

Our Journey through Holy Week

April 25, 2021 - May 2, 2021

St. Neftarios Newsletter Supplement

Thank you to hundreds of people who joined in the celebration of our risen Lord. Thank you to the volunteers who spent thousands of combined hours preparing for our Agape Picnic. After a year of isolation, the plaza was alive with celebration and touched our senses with the smell of roasting lamb, the sounds of music and laughter, and the sights of happy faces gathered together in love once again, as we proclaimed: Christ is Risen! Truly He is Risen! ❖



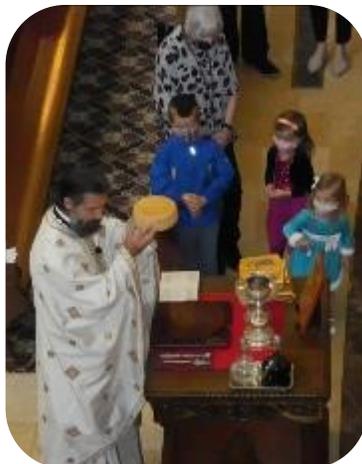
Paschal Greetings

Language	Greeting	Response
Albanian:	Krishti U Ngjall!	Vertet U Ngjall!
Arabic:	El Messieh kahm!	Hakken kahm!
Armenian:	Kristos hanyav ee merelotz!	Orhnial eh harootyunuh kristosee!
Eritrean-Tigre:	Christos tensiou!	Bahake tensiou!
Ethiopian:	Christos t'ensah em' muhtan!	Exai' ab-her eokala!
Georgian:	Kriste ahzdkhah!	Chezdmariet!
Greek:	Christos anesti!	Alithos anesti!
Romanian:	Hristos a inviat!	Adeverat a inviat!
Russian:	Khristos voskres!	Voistinu voskres!
Serbian:	Cristos vaskres!	Vaistinu vaskres!
Spanish:	Cristo ha resucitado!	En verdad ha resucitado!
Ukrainian:	Khristos voskres!	Voistinu voskres

Saturday of the Holy, Righteous Friend of Christ, Lazarus

The Church commemorates the miracle of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ when he raised Lazarus from the dead after he had lain in the grave four days. The Church bears witness to the power of Christ over death and exalts Him as King before entering the most solemn week of the year, Holy Week.

At St. Nektarios, our Holy Week Journey began on the Saturday of Lazarus with a special Teaching Divine Liturgy. Fr. Andreas brought the Holy Gifts out onto the Solea and our parishioners gathered around as they witnessed, close-up, what happens in the altar at each Liturgy. It was an educational experience that you will not want to miss next year. The Teaching Divine Liturgy was followed by Palm Cross making in the Fellowship Hall. What a blessing to be together after a year apart. ❖



Palm Sunday — The Entrance of Christ into Jerusalem

Palm Sunday, one of the most joyous feasts of the year, is the commemoration of the Entrance of Our Lord into Jerusalem following His glorious miracle of raising Lazarus from the dead. Having anticipated His arrival and having heard of the miracle, the people went out to meet the Lord and welcomed Him with displays of honor and shouts of praise.

We commemorate the **only day**, in the earthly life of our Lord when he was publicly offered “perfect praise” and proclaimed as the Messiah by those uniquely qualified to offer it...the children (Mark 10:13-16). Thus, the children cried out---

“Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel!”

At St. Nektarios, we too offer displays of honor and shouts of praise. The Clergy bless the palms after the Gospel reading during Matins and young girls distribute palms in the narthex. This allows everyone to be holding their palms during the entire service. At the end of the service this year, the Clergy processed the icon of the Entry of our Lord into Jerusalem outside and around the church. The congregation prominently held their palm crosses as the clergy, acolytes and choirs passed by crying *Hosanna!*

The palms are the “symbols of victory” as it says in the hymn for the feast day, which is sung repeatedly throughout the service. This victory is not only our Lord’s victory over death, but also a personal victory over one’s sinful passions, which is the hope and purpose of Lent.

***“Before Your passion,
You confirmed the resurrection of all,
by raising Lazarus from the dead,
O Christ our God. Therefore, like the
children of old, we also carry symbols of
victory, and to You, the Victor over death, do
we cry out: Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is
He who comes in the name of the Lord.”***



The Service of the Bridegroom

Beginning on the evening of Palm Sunday and continuing through the evening of Holy Tuesday, the Church observes the Service of the Bridegroom. The name of the service is from the figure of the Bridegroom in the parable of the Ten Virgins found in Matthew 25:1-13. Christ is the divine Bridegroom of the Church.

We are instructed of our need for spiritual vigilance and preparedness, watching and waiting for the Lord, who will come again to judge the living and the dead. The troparion (hymn of the service) conveys this expectation:

“Behold, the Bridegroom cometh in the middle of the night, and blessed is that servant whom He shall find watching; and again unworthy is he whom He shall find heedless. Beware, therefore, O my soul, lest thou be overcome with sleep, lest thou be given up to death, and be shut out from the Kingdom. But rouse thyself and cry: Holy, Holy, Holy art Thou, O God, through the Mother of God, have mercy on us.”



