



Guide to the Holy Pascha Week

Contents

Guide to the Holy Pascha Week.....	3
Church Tradition	3
Church Setting.....	3
The Sacraments.....	4
The Hymns	4
The Hours and Gospel Readings	5
How to Benefit Spiritually from Holy Week.....	6
Daily Readings for Holy Week.....	8
Lazarus Saturday.....	8
Sunday Before Holy Week; Feast of Palms	8
Origin of Alexandria, <i>Homily 37: Luke 19:29-40</i>	9
Monday	11
VIGIL OF MONDAY	11
EVENTS.....	11
Saint John Chrysostom, <i>On Matthew, Homily 67: The Fruit of Labor</i>	12
Tuesday	20
EVENTS.....	20
Saint Augustine, <i>Sermon #43: Our Beloved Bridegroom</i>	21
Wednesday	26
EVENTS.....	27
Saint Ambrose of Milan, <i>On Repentance, Book II: The Aroma of Repentance</i>	29
Thursday.....	31
Saint John Chrysostom, <i>Homily 70: On the Gospel of John</i>	37
Saint Ambrose of Milan, <i>On the Holy Spirit, Book I: Wash My Feet, Lord</i>	40
Good Friday.....	41
Saint Gregory of Nazianzus, <i>Third Theological Oration. 17-21: The Mystery of the Cross</i>	45
Bright Saturday	48
Saint Augustine, <i>City of God, Book XXI, Chapter 26: What It is to Have Christ for a Foundation, and Who They are to Whom Salvation as by Fire is Promised</i>	49
Bishop Gregory the Dialogist, <i>The Dialogues: Book II, The Life of Benedict</i>	52

Saint Epiphanius of Cyprus, <i>The Silence of the Earth</i>	53
Resurrection Sunday	54
Saint Cyril of Alexandria, <i>Commentary on the Second Letter to the Corinthians: Our Firm Hope</i>	54
Bishop Maximus of Turin, <i>Christ is Risen!</i>	55

Guide to the Holy Pascha Week

Without question, the Holy Pascha week is the holiest week of the entire year.

The artistic beauty and spiritual depth of the rites of the Coptic Orthodox church are at its zenith during this week. Christ's crucifixion and resurrection are the foundation upon which is built the whole fabric of Christianity. This document seeks to serve as a guide through the journey of our Lord Jesus Christ through His passion and crucifixion.

Church Tradition

During Holy Week the Church reenacts before us the entire passion of Christ. We do, within the confines of the church building, what the early Christians did in Jerusalem every year during this week. The early Christians used to celebrate Holy Week by visiting and praying at each site where the events had originally taken place. The early Church had understood the great importance of Holy Week and took several steps to devote this week to the Lord. The level of asceticism (fasting, prayer, metanias, vigil) was at its maximum. They only ate bread and salt, abstaining from any cooked food or dessert. They considered it inappropriate to taste anything sweet while commemorating the suffering of the Lord and also tried to avoid the distractions of cooking. Women did not wear jewelry or make up, and devoted all of their time for worship and devotion. Most Christians also abstained from food from Good Friday until Easter service, spending the whole week in the church. Emperor Theodosius, a Christian king, ordered a universal holiday during this time so that all those working within the government or private business sector could assemble in prayer and devotion as one family. Masters alleviated their slaves from working during this week, allowing them to worship in the Church. Prisoners were even set free to go to Church and join in the ceremonial prayers. The early Church used to celebrate Pascha once every 33 years. But because many died without ever celebrating this feast, the church decided to celebrate it once every year. Initially, there was some discrepancy between the Church of Antioch (which celebrated Easter on Passover, the 14th of Nissan, even if it was not a Sunday) and the Churches of Rome and Alexandria (which set Easter as the Sunday following the Passover). The Council of Nicea resolved this by setting its date as the latter. Our blessed Church has set the schedule of prayers and readings to correspond with the journey, the teaching, and the events that led up to the crucifixion. The hymns, sermons and meditations are so expositive that the catechumens used to learn the entire story of Christ during this one week.

