesus cursed the tree: *"May no fruit ever come from you again!"* Matt. 21:19. The reference to the story of the virtuous Joseph of the Old Testament (Genesis 37-41) is made only for contrast, since the life of Joseph was a model of propriety and sincere observance of ethical principles.

On this evening we begin with the Hymn of the Bridegroom, "Behold the Bridegroom comes in the midst of the night... beware, therefore, O my soul, lest thou be borne down in sleep.... and lest thou be shut out from the Kingdom . . ." The canticle hymn also has a symbolic exhortation: "I see thy bridal hall adorned, O my Savior, and I have no wedding garment. . . O giver of Light, make radiant the vesture of my soul and save me". At this time the solemn procession of the Icon of Christ-Bridegroom takes place around the church. The people, anticipating the sufferings of Christ, sing: "Thy sublime sufferings, on this day, shine upon the world as a light of salvation".

The Gospel reading during this service is Matthew 21:18-43. It mentions that *"the chief priests and the elders of the people came up to him as he was teaching, and said 'By what authority are you doing these things, and who gave you this authority?'"* v. 23. They sought to have Christ accuse Himself in answering this question.

"Both watch and pray....."

Great Holy and Monday

The service is Orthros [Matins] of Tuesday morning sung by anticipation Monday evening

Tuesday of Holy Week (sung by anticipation now Monday evening) commemorates the parable of the Ten Virgins, Mtt. 25:1-13. Ethical preparation and wakefulness are the foundations of vivid faith. The parable of the Ten Virgins is developed around the theme of the Bridegroom: "Why are Thou heedless, O my soul? . . . Work most diligently with the talent which has been confided to thee; both watch and pray". The hymnologist reminds us, "I do not possess a torch aflame with virtue, and the foolish virgin I imitate when it is the time for action"; and, "Into the splendor of thy saints, how can I, who am unholy, enter?" The exhortation is given: "Come Ye faithful, let us work earnestly for the Master . . . increase our talent of grace ... Wisdom through good works".

The Gospel is Matthew 22:15-23 through 23:39; 24:26 through 26:2.

"When he came to himself.....he came to his father....."

Great Holy Tuesday Evening

The service is Orthros [Matins] of Wednesday morning sung by anticipation on Tuesday evening

On Wednesday of Holy Week (sung by anticipation now on Tuesday evening) it has been ordained by the Holy Fathers of the Church that commemoration should be made of the anointing of Christ with myrrh by the woman in the house of Simon, the leper, in Bethany. Repentance was the mission of the prophets. It would be an apt one-word title for the Bible, because *"repentance"* was the mission of our Lord. This woman who

demonstrated her repentance and her warm faith toward our Lord still presents to us the aroma of her virtue for imitation today.

On this evening is sung the beautiful "Hymn of Cassiane", probably a work of Patriarch Photius. It begins: "The woman who had fallen into many sins recognized thy Godhead, O Lord; Woe to me, says she; receive the sources of my tears, O Thou who doth gather into clouds the water of the sea. Who can trace out the multitude of my sins and the abysses of my misdeeds? "O Thou whose mercy is unbounded".

The Gospel reading is John 12:17-50.

"The light of Christ shineth for all....."
Great Holy Wednesday Morning
The Divine Liturgy of Presanctified Gifts

The Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts is celebrated on this day for the last time during Lent. This very ancient Liturgy is a Vesper Service, with the Holy Gifts presanctified in the Liturgy on the previous Sunday. This Liturgy is offered every Wednesday and Friday during Lent so that the people may receive Holy Communion. This Liturgy is solemn, and reflects the grandeur and simplicity of the early Church. During Lent no other Liturgy is held except on Saturday, Sunday and March 25, when the Liturgies of St. Basil (on Sundays) and St. Chrysostom are officiated.

"Anointing him sick with oil in the name of the Lord....."
Great Holy Wednesday Afternoon
The Mysterion of Holy Unction

The sacred ceremony of the Mysterion of the Holy Unction takes place on this Wednesday evening, following an old custom. It is the evening of repentance, confession and the remission of sins by the Lord, preparing the faithful to receive Holy Communion, usually the next day, Holy Thursday morning. Holy Unction is the Mysterion for cleansing sins and renewing the body and the spirit of the faithful. Holy Unction is one of the seven Sacraments of the Church, and it has its origin in the practice of the early Church as recorded in the Epistle of James (5:14-15). At the end of the service, the priest anoints the people with Holy Oil, the visible carrier of the Grace of God.