Holy Wednesday Presanctified Liturgy and Holy Unction

On Great and Holy Wednesday, the day begins with the service of the Presanctified Liturgy. The church provides several opportunities during Holy Week at which the believers may receive Holy Communion.

Later in the day, the Sacrament of Holy Unction is conducted. It is offered for the healing of soul and body and for forgiveness of sins. At the conclusion of the service, the clergy anoint the body with oil. The grace of God, which heals infirmities of soul and body, is called down upon each person.

The biblical basis for the Sacrament is found in James 5:14-16:

“If any among you are sick, let him call for the presbyters of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; and the prayer of faith will save the sick man, and the Lord will raise him up; and if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed.”

For those who were not able to attend the service on Holy Wednesday, clergy were available after the subsequent services during Holy Week to anoint those in attendance. ❖



Prayer of the Oil

O Lord who, in thy mercies and bounties, healest the disorders of our souls and bodies, do Thou, the same Master, sanctify this Oil, that it may be effectual for those who shall be anointed therewith, unto healing, and unto relief from every passion, every malady of the flesh and of the spirit, and every ill; and that therein may be glorified Thy most Holy Name, of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and to the ages of ages. Amen.



Photo by Fr. Nektarios

Holy Thursday

On Holy Thursday morning at the Divine Liturgy of St. Basil, two pieces of Prosfora representing Lambs are consecrated. The second piece of Prosfora Lamb is for the Reserved Sacrament which is used especially to give communion to the sick during the next year.

At St. Nektarios, a congregant offers flour to be placed around the oil that is blessed during the Holy Wednesday Unction Service. This flour is then used to make the Prosfora to be used during the Thursday morning Liturgy.

At the evening Passion Service several events are commemorated: the washing of the disciples' feet, the institution of the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist at the Last Supper, the agony in the garden of Gethsemane, the betrayal of Christ by Judas, and our Lord's crucifixion. After the Procession of the Cross of Christ, the congregation prayerfully and solemnly comes forward to light a candle at the Cross and venerate the icon of the crucified Christ. ❖



Holy Friday

In the morning, the services of the Royal Hours are observed, a time of solemn celebration.

The afternoon vespers, called *Apokathelosis* or *Taking Down from the Cross*, are a continuation of the Royal Hours. During this service, the Body of Christ is removed from the Cross. As His body is taken down it is then wrapped with a white sheet, mimicking the actions of Joseph of Arimathea.

Thank you to our office staff who assisted with the wrapping of Christ's body: Silva Awaimrin, Kim Braswell, Samara Clewell, Evelyn Klund and Tim Shelton.

As the clergy processed with the Epitaphion (embroidered cloth depicting the Body of Christ), the office staff escorted the procession to take the "Body of Christ" to the tomb.

At the evening Matins of Holy Saturday with *Encomia* (lamentations) the Church contemplates the mystery of the Lord's descent into Hades, the place of the dead. Death, our ultimate enemy, is defeated from within. The focus is on the Tomb of Christ. It is life-giving, a source of power, victory and liberation.

After the singing of the lamentations and with lighted candles, the congregation proceeds outside to process around the church. As we return, everyone has the opportunity to walk under the tomb of Christ as they re-enter the church. ❖



Holy Saturday and Midnight Resurrection Services

The Liturgy held on the morning of Holy and Great Saturday is that of St. Basil the Great. This service was full of the coming Paschal joy. After the reading of the Epistle, the priests followed the custom of tossing laurels, saying:

"Arise, O God, and judge Thou the earth for Thou shall take all heathen to Thine inheritance".

Parishioners brought in baskets filled with their Paschal food to break the fast. The baskets of food were blessed at the end of the service.

Before midnight, the congregation gathered for the Pre-resurrection service (followed by Matins and the Divine Liturgy of Great and Holy Pascha) and sat in a dimly lighted sanctuary. A few minutes before midnight the sanctuary was completely darkened in anticipation of Christ's resurrected light. Then the Fathers and Deacons came out of the altar with lighted candles singing,

"Come ye and receive light from the unwaning life, and glorify Christ, who arose from the dead".

The acolytes assisted with spreading the light from candle to candle among the congregation, bringing the sanctuary aglow and illuminating everyone's joyful, smiling eyes behind their masks. ❖



Agape Vespers and Pascha Celebration

Also called **Vespers of Love**, the Agape service continues the celebration of Pascha. At this service the Gospel reading (John 20:19-25) depicts the first appearance of the risen Lord to his disciples, and is recited in as many languages as are known by those present in our parish. This symbolizes that the glorious resurrection of Christ is proclaimed to all the nations of the world.

Thank you to our gospel readers.

English: Joseph Tristano

Arabic: Emile Khuri

Russian: Tatiana Mukhammad

Spanish: Missy Davis

French: Naguib Farah

Romanian: Irina Hubbard

Georgian: Aka Vashakidze

Armenian: Azad Khuri

Turkish: Sonya Tekin Tash

German: Madeleine Tekin

Portuguese: Ana Levantis

Latin: Presbytera Maria Dalber

Chinese (Cantonese): Jonathan Doughty

Sign Language Interpreter:

Elizabeth Houpos



Thank you to our gospel readers and interpreter above. See names on left.