Church Setting

Under the Old Testament law, the sin offering was to be burned outside of the camp so that the camp would not be defiled by the sins of the congregations (Leviticus 4:12, 21). In a similar manner, Christ had taken away the sins of the world outside of

Jerusalem. The Church follows the example of the Old Testament and Christ's sacrifice by celebrating all of the prayers of Pascha outside of the main church, the altar. Instead, the Holy Week prayers are done in the middle section of the church. No one enters the Altar because the Lord Christ's suffering and crucifixion took place outside of Jerusalem. As St. Paul explains, we go outside the camp: ***"Let us go forth therefore unto Him outside the camp bearing His reproach."*** (Hebrews 13:13). We do not go near the sanctuary, for we remember how the door to the heavens were closed before the crucifixion. We enter with Him on Holy Thursday, as we commemorate the Eucharist. Then we continue with Him for the remainder of the events in Jerusalem. Additionally, black veils are placed on the pulpit, draped along the walls and wrapped around the columns of the church. The atmosphere is transferred into one of intense mourning, so that we may participate in the Lord's sufferings. As St. Paul explained, ***"that I may know Him and the power of His Resurrection and the sharing of His sufferings."*** (Philippians 3:10)

The Sacraments

Throughout Holy Week, the Church focuses again on the sufferings of the Lord. There is no raising of incense to be made during the first three days. Consequently, during this time, none of the sacraments are performed (except for confession). The first sacrament allowable outside of this is the Divine Liturgy celebrated on Holy Thursday. For this reason, the Church prepares the congregation for the lack of these sacraments by having general services. The Sixth Sunday of Lent is also known as Baptism Sunday, where most of the catechumens and children would be baptized so that they may receive communion and prepare for Easter. On the Last Friday of Lent, a general Unction of the Sick service is held. After a series of prayers over Holy Oil, the priest anoints the congregation with the oil for the healing of their sicknesses and diseases. Additionally, after Palm Sunday, there is a general funeral service. There are only two Divine Liturgies celebrated throughout the entire Passion Week, on Holy Thursday and Bright Saturday. Both are prayed with minimal hymns, since most of the hymns of the Liturgy are joyous ones.

The Hymns

It has been said that the hymns of the Coptic Orthodox Church are among the oldest ecclesiastical chants still chanted today in the entire world. The service of the ritual is interspersed with a number of hymns of great antiquity and amazing magnificence. The mournful tunes fill us with comfort and inner relief. They lead man into impalpability and transcendence over worldliness to rest in the serenity and peace of God. In addition to these hymns, most parts of the Holy Week service are set to plain tunes—simple in their structure, but matchless in their penetration and their power to bring man into the depth of devotion thereby filling him with celestial ecstasy. The Paschal hymn is perhaps the great hallmark of the entire week. Its repetition leads to one of great depth and internal reflection. The church repeats this one hymn twelve times in each hour to replace the twelve psalms for each prayer of the canonical hour. Not only is the Paschal hymn a psalm of prayer, it is also a historical sermon. It becomes a simple introduction, not only to the prayer of our Heavenly Father, but into the life of our dear Lord. As our beloved Pope Shenouda III writes:

The Lord Christ left Jerusalem to Bethany, where we follow Him, saying, "Thine is the Power, the Glory, the Blessing." The Chief Priests were annoyed when the Lord cleared the Temple, and said "By what authority are you doing these things?" But we say, "Thine is the Power, the Glory, the Blessing, and the Majesty, Emmanuel our God and our King." They planned to kill Him while we defend Him saying, "Thine is the Power, the Glory, the Blessing." The Lord in humility, bent to wash the Disciples' feet, and we praise Him saying, "Thine is the Power and the Glory, the Blessing and the Majesty." The Lord prayed at Gethsemane in such agony that His sweat became as drops of blood and we proclaim, "Thine is the Power and the Glory, the Blessing and the Majesty." We follow Him hour by hour; when arrested, put

under trial in the presence of His enemies, crowned with thorns, flogged, falling under the Cross, nailed, till He commended His Spirit into the hands of the Father and when He took the robber on His right with Him into Paradise, and we continually chant unto Him the hymn, "Thine is the Power and the Glory, the Blessing and the Majesty, forever Amen"

The Hours and Gospel Readings

This is the only time during the year that we do not read from the Agpeya. This is because its prayers encompass the entire life of Christ (prophecies, nativity, crucifixion, resurrection, ascension, etc.); but during Holy Week, we simply focus on the Passion of our Lord. Consequently, there are separate prayers for each hour. The Didache also mandated the reading of all the books of the Bible, including the Old and New Testaments. Since this became difficult due to the Christians' occupation with other business, Pope Gabriel the 70th Pope of Alexandria, selected some of the prophecies from the Old Testament, Psalms, and the New Testaments that memorialized the Passion of our Savior. He then distributed them among the daily hours and compiled it into the Holy Pascha. This book was then reorganized and revisited by H.G. Bishop Peter, Bishop of Bahnasa. Bishop Peter added some of the sermons and homilies of the early Fathers of the Church.

