

Key Messages

Entering the period of Holy Week

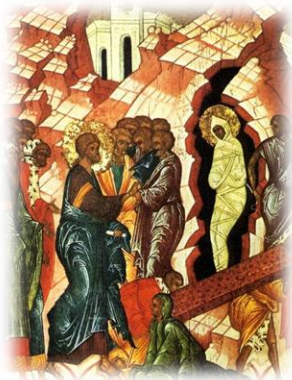
I hope that you have had a lovely Easter break and are feeling rested and ready for a bright start to the summer term!

Please see the message below from Mr Vassiliou (STA Spiritual Director) about how we celebrate Easter in the Greek Orthodox Church.

A reminder that school is closed on Friday 22 April as it is a very important day known as Great and Holy Friday. In the evening, the STA Byzantine choir will be taking part in a special Holy Friday service at the Twelve Apostles Greek Orthodox Church.

Upon our return to school on the 19 April, we enter the period in the Orthodox church known as Holy week which will culminate in the great feast day of 'Pascha' or Easter Sunday on April 24.

Great Lent ends on Friday of the fifth week – 15 April, (the day before Lazarus Saturday). Holy Week begins immediately thereafter. A brief explanation of each of the solemn days of Holy or Passion week is as follows:



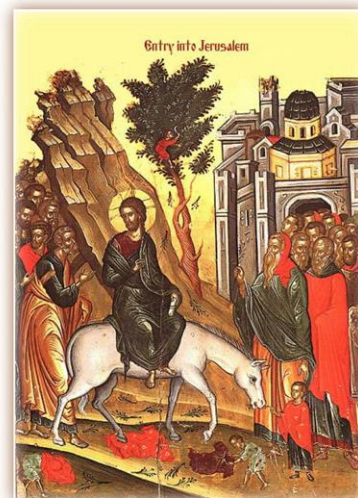
Lazarus Saturday – 16 April: is the day which begins Holy Week. It commemorates the raising of our Lord's friend Lazarus, who had been in the tomb for four days. This act confirmed the universal resurrection from the dead that all of us will experience at our Lord's Second Coming. This miracle led many

to faith, but it also led to the chief priest's and Pharisees' decision to kill Jesus (**John 11:47-57**).

(Icon depicting the Raising of Lazarus)

Palm Sunday – 17th April: (The Entrance of our Lord into Jerusalem): Our Lord enters Jerusalem and is proclaimed king - but in an earthly sense, as many people of His time

were seeking a political Messiah. Our Lord is King, of course, but of a different type - the eternal King prophesied by Zechariah the Prophet. We use palms and olive branches on this day to show that we too accept Jesus as the true King and Messiah.



Icon depicting Palm Sunday (Entry of the Lord into Jerusalem)

Holy Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday: The first thing that must be said about these services, and most of the other services of Holy Week, is that they are "sung" in anticipation.

The services of these days are known as the **Bridegroom or Nymphios Orthros Services**. At the first service of Palm Sunday evening, the priest carries the icon of Christ the Bridegroom in procession, and we sing the "Hymn of the Bridegroom." **We behold Christ as the Bridegroom of the Church**, bearing the marks of His suffering, yet preparing a marriage Feast for us in God's Kingdom.

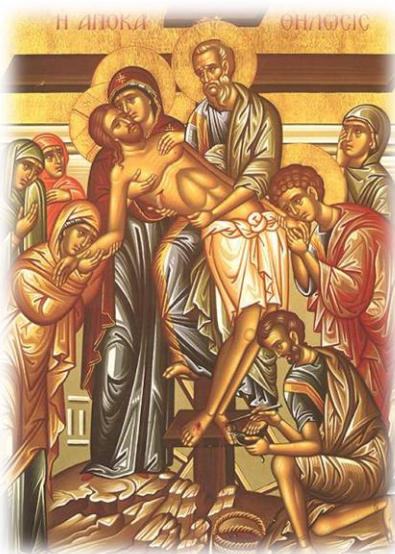
Each of these **Bridegroom Orthros services** has a particular theme. **On Holy Monday**, the Blessed Joseph, the son of Jacob the Patriarch, is commemorated. Joseph is often seen as a Type of Christ-like figure; Joseph was betrayed by his brothers, thrown into a pit, and sold into slavery by them. In the same way, our Lord was rejected, betrayed by His own, and sold into the slavery of death. The Gospel reading for the day is about the barren fig tree, which Christ cursed and withered because it bore no fruit. The fig tree is a parable of those who have heard God's word, but who fail to bear the fruit of obedience. It is also a warning to all people, in all times, of the importance of not only hearing the God's word but putting it into action.

The Parable of the Ten Virgins is read on Holy Tuesday: It tells the story of the five virgins who filled their lamps in

preparation for receiving the bridegroom while the other five allowed their lamps to go out, and hence were shut out of the marriage feast. This parable is a warning that we must always be prepared to receive our Lord when He comes again. The theme of the day is reinforced by the hymn we sing: "I see Thy Bridal Chamber adorned, O my Saviour, but have no wedding garment that I may enter. O Giver of Light, enlighten the vesture of my soul, and save me." The theme of Holy Wednesday is repentance and forgiveness. We remember the sinful woman who anointed our Lord in anticipation of His death. Her repentance and love of Christ is the theme of the "Hymn of Kassiane" which is chanted on this night, reminding us one more time, before "it is too late," that we too may be forgiven if we repent.

