

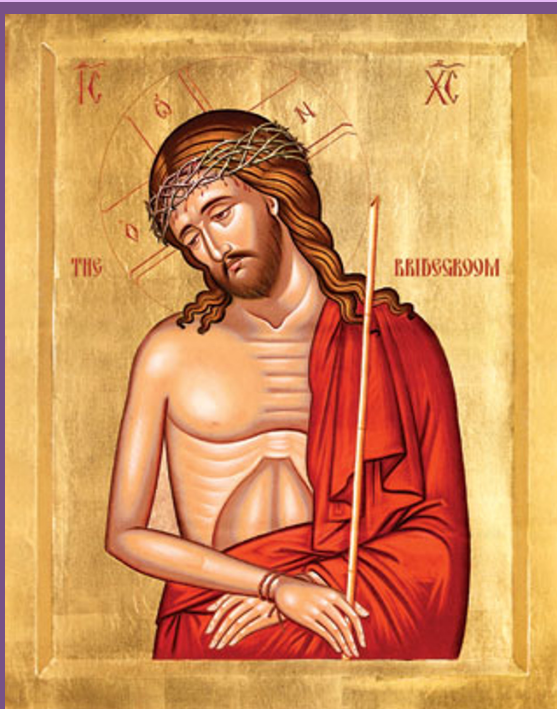
A Young Family's Guide to Holy Week



St. Mary Magdalene Holy Week for Young Families Guide!

Perhaps the greatest week of the entire Liturgical Year in the Orthodox Church is that of Holy Week. The entire Orthodox Christian World unites as one, as we draw near to Golgotha with our Lord, and then joyously celebrate His glorious Resurrection from the dead!

One of the truly amazing experiences of Holy Week is watching how the Church's anticipation of the Resurrection grows. For children especially, that joy and excitement is truly palpable...and it is one that needs to be harnessed if they are to learn how to grow in the faith! In order to help our young families take full advantage of the Grace of Holy Week, we offer this guide, that it may nurture the radiant joy that is naturally found in the children, during the Holiest Week of the year!



**ADVICE FOR
HOLY WEEK
WITH YOUR
CHILDREN**



**St. MARY
MAGDALENE
ORTHODOX ✝ CHURCH**

GENERAL TIPS



Be Present as a Family!

Regular attendance to Holy Week services, regardless of how much you think your little ones are absorbing, is vital to their growth as Orthodox Christians! Children might be able to gain an idea of Who Christ is by reading books at home and participating in Church school, but they will never learn to experience Him without being present at the Divine Services, where heaven literally touches earth!

Night-Time Routines

Participating in Church Services around bedtime can bring up some unique challenges, especially when it interferes with a normal bedtime routine for younger children! Discuss these changes with your little ones! Explain to them why your family will be coming to Church during the evening! For younger children, it is ok to bring them in their pajamas. By the end of the services, there is a good chance that the children will fall asleep to the beautiful hymnography that is sung by the choir. Don't be afraid to bring a blanket and let the children sleep while you and your spouse enjoy the tranquility of the Church.

What about the God Parents?

One of the tremendous blessings that we have in the Orthodox Church, is having responsible God Parents who are there to assist the children in the growth of their spiritual lives. If your God parents are here at the parish, or are somewhat local to the area, don't hesitate to give them a call to help out during Holy Week! They literally signed up for this responsibility!

Helpful Tips for each Service

Lazarus Saturday Pan Orthodox Divine Liturgy (Saturday before Palm Sunday)

There are many who say that Liturgically, Lazarus Saturday is the start of Holy Week. It is our tradition here in Genesee County to celebrate this incredible Divine Liturgy as a Pan Orthodox Community, rotating throughout our four area parishes. One of the unique features of this coming together is that the Service of Preparation (Proskemedia Service) that is typically done privately by the priest, is done publicly outside of the Altar, giving families a unique opportunity to see, participate, and learn about this incredibly beautiful service!

One of the ways that the children can participate is by making a list of your family's living and departed relatives. Have them bring the list to the service and the children will read the names to the priest, while he takes out a piece of the Holy Bread for each individual, and places it on the Diskos for the Divine Liturgy.

Palm Sunday Divine Liturgy

Make sure that you show up on time for one of the most beautiful Divine Liturgies of the year! The church will fill up quickly! Allow the children to get their palms and pussy willows blessed, as they hold them up high and proclaim "Hosanna" with the rest of the Orthodox World, who celebrates our Lord's triumphant entry into Jerusalem! One fun activity that you can do, is to teach your children how to make "Palm Crosses", either by looking at a guide online or by learning from others in our parish community!