"Let no fear separate you from Me....."
Great Holy Wednesday Evening

The service is Orthros [Matins] of Thursday morning sung by anticipation Wednesday evening

The Orthros of Thursday morning is sung by anticipation Wednesday evening. In many Orthodox churches, however, this service is sung at its designated Thursday morning time, before the Vespers and Divine Liturgy. "On Thursday in Holy Week (now Wednesday evening or Thursday morning) the Holy Fathers, who had well-ordained things, handed down to us successively from the Holy Apostles and the Sacred Gospels to celebrate four Events: the washing of the disciples' feet, the institution of the Holy Eucharist, the Marvelous Prayer, the betrayal".

The Gospel reading is St. Luke 22:1-39.

"Do this in remembrance of Me....."
Great Holy Thursday Morning

**The service is the Vespers and Divine Liturgy of Thursday evening
which is sung in the morning by anticipation**

Jesus drew His last breath of freedom on this Thursday night. Christ knew all the incidents, which were about to take place, and called to Him His Apostles in order to institute the Holy Eucharist for them and for the Church forever. At the end of March, with the full moon as a brilliant lantern in the sky and the weather, mild, the people, in Jerusalem enjoyed the beginning of spring. In this, atmosphere, Christ presented Bread and Wine as the Elements of His Very Body and His Very Blood; they are the Precious Gifts, which have been left as His perpetual Presence in the Church. The institution of the Holy Eucharist and its re-enactment through the centuries, both as a sacrifice and sacred ceremony (Mysterion), is the life giving remembrance, which, along with the Crucifixion and Resurrection of Christ, constitutes the basis of salvation for the Christian.

Then followed the incidents of dramatic closing moments of Christ's life. After the washing of His Apostles' feet, He pointed out the betrayer, inaugurated the Eucharist, and pronounced the new commandment of love for one another. He spoke to them words of comfort, promising the descent of the Holy Spirit to complete man's union with Christ. His departure, Christ said, would bring to them and the world joy. Christ took His Apostles out in the mild night where He could see face-to-face His co-workers in the bright light of the full moon. In this spiritual mood and physical setting, Jesus withdrew to pray. After this agony of the "*bloody sweat*" came the kiss of Judas and His arrest. He thus became the source of spiritual and physical freedom for mankind.

The Divine Liturgy of St. Basil is officiated on this day. The readings are: 2 Cor. 11:23-32; Mtt 26-2-28; Jn. 13:3-17; Mtt 26:21-39; Lk. 22:43-44; Mtt 26:40-75; Mtt 27-1-2. During this Liturgy the priest prepares the "Amnos", the Holy Communion, which is kept throughout the whole year to be given the faithful in times of sickness. The Body and Blood of Christ is present in the Church during the entire year and throughout the ages. On this day, with greater feeling than ever, Christians come for Holy Communion singing: "Receive me Today, O Son of God, as a partaker of Thy Mystic Feast; for I will not speak of the Mystery to Thine enemies, I will not kiss Thee as did Judas, but as the thief I will confess Thee. Lord, remember me when I comest to Thy Kingdom."

"We worship Thy passion, O Christ....."

Great Holy Thursday Evening

The service of the HOLY PASSION of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The service is Orthros [Matins] of Friday morning sung by anticipation Thursday evening

Good Friday celebrates the holy, saving and awesome Passion of Christ. To take away our sins, Christ willingly endured the spittings, scourgings, buffetings, scorn, mocking and the purple robe; the reed, sponge, vinegar, nails, spear and, above all, the Cross and Death. The confession from the cross of the penitent thief, crucified with Christ, is celebrated. This service is long, but its content is dramatic and deeply moving for the devout Christian. Participation in the prayers and the historical sequence of the events, as related in the Gospels and hymns, provides a vivid foundation for the great events yet to come. Following are the references of the "Twelve Gospel" passage readings of this service:

1. St. John 13:31 thru Ch. 18,1
2. St. John 18:1-29
3. St. Matthew 26:57-75
4. St. John 18:28 thru Ch. 19:16
5. St. Matthew 27:3-32
6. St. Mark 15:16-32
7. St. Matthew 27:33-54

8. St. Luke 23:32-49
9. St. John 19:38-42
10. St. Mark 15:43-47
11. St. John 19:38-42
12. St. Matthew 27:62-66

These readings relate the last instructions of Christ to His disciples, the prophecy of the drama of the Cross, the dramatic prayer of Christ and His new commandment. The day should be devoted to reading the "Gospel of the Testament" of Christ, which He left for all men. The Church services during Holy Week re-enact the events of this Gospel.

After the reading of the fifth Gospel passage reading comes the procession with the Crucifix around the church, while the priest chants the 15th antiphon: "Today is hung upon the Tree, He Who did hang the land in the midst of the waters. A Crown of thorns crowns Him Who is King of Angels. He is wrapped about with the purple of mockery Who wrapped the Heavens with clouds. He received buffetings Who freed Adam in Jordan. He was transfixed with nails Who is the Bridegroom of the Church. He was pierced with a spear Who is the Son of the Virgin. We worship Thy Passion, O Christ. Show also unto us thy glorious Resurrection".