Holy Unction: The Mystery or Sacrament of Holy Unction is celebrated on **Holy Wednesday evening**. Actually, this service can be celebrated any time during the year, especially when one is ill. However, because of our need for forgiveness and spiritual healing, we offer this service during Holy Week for the remission of our sins. We should prepare for this service in a prayerful way, as we do for Holy Communion.

Great and Holy Thursday: On Holy Thursday we turn to the last events of our Lord and His Passion. Thursday morning begins with a Vespereal Divine Liturgy commemorating the Mystical/Last Supper. Everyone who is able should try to receive Holy Communion at this service as it was at the Mystical Supper that our Lord instituted the Holy Eucharist.



Thursday evening: actually begins the services of Great and Holy Friday. The service of the Twelve Passion Gospels commemorates the solemn time of our Lord's Crucifixion. After the reading of the fifth Gospel, the holy cross is carried around the church in procession, and Christ's

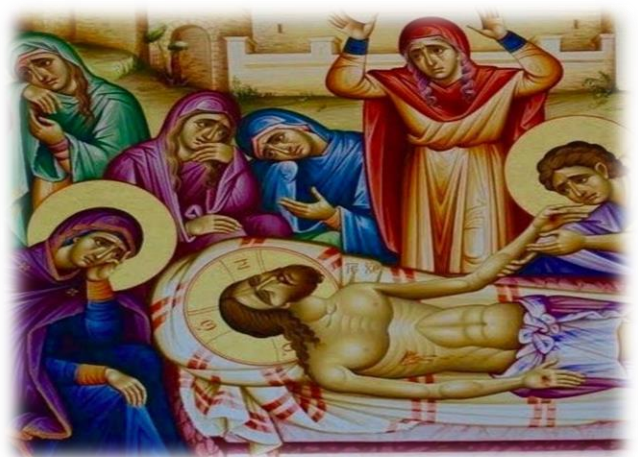
body is nailed to the cross in the centre of the church.

Taking Down of Our Lord from the Cross

Great and Holy Friday: This is a day of strict fast. As little as possible should be eaten on this day. It is the only day in the entire year that no Divine Liturgy of any kind can be celebrated. In the morning we celebrate the Royal Hours. These solemn hours are observed as we read the various accounts and hymns concerning the crucifixion. In the afternoon we celebrate the Vesper service of the taking down of Christ's body from the cross. During the Gospel reading, our Lord's body is taken off the cross and wrapped in a new, white linen sheet. This act commemorates the removal of Christ's body from the cross by Joseph of Arimathea (John 19:38-42). Later in the service, the Epitaphios, or winding-sheet, with Christ's body on it is carried in procession and placed in the recently decorated tomb. In the evening the Lamentations service is sung. This service begins in a solemn manner, but by the end of the service we are already anticipating the Resurrection of our Lord. The Holy Friday evening service is actually the first service of Holy Saturday, the day in which we commemorate our Lord's body resting in the tomb while His all-pure soul descends into Hades to free the faithful of the Old Covenant.

Epitaphion (Lamentations at the Tomb of Christ)

During the evening service, the Lamentations of Lazarus are sung and Christ's body is removed from the altar and placed in the tomb, accompanied by the hymn: "I zoe en Tafo" – Life in the tomb and beautifully sung here <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xiE-biR9USU> by Fairuz, a Greek Orthodox Christian of Lebanese descent.





Great and Holy Saturday

Great and Holy Saturday: This day is a day of hope and waiting. In the morning we celebrate a Divine Liturgy which commemorates Christ's victory over death. Bright vestments are worn as we anticipate Christ's Resurrection. Laurel leaves are strewn throughout the church during the service, because in the ancient world laurel leaves were a sign of victory. As the leaves are strewn, the choir chants "Arise O God and Judge the earth, for to Thee belong all the nations." The Old Testament story of Jonah in the belly of the whale is read at this service because Jonah is seen in the Church as a Type of Christ. As Jonah was three days in the belly of the great fish, and was then safely deposited back onto land, so our Lord was three days in the tomb before His glorious Resurrection. The Vespers Divine Liturgy of Holy Saturday concludes the services of Holy Week and brings us to the eve of Great and Holy Pascha.

During the Great and Holy Saturday service, the Divine Liturgy of Saint Basil the Great is performed as well as the vespers/evening prayers. During the evening service, people gather inside and outside the church holding unlit candles while the Liturgy is underway. Just before midnight, the church goes dark. At midnight, the priest lights the first candle and people take turns lighting each other's candles. This is the moment when we celebrate Christ's resurrection! The congregation then sings the traditional hymn; Christ is Risen or Christos Anesti.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M1vPn5KTTT4>

Finally, to all our students and families, we wish you all a happy Easter as we await in anticipation our Lord's resurrection

Καλή Ανάσταση - Glorious Resurrection Χριστός Ανέστη – Christ is Risen

Mrs Warwick (Headteacher)