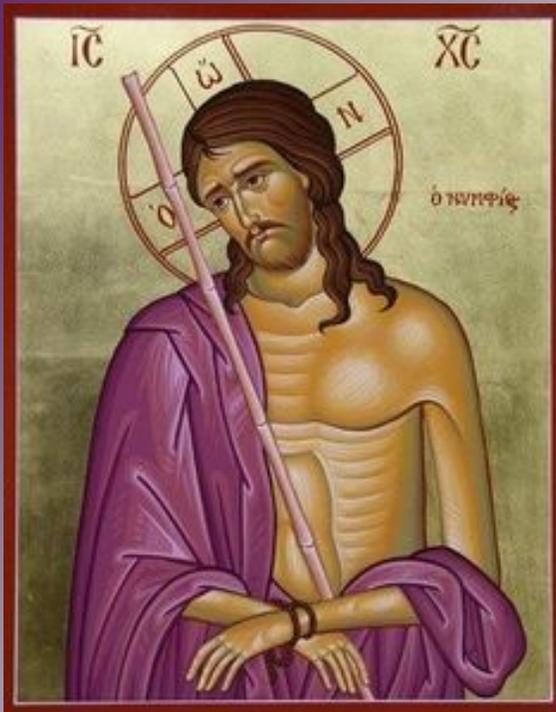


St. Mary Magdalene



Holy Week
for Young Families
Guide!



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Holy Week is when we can draw near to Golgotha with our Lord and celebrate in His resurrection as a family. Our journey through Holy Week to Pascha is intense, as our anticipation of the Resurrection grows. For the children, the joy and excitement is truly palpable, which is why we are offering this Holy Week Guide for parents, who need to take advantage of their children's peaked curiosity. Below are some tips to help parents survive Holy Week and Pascha in the Orthodox Church.

General Tips:

- Bring your children and attend church as a family- Kids absorb more than you think they do and are paying attention even if you think they aren't. Your children will not truly learn about The Church if they are not part of the Church. The best way to teach our children is to lead by example! Be present with your family!
- Participating in church services each night deviates from your family's normal routine. Discuss these changes with your children and prepare them for the amazingness that is Holy Week!
- Bring your young children in their Pajamas. Your young ones will most likely fall asleep by the end of the service, or at the very least on the way home. Make bedtime just a bit easier when you get home by skipping this step. Also don't be afraid to bring a blanket and let your kiddos sleep while you and your spouse enjoy the tranquility of being in the Church. **The upstairs loft will be designated throughout Holy Week for Sleeping Children!**
- Have dinner before you come to church. Hungry kids are hangry kids!
- If attending every service is too difficult on your children, take turns trading on and off with your spouse to attend the services, or bringing your older children to the longer services while leaving your younger ones home with your spouse. It is important to set the example of our Church Life as a priority.
- Utilize your children's Godparents. They literally signed up for this responsibility. If you need help, ask for it, they would love nothing more to have their Godchildren in church with them.

Helpful Tips for Each Service

Lazarus Saturday Vespers (7pm):

This is the start of Holy Week, begin this journey with the entire family. Read your children the story of Lazarus and discuss how it is the foreshadowing of the Resurrection.

Lazarus Saturday Liturgy (9:30am):

We celebrate this Liturgy each year with our Pan-Orthodox Family. All four churches in our area come together for this Service. The Proskomedia (Preparation of the Holy Eucharist) is done publicly outside of the Altar. Families and children are encouraged to participate in this unique opportunity!

Bring your lists of living and departed family and friends to share with the priests. Have your older children read them their names while your younger children watch the preparation process. Stay for Divine Liturgy with our brothers and sisters in Christ then enjoy a Lenten fellowship breakfast and break bread as a Pan-Orthodox Community one last time before Pascha.

Palm Sunday:

Kids love holding their palms and pussy willows high and proud during Divine Liturgy. Discuss the Entrance of our Lord into the Holy City, and how this is the beginning of His passion leading to The Resurrection.

Teach your children how to make palm crosses! There are several people in our parish willing to teach how to fold these crosses, and numerous guides online!

Sunday, Monday and Tuesday Bridegroom's Matins (7pm):

This is a very beautiful service full of prostrations and beautiful music. Children love to bow down! It is one of the purist forms of worship!

Wednesday Holy Unction (7pm):

Holy Unction is one of the sacraments of the Church, and every member of the parish community is encouraged to attend this service, which is both for the healing of soul and body!

The service is made up of 7 Epistle Readings, Gospels, and Prayers of Healing. It is also the custom of our parish to come forward and kneel under the priest's (or Bishop's) vestments for the healing prayer. Bring your children to be apart of this beautiful opportunity!

At the end of the service, everyone who is Orthodox is anointed with the Holy Unction Oil. Teach your children what to expect, as Father will anoint their foreheads, eyes, nose, ears, mouth, chest, and the tops and bottoms of their hands!

***As this is a sacrament of the Church, parents and older children should try to fast 6 hours before the service begins!

Thursday Divine Liturgy (10am):

This is the Liturgy of St. Basil the Great, which commemorates the Last Supper and the implementation of The Holy Eucharist. This is also the service where the reserved communion (which is kept year round for those who are in the hospital or homebound) is made for the entire year!