HELPFUL TIPS FOR EACH HOLY WEEK SERVICE

BRIDEGROOM MATINS (HOLY SUNDAY, MONDAY AND TUESDAY NIGHT)

AFTER THE TRIUMPHANT JOY OF THE PALM SUNDAY LITURGY, THE FEELING OF THE CHURCH CHANGES. THE LIGHTS GO OUT AND THE ICONS ARE ILLUMINATED ONLY BY CANDLELIGHT. THESE THREE SERVICES, KNOWN AS THE BRIDEGROOM MATINS, COMMEMORATE OUR LORD'S LAST DAYS OF HIS EARTHLY MINISTRY. THE BEAUTIFUL HYMNOGRAPHY, POWERFUL SCRIPTURE READINGS, PROSTRATIONS, AND PENITENTIAL PRAYERS ARE TRULY INCREDIBLE. ONE OF THE WAYS THAT CHILDREN CAN PARTICIPATE IS TO TEACH THEM HOW TO DO PROSTRATIONS AT THE APPROPRIATE TIMES OF THE SERVICE! THIS IS ONE OF THE PURIST FORMS OF WORSHIP, WHICH TEACHES US ALL HOW TO PLACE OUR HEARTS ABOVE OUR HEADS!



HOLY UNCTION (HOLY WEDNESDAY)

AS WE CONTINUE TO PREPARE OURSELVES FOR OUR JOURNEY TO GOLGOTHA AND THE TOMB, IT IS THE TRADITION OF SOME CHURCHES TO HAVE THE SACRAMENT OF HOLY UNCTION ON HOLY WEDNESDAY. THIS SACRAMENT IS NOT ONLY FOR THE HEALING OF THE BODY BUT ALSO FOR THE HEALING OF THE SOUL...SOMETHING THAT IS DESPERATELY NEEDED FOR ALL OF US DURING HOLY WEEK!

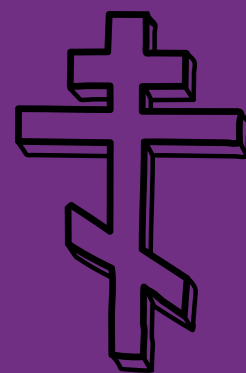
THE SERVICE IS MADE UP OF 7 READINGS FROM THE HOLY EPISTLES, 7 GOSPEL READINGS, AND 7 PRAYERS OF HEALING. IT IS CUSTOMARY FOR OUR PARISHIONERS TO COME FORWARD AND TO KNEEL UNDER THE PRIEST'S VESTMENTS FOR THE HEALING PRAYERS! CHILDREN ARE MORE THAN WELCOME TO TAKE PART IN THIS BEAUTIFUL TRADITION!

AT THE VERY END OF THE SERVICE, EVERYONE WHO IS AN ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN IS ANOINTED WITH THE HOLY UNCTION OIL. AS THIS IS NOT AN EVERY WEEK OCCURRENCE, IT IS A GOOD IDEA TO TEACH YOUR CHILDREN WHAT TO EXPECT. THEY WILL BE ANOINTED ON THE FOREHEAD, EYES, NOSE, EARS, MOUTH, CHEST AND TOPS AND BOTTOMS OF THEIR HANDS!

DIVINE LITURGY FOR THE INSTITUTION OF THE EUCHARIST (HOLY THURSDAY MORNING)

THIS DIVINE LITURGY OF ST. BASIL THE GREAT COMMEMORATES THE LAST SUPPER AND THE INSTITUTION OF THE HOLY EUCHARIST. ONE OF THE UNIQUE FEATURES OF THIS DIVINE LITURGY IS THAT THE CHURCH WILL CONSECRATE THE RESERVE SACRAMENT WHICH IS THEN KEPT ON THE HOLY ALTAR TABLE FOR THOSE WHO ARE HOMEBOUND OR IN THE HOSPITAL FOR THE ENTIRE YEAR! HOLY THURSDAY LITURGY IS A GREAT OPPORTUNITY TO TALK TO CHILDREN ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF THE HOLY EUCHARIST, AND HOW WE SHOULD ALL PREPARE TO RECEIVE IT!