During the Procession, the faithful Christian kneels and prays for his spiritual welfare, imitating the thief on the Cross who confessed his faith and devotion to Christ. He then approaches and reverently kisses the Crucifix.

"They cast lots upon my besture....."

Good Friday Morning

Royal Hours

According to custom, the "Royal Hours", four in number, are read at this time. These services consist of hymns, psalms, and readings from the Old and New Testaments, all related prophetically and ethically to the Person of Christ. In some churches the "Hours" are read in the afternoon, before the Vesper services.

"Father forgive them for they know not what they do....."

Good Friday Afternoon

The service is Vespers sung on Friday afternoon

The Vespers of Friday afternoon are a continuation of the Royal Hours. During this service, the removal of the Body of Christ from the Cross is commemorated with a sense of mourning for the terrible events which took place. Once more, excerpts from the Old Testament are read together with hymns, and again the entire story is related, followed by the removal from the Cross and the wrapping of the Body of Christ with a white sheet as did Joseph of Arimathea. Apostle Paul, interpreting the dreadful event, exhorts the Church: *"For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God . . . we preach Christ crucified . . . the power of God and the wisdom of God"*, 1 Cor. 1: 18f.

As the priest reads the Gospel, *and taking the body, Joseph wrapped it in a white cloth*", he removes the Body of Christ from the Cross, wraps It in a white cloth and takes It to the altar. The priest then chants a mourning hymn: "When Joseph of Arimathea took Thee, the life of all, down from the Tree dead, he buried Thee with myrrh and fine linen . . . rejoicing. Glory to Thy humiliation, O Master, who clothest Thyself with light as it were with a garment". The priest then carries the cloth on which the Body of Christ is painted or embroidered around the church before placing It inside the Sepulcher, a carved bier which symbolizes the Tomb of Christ. We are reminded that during Christ's entombment He descends into Hades to free the dead of the ages before His Resurrection.

The Gospel readings which relate these events are: Matt. 27:1-38; Lk. 23:29-43; Matt. 27:29-54; Jn. 19:31-37; Matt. 27:55-61. Good Friday is the only day in the year on which the Divine Liturgy is not officiated.

Today the devoted Christian ponders in his heart the deep meaning of the Seven Last Words of Christ uttered on the Cross, the first Divine Pulpit of Christianity.

"Do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves"

Good Friday Evening - The Lamentations

The service is Orthros [Matins] of Saturday morning sung by anticipation Friday evening

It consists of psalms, hymns and readings, dealing with the death of Christ, in contrast to His divinity, and in expectation of His Resurrection. One of the hymns relates: "He who holds all things is raised up on the Cross and all creation laments to see Him hang naked on the Tree". The thoughtful, and well-written *Odes*, sung by the choir, compare the Compassion of God and the cruelty of man; the Might of God and the moral weakness of man. The *Odes* picture all Creation trembling when witnessing its Creator hung by His own creatures: "Creation was moved . . . with intense astonishment when it beheld Thee hung in Golgotha". The *Odes* remind us of the vision of Isaiah, who saw Christ, "the unwaning light of the manifestation", and cried aloud, "The dead indeed shall arise and all those on earth shall rejoice". During this service the Body of Christ is carried in procession around the church. In some parishes the entire flower-bedecked Sepulcher, symbolizing the Tomb, is carried in the procession.

The entire congregation joins in singing the, three parts of the "Hymns of Praise" (there are approximately 300 hymns, but only a few are sung). After these hymns are sung, the priest sprinkles the Sepulcher and the whole congregation with fragrant water. There is a simultaneous praise of both the Crucifixion and Resurrection of Christ with their purpose of the redemption of man. We no longer lament the sufferings of the Crucified One; we now lament chiefly for our own sins because we are far from God. So these services should have a rather personal meaning of repentance and of strong faith in God.

Christians observe Good Friday with fasting, prayer, cleanliness, self-examination, confession and good works, in humility and, repentance so that the Grace of the Cross might descend upon them.

The Gospel reading is Matthew 27:62-66.

"Arise, O God, and judge Thou the earth....."

Great Holy Saturday Morning

**The service is Vespers and Divine Liturgy of Saturday evening
sung by anticipation Saturday morning**

Psalms are read and Resurrection hymns are sung which tell of Christ's descent into Hades. "Today Hades cried out groaning" is the hymn's description of the resurrection of Adam and the conquering of death. Most of the readings of this day are from the Old Testament on the prophesies and promise of the conquering of death. On this day the Divine Liturgy of St. Basil is officiated. The Apostle Paul exhorts the faithful: "*We were buried, therefore, with him by baptism unto death, so we, too, might walk in newness of life*", Romans 4:6.