Teach your children the importance of the Eucharist and how we should prepare to receive it!

Thursday's Matins of Holy Friday (Passions Gospels) (7pm):

This is one of the longest services of the week, but it is perhaps the most beautiful of them all! On this night, we read through the 12 Passion Gospels, which takes us on a journey to Golgotha and the Cross.

During the middle of the service, the Cross of Christ is carried by the Priest, representing Christ carrying His cross to Golgotha. The entire service, combined with the unique hymns and striking imagery, is quite powerful!

If possible, it never hurts to read parts of the Gospels that will be read to your children before the service, to answer any questions that they might have. Also, due to the length of the service, don't hesitate to take the kids outside if they get a little antsy!

Holy Friday Vespers (3pm):

Also called the unnauling vespers, this service shows Christ being removed from and placed in the nearby tomb, which is adorned with beautiful flowers in the center of the Church. This service offers some beautiful visuals for children!

Additional Tips:

The Service is structured like a Saturday Vespers so Children should recognize most parts of this service.

This Gospel reading discusses Christ's death on the cross. Don't be afraid to talk with your children (of all ages) about how Christ died for us.

The most moving part of this service is the priest solemnly carrying the shroud to the tomb in the middle of The Church. Children will quickly understand this meaning of this movement, just as the children understood Jesus entering into Jerusalem.

During the procession of the shroud, it is our tradition to do a full prostration as we are able. Children love to bow. Discuss this with them ahead of time and show the proper technique of how to bow low.

Friday Lamentations (7 pm):

This is the burial service for Christ! While everyone holds candles, the Priest and the Choir sing the lamentations, which gradually change from being more somber to proclaiming the joyous news of Christ's Victory over death.

Towards the end of the service, the burial shroud is carried above the priest's head in procession around the Church. Children play a large role in the procession, as they carry their candles, or other assigned items around the Church while singing "Holy God...".

When we re-enter the Church, everyone walks under the shroud and venerates the Gospel, reminding us of how Christ passed through death and into the Resurrection. We then hear the Old Testament Reading of Ezekiel and the "Dry Bones", which is a prophecy about Christ's Resurrection from the dead!

Additional Tips

Children will love the procession, include them in holding the candles and signing. They can fully participate in this part of the service.

Have the older children pay attention to how the Liturgical Music changes in tone, rhythm, etc. Certain melodies are used at certain times for emphasis on the words being sung.

Discuss with your children how we are dependent on lights (headlights, refrigerator lights, house lights, etc.) and how we could not function in our daily lives without these things. Just like these lights, we could not live without the light of Christ.

All-Night Vigil at the Tomb:

Following Lamentations our pre-teens, teens and families participate in a lock-in, and read the Scriptures at the Tomb of Christ all night long. (See the sign-up sheet in the Narthex). This is a great opportunity for your older children to participate with fellow Orthodox youth in the life of The Church

Saturday Divine Liturgy of St. Basil (10am)

During this service, it is our parish tradition to have the Children read the Old Testament readings (see the sign-up sheet in the Narthex). This is a wonderful way for your children to participate in liturgical life, and learn how to read/chant in the church.

Also during this service, while “Arise, O Lord” is sung by the Choir, the Church is literally transformed from “dark” to light”. The purple covers, vestments, and votive candles are changed to bright white! This is always an exciting moment for children to visually witness, and is truly a visual representation of the Resurrection!

Additional Tips

Before Liturgy, ask your children what they have seen throughout the week! You may be surprised by how much has seeped in!

For young Children, it may be fun for them to wear light colored clothing with a dark color sweater or jacket on top. When the Altar cloths are being changed, they can also change their clothes as well!

You can also discuss with your children how historically, catechumens would be welcomed into the Church on this day during the Old Testament readings!

Great and Holy Pascha (11:30pm):

We have finally arrived at the pinnacle of Holy Week... Pascha night! This is the most joyous celebration in the Orthodox Church!

The night begins with the Paschal Nocturnes, where the burial shroud is carried back into the Altar, and placed on the Altar Table for the Liturgy. All of the lights are turned off, and the candles are extinguished. When we approach midnight, the priest will light a single flame representing the Light of Christ, and from that one flame, the rest of the Church lights their candles, signifying Christ’s Light and Life being spread throughout the world!

Everyone present carries their lit candles outside for a procession, before arriving at the entrance of the Church, where we hear the Gospel about the Joyous News of the Resurrection. It is here that we sing “Christ is Risen!” for the first time, before entering the Church and Celebrating the Paschal Service and Liturgy!