THE TWELVE PASSION GOSPELS AND HOLY FRIDAY MATINS (HOLY THURSDAY EVENING)

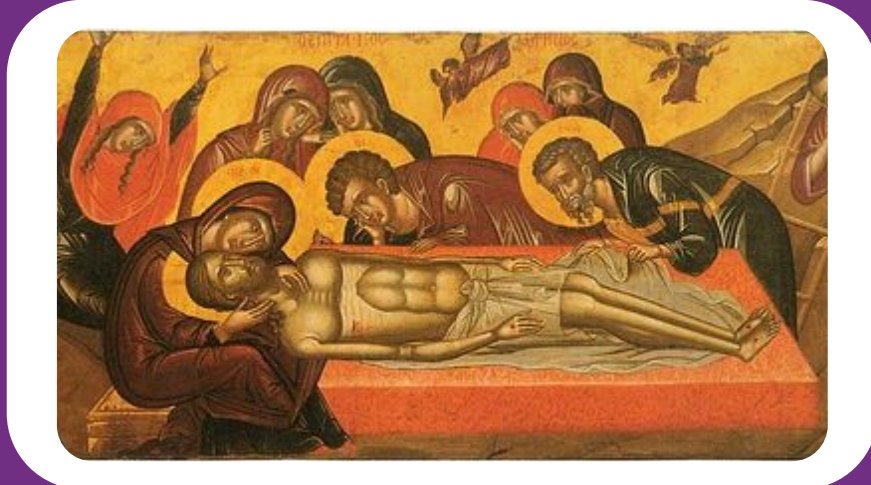


IN PERHAPS WHAT IS THE MOST BEAUTIFUL AND RICH SERVICE OF ALL OF HOLY WEEK, THE MATINS SERVICE AND THE READING OF THE 12 PASSION GOSPELS TAKES PLACE IN A CANDLELIT CHURCH ON HOLY THURSDAY EVENING. THIS IS THE LONGEST SERVICE OF HOLY WEEK, BUT IT IS ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT FOR OUR PARISH FAMILY TO ATTEND, AS WE LITERALLY WALK WITH OUR LORD TO GOLGOTHA AND TO THE CROSS. BESIDES HEARING THE NARRATIVE OF THE CRUCIFIXION FROM SCRIPTURE, THERE IS A POWERFUL PART OF THE SERVICE WHERE THE PRIEST WILL CARRY THE CROSS OF CHRIST AROUND THE INSIDE OF THE CHURCH, WHILE THE FAITHFUL BOW LOW BEFORE THE INSTRUMENT OF OUR SALVATION. THE MOVEMENTS, THE HYMNOGRAPHY, AND THE STRIKING IMAGERY ARE QUITE POWERFUL, AND IS SOMETHING THAT NEEDS TO BE EXPERIENCED BY THE ENTIRE PARISH FAMILY!

FOR PARENTS, IT IS HIGHLY ENCOURAGED THAT YOU READ THROUGH THE PASSION GOSPELS AT HOME, PERHAPS FROM A CHILDREN'S BIBLE, AND ANSWER ANY QUESTIONS THAT THEY MIGHT HAVE. IT WILL ALSO HELP THEM UNDERSTAND WHY THE PRIEST CARRIES THE CROSS AROUND THE CHURCH, AND WHAT THAT REPRESENTS! DUE TO THE LENGTH OF THE SERVICE, IT IS PERFECTLY OK TO TAKE THE CHILDREN OUTSIDE OF THE CHURCH IF THEY GET A LITTLE ANTSY!

HOLY FRIDAY UN-NAILING VESPERS (HOLY FRIDAY AFTERNOON)

THE SERVICE ON FRIDAY AFTERNOON IS WHERE WE FIRST SEE THE TOMB IN THE CENTER OF THE CHURCH, AWAITING OUR LORD TO BE TAKEN DOWN FROM THE CROSS. IN THE MIDDLE OF THE GOSPEL READING, THE PRIEST WILL ASCEND UP TO THE CROSS TO TAKE THE ICON OF CHRIST BACK INTO THE ALTAR. SHORTLY AFTER, THE BURIAL SHROUD BROUGHT OUT TO THE CENTER OF THE CHURCH FOR VENERATION, WHERE IT WILL REMAIN UNTIL JUST BEFORE MIDNIGHT ON PASCHA. AT THE END OF THE SERVICE EVERYONE COMES FORWARD AND DOES THREE PROSTRATIONS BEFORE THE TOMB AND KISS THE GOSPEL BOOK AND THE ICON ON THE SHROUD. THIS IS A WONDERFUL OPPORTUNITY TO EXPLAIN HOW OUR LORD IS SLEEPING... AWAITING HIS RESURRECTION!