After the reading of the Epistle, the priest follows the custom of tossing of laurel, saying: "Arise, O God, and judge Thou the earth: for Thou shall take all heathen to Thine inheritance". The Cherubic hymn of this day is: "Let all mortal flesh keep silence and stand with fear and trembling.....", a thoughtful hymn of adoration and exaltation. The Divine Liturgy ends with the Communion Hymn: "So the Lord awaked as one out of sleep, and He is risen to save us".

The readings are from Romans 6:3-11 and Matthew 28:1-20.

The Holy Sunday of Easter

**The service is Orthros [Matins] and Divine Liturgy of Sunday morning sung Saturday midnight.
With this service the Pentecostarion starts. (50 days services)**

On Easter Sunday (Saturday midnight) the life-giving Resurrection of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is celebrated. Before midnight, the Odes of Lamentation of the previous day are repeated. The Orthros of the Resurrection begins in complete darkness. The priest takes light from the vigil light and gives it to the faithful, who are holding candles. The priest sings: "Come ye and receive light from the unwaning life, and glorify Christ, who arose from the dead", and all the people join him in singing this hymn again and again. From this moment, every Christian holds the Easter candle as a symbol of his vivid, deep faith in the Resurrection of Jesus Christ as Savior. In many churches the priest leads the people outside the church, where he reads the Gospel which refers to the Angels statement:

"He is Risen; He is not here", Mark 16:1-8.

Then comes the breathless moment as the people wait for the priest to start the hymn of Resurrection, which they join him in singing, repeatedly: "Christ has Risen from the dead, by death trampling upon Death, and has bestowed life upon those in the tombs". From this moment the entire service takes on a joyous Easter atmosphere. The hymns of the *Odes and Praises* of Resurrection which follow are of superb meaning and expression. The people confess, "It is the Day of Resurrection, let us be glorious, let us embrace one another and speak to those that hate us; let us forgive all things and so let us cry, Christ has arisen from the dead". By this hymn they admit that love of one's fellowman is the solid foundation of the faith in the Resurrection of Christ.

The Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom is then officiated. At the end of the Liturgy, a part of the marvelous festival sermon of St. Chrysostom is read, which calls upon the people to "Take part in this fair and radiant festival. Let no one be fearful of death, for the death of the Savior has set us free . . . O Death, where is thy sting? O Hades, where is Thy victory? Christ is Risen and Thou art overthrown. To Him be glory and power from all ages to all ages".

The readings are Acts 1: 1-8 and John 1: 1-17.

"Peace be unto you....."

Easter Sunday Morning Vespers

The Sunday of Agape

Easter Sunday morning the faithful gather once more for prayer with lighted candles. All sing the hymn, "Christ is Risen from the Dead". The people greet one another joyously, saying: "Christ is Risen", the Easter salutation which is answered, "Truly He is Risen". They sing, "the dark shadows of the Law has passed away by the coming of grace", and standing in exaltation they exclaim, "Who is so great a God as our God?"

The Gospel according to John (20:19-25) is read in various languages, proclaiming the Good News of Resurrection all over the universe without discrimination. The fruit of faith in the Resurrection of the Lord is love in His Name; therefore, this day is called "Sunday of Agape" (love feast), a day dedicated to Christian principles, especially to forgiveness and charity. At this time, Christians seek to end misunderstanding and arguments among those whom they may be at odds. Apostle Paul firmly interprets the Resurrection of Christ, saying: "If Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain", 1 Cor. 15:14. The Church also states in its Creed, "The Third day He rose again".

A Living Faith

Remembrance of the events of the last week in the life of Jesus Christ has a practical appeal to the heart of the Christian believer. One's beliefs constitute his being; the more our beliefs are true and firm, the more

purposeful meaning life has. The Resurrection of Christ strengthens and illuminates our beliefs; this is our being. It is not only a belief in an historical fact which took place in a certain place and time, but it is marvelous in its nature. The Resurrection of Christ in relation to His Crucifixion and Mystic Supper continue to be present in the mind of the believer as a fact as well as the source of "the power from above", for which the believer prays. Assurance of a personal participation in the enactment of the same events in the life of Christ becomes an unfaded happiness for the Christian.

This is the divine inheritance that the Church of Christ keeps as its treasure and solid foundation. The goal of a member of the Church is to keep his faith living and working in his everyday life and relations with others. The Christian will be recognized and identified as the friend and disciple of Jesus Christ. His beliefs will be like the flag which flies from the top of the centermost of his own ship, sailing to its divine destiny. The flag's inscription bears the assurance that *"Christ is Risen, Indeed"*.