Additional Tips

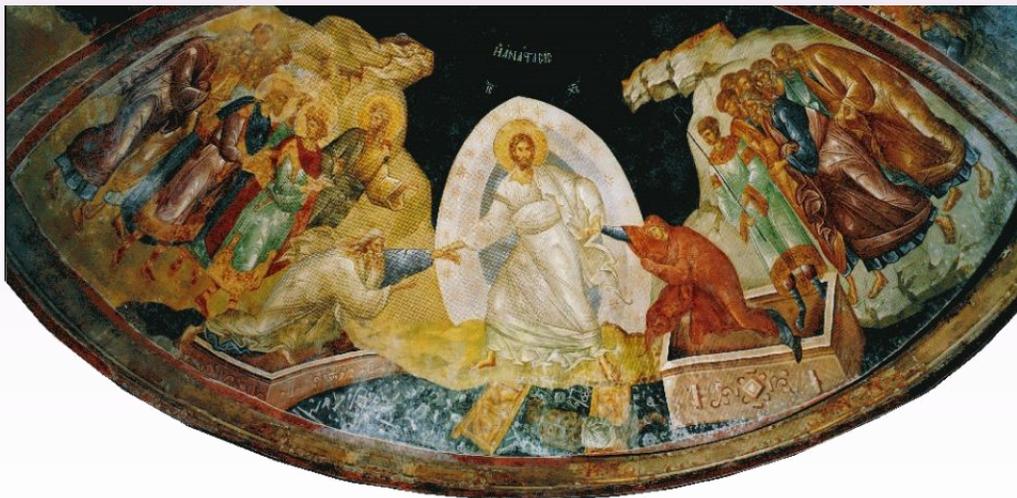
It may be difficult to get your child to rest on Saturday, but encourage a nap. Every kid wants to stay up late, so use this to your advantage to make nap time happen!

Dress your children for the weather at Midnight, as it is usually pretty chilly in Michigan. Plan accordingly!

Younger children will fall asleep at some point. This is okay! Bring a blanket and let them sleep upstairs! They will still remember a lot about the night!

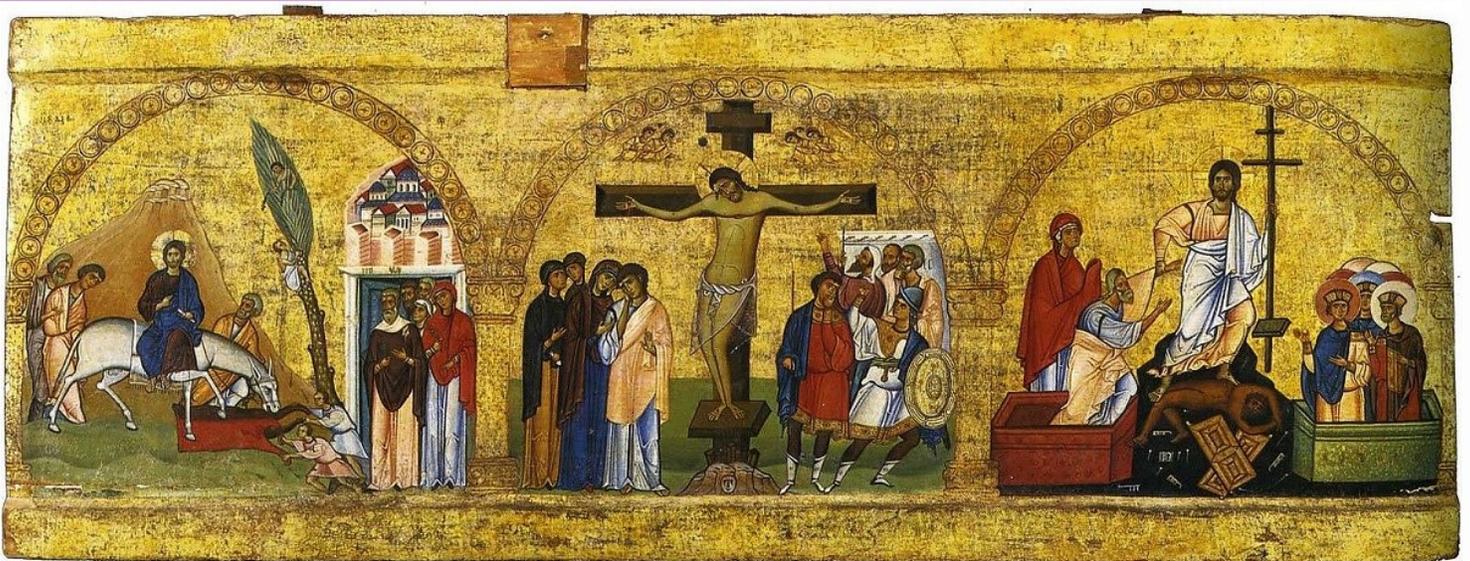
Before communion, if possible, gently rouse your children to receive The Eucharist. Infants and young toddlers can be brought to the chalice asleep. It is important that your children participate in the Eucharist at Pascha!

As is our tradition, we use the proclamation of “Christ is Risen!” in several languages. Teach these to your children ahead of time! They will love to shout these responses especially in Church.



Conclusion

Although most of the Holy Week Services may be longer than a typical Divine Liturgy, **you can and should bring your children**, and prepare them to fully participate in this special time of our Liturgical year! Please be aware of your children's needs, whereabouts, and movements during these services, so that all those around you can also fully experience the joy of the Feast. Most importantly experience this solemn and joyous time as a family with your Church family.



But perhaps the most important advice of all:
Be present with your family so that they can experience what Orthodoxy is all about!

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