MATINS AND LAMENTATIONS (HOLY FRIDAY EVENING)

WITH OUR LORD IN THE TOMB, WE HOLD CANDLES AND SING THE BEAUTIFUL LAMENTATIONS, REMEMBERING OUR LORD'S DESCENT INTO HADES. TOWARDS THE END OF THIS SERVICE THERE IS A BEAUTIFUL PROCESSION AROUND THE OUTSIDE OF THE CHURCH, WHERE THE CHILDREN CARRY CANDLES AND OTHER ITEMS OF THE CRUCIFIXION, AS WHILE THE CONGREGATION SINGS THE HOLY GOD, HOLY MIGHTY, HOLY IMMORTAL HAVE MERCY ON US! WHEN WE RE-ENTER THE CHURCH AFTER THE PROCESSION, EVERYONE WALKS UNDERNEATH THE BURIAL SHROUD AND VENERATES THE GOSPEL BOOK. THIS REMINDS US OF HOW CHRIST PASSED THROUGH DEATH INTO LIFE. WE THEN HEAR THE FIRST HINT OF THE RESURRECTION FROM EZEKIEL, SOMETIMES CALLED THE "DRY BONES", THIS IS AN INCREDIBLE SERVICE FOR CHILDREN TO PARTICIPATE IN AND TO LEARN ABOUT.

ALL NIGHT VIGIL (ALL NIGHT FOLLOWING LAMENTATIONS)

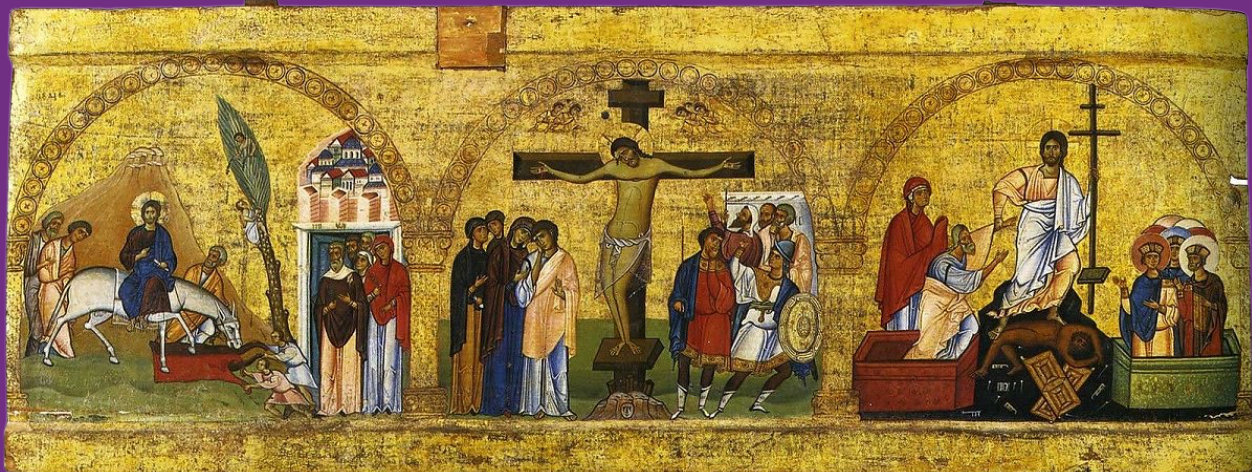
FOR TEENS AND YOUNG ADULTS, WE HAVE AN ALL-NIGHT VIGIL AT THE TOMB OF CHRIST, WHERE THE PARISH FAMILY WILL TAKE SHIFTS READING FROM THE NEW TESTAMENT. IT IS AN INCREDIBLE EXPERIENCE FOR EVERYONE, BUT MOST ESPECIALLY OUR YOUTH, WHO TEND TO THE TOMB THROUGHOUT THE NIGHT!

HOLY SATURDAY DIVINE LITURGY AND 15 OLD TESTAMENT READINGS (HOLY SATURDAY MORNING)

THE CHURCH UNDERGOES A GLORIOUS TRANSFORMATION FROM THE LENTEN PURPLE TO THE PASCHA WHITE, AS WE SEE A WONDERFUL VISUAL OF THE GLORIOUS RESURRECTION! IT IS ALSO THE TRADITION OF OUR PARISH, FOR THE CHILDREN TO READ FROM THE OLD TESTAMENT READINGS THAT ARE ASSIGNED TO THIS SERVICE. IT IS A GREAT OPPORTUNITY FOR THEM TO BE INVOLVED IN THE LITURGICAL LIFE OF THE CHURCH!

THE READINGS THAT ARE ASSIGNED DO NOT CHANGE FROM YEAR TO YEAR, SO BE SURE TO PICK A PARTICULAR READING WITH YOUR CHILD TOWARDS THE BEGINNING OF LENT FOR THEM TO READ.

BEFORE THE DIVINE LITURGY, THIS IS ALSO A WONDERFUL OPPORTUNITY TO ASK YOUR CHILDREN WHAT THEY HAVE SEEN OR LEARNED FROM THE PAST WEEK. YOU WILL BE SURPRISED AS HOW MUCH THEY HAVE TAKEN IN FROM ORTHODOXY'S HOLIEST WEEK OF THE YEAR!



GREAT AND HOLY PASCHA (SATURDAY NIGHT TO SUNDAY MORNING)

WE HAVE FINALLY REACHED THE FEAST OF FEASTS! THE MOST IMPORTANT HOLY DAY OF THE YEAR HAS COME! THE INFINITE JOY OF THE RESURRECTION IS EXPERIENCED IN THIS ONE INCREDIBLE NIGHT OF REJOICING!

THE NIGHT BEGINS WITH THE PASCHAL NOCTURNES, WHERE WE SEE THE BURIAL SHROUD CARRIED FROM THE TOMB TO THE ALTAR, WHERE IT WILL REMAIN THERE FOR 40 DAYS! ALL OF THE LIGHTS ARE TURNED OUT AND THE CANDLES ARE EXTINGUISHED.

AS WE APPROACH MID-NIGHT, THE PRIEST LIGHTS A SINGLE FLAME, REPRESENTING THE LIGHT OF CHRIST. IT IS FROM THAT ONE FLAME THAT THE LIGHT IS SPREAD THROUGHOUT THE ENTIRE CHURCH, SIGNIFYING CHRIST'S LIFE BEING SPREAD THROUGHOUT THE ENTIRE WORLD.

WE THEN ENTER INTO A PROCESSION OUTSIDE, BEFORE ARRIVING AT THE ENTRANCE OF THE CHURCH, WHERE WE HEAR THE GOSPEL ABOUT THE JOYOUS NEWS OF THE RESURRECTION. WE SING AND SHOUT "CHRIST IS RISEN" FOR THE FIRST TIME, AND THEN ENTER THE CHURCH AND CELEBRATE THE PASCHAL SERVICE AND LITURGY!

SOME IMPORTANT TIPS TO REMEMBER ABOUT PASCHA:

1. BRING YOUR CHILDREN! ENCOURAGE A NAP ON SATURDAY EVENING AND LET THEM SLEEP DURING THE LITURGY IF THEY NEED TO. REGARDLESS OF WHAT THEY DO, THEY NEED TO BE IN CHURCH ON THE HOLIEST DAY OF THE YEAR!
2. DRESS FOR THE WEATHER! AT MIDNIGHT IN MICHIGAN, IT GETS A BIT CHILLY! IF YOU HAVE A NEW BORN THAT YOU DO NOT FEEL COMFORTABLE BEING OUTSIDE WITH, IT IS OK TO REMAIN IN THE CHURCH DURING THE PROCESSION.
3. DON'T FORGET TO BRING A BLANKET TO LAY AT YOUR FEET FOR YOUR CHILD TO SLEEP ON! IF YOU ARE ABLE, GENTLY WAKE THEM BEFORE COMMUNION SO THAT THEY CAN PARTICIPATE IN THE BODY AND BLOOD OF CHRIST ON PASCHA!
4. TEACH YOUR CHILDREN HOW TO SAY "INDEED HE IS RISEN" IN THE MANY DIFFERENT LANGUAGES THAT WE USE IN THE CHURCH TO PROCLAIM THE RESURRECTION!



"During Holy Week and Pascha in the Orthodox Church, the Average Orthodox Christian who attends all the services at the church, leading up to and including the feast of the resurrection of Christ, will spend more than 30 hours in church. He won't do it to show how tough he is. He will do it because it is **UTTERLY AWESOME**, And we don't mean that figuratively, this is what happens when God rises from the dead."



Be present with your family so that they can experience what Orthodox Christianity is all about!

Please reach out to Fr. Gabriel directly if you have any specific question about bringing your children to church during this Holy Time.



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