Each day during Pascha has a morning and evening service. The Morning and Evening service contain five separate hours:

	<i>Morning Service</i>	<i>Evening Service</i>
• 1st hour	6 am	6 pm
• 3rd hour	9 am	9 pm
• 6th hour	12 (noon)	12 (midnight)
• 9th hour	3 pm	3 am
• 11th hour	5 pm	5 am

Each of the above hours are divided into six separate sections:

1) Prophecies and Poetry

- Number of readings vary from 2-5 (except on Good Friday 18 are read)
- Most of the readings are from the book of Isaiah. By Easter, the Church would have finished the entire book. Isaiah contains the most prophecies.
- Each hour generally has one prophecy explaining how Jerusalem would treat the Messiah, and one chapter (usually Proverbs or Sirach) discussing the importance of wisdom, fear of God, righteousness, etc.
- As in the great Lent, the first prophecy is the same theme as the Pauline (during Lent), the Gospel, and the sermon. The other prophecies fulfill the first prophecy. They are arranged to fit the life of Christ during His days on earth.

2) Homilies (only are read in the first, ninth and eleventh hours of Monday- Thursday)

3) **Doxology of the Pascha** (Thine is the power, the glory...). The community joins together in singing, "Thine is the Power...." twelve times (six towards the North and six towards the South), followed by the Lord's Prayer. This beautiful praise is repeated continuously. Humans did not create this praise, as many may believe. Rather, the praise is of divine inspiration, as the psalms. It is taken from the Book of Revelation. Whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to Him who sits on the throne, who lives forever and ever (Revelation 4:9), they say with loud voice: "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom, And strength and honor and glory and blessing!"

(Revelation 5:12). The Church joins the angels who are before the throne of God praising the Living One forever.

Beginning at the Eleventh Hour of Tuesday, we add “my Good Savior” to the praise, strongly attesting that Christ’s sufferings for our salvation began when the high priests and the elders were consulting the arrest of Jesus and plotting His death. Beginning at the vigil of Friday, and continuing throughout the day, we add “my salvation” to the praise, emphasizing that the Church recognizes that salvation is fulfilled on the Cross.

4) **Psalm and Gospel.** The Church selects verses and Psalms that relate to the sufferings of Christ to be read in a sad tune. Following the Psalm, the introduction of the Gospel is either read or chanted. “We beseech our Lord and God that we may be made worthy to hear to the Holy Gospel. In wisdom, let us attend to the Holy Gospel”. The psalms contain many prophecies on the life of Jesus from His birth to His ascension. Considering that at this time we are commemorating the agony of Christ, the Church chooses texts that are connected with the events.

5) **Expositions** (el Tarh)

6) **Litanies** for the church (clergy, servants, catechumens), the sick, the poor, the leaders and rulers, the whole world... (Prostrations during the daytime litanies except Sunday)

7) **12 Lord Have Mercy**

8) **Final Hymn** (O King of Peace)

9) **Benediction**

How to Benefit Spiritually from Holy Week

1. Our Behavior Inside and Outside of Church

It is very noticeable that many people during Passion Week are one thing inside church and completely different outside. Inside church, black curtains, somber hymns, solemn readings, and concentrating on the suffering of Christ. Outside of church, we often laugh, joke around, socialize, think and talk about many worldly issues. We lose all the spiritual depth that we gained inside church. Let us concentrate our thoughts, conversations, and meditations around the events of this holy week and the Passion of our Savior.

2. Retreat

During our regular fasting days, we put the words of the Bible before us, “**Consecrate a fast, call a sacred assembly**” (Joel 1:14). How much more then should we apply this commandment during Holy Week? This week should be characterized by solitude and retreat with God, by staying away from idle discussions and various means of entertainment of pleasure. Reserve your time to God and to spiritual activities worthy of this week.

3. Follow the Steps of Christ

Meditate on the events of the week one by one: from Palm Sunday, when Christ refused His worldly kingdom and the Jews gave up their hope in Him, until they crucified and buried Him.

On Palm Sunday, ask yourself, “Is Christ King and Lord over everything in my life?”

Do I, like Christ, turn down worldly glory for spiritual and eternal glory? During the

General Funeral Service, do I consider myself attending my own funeral?" And when the church denounces Judas' traitorous kiss on the eve of the Wednesday of Passion Week, ask yourself in prayer, "How often, O Lord have I betrayed You? How many times have I told You words of love in prayers, while my actions show the opposite and my heart is far away from You?"

4. Share in the Fellowship of His Suffering.

Saint Paul said, ***"That I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His suffering, being conformed to His death"*** (Philippians 3:10). Can we give ourselves an exercise this week to share in the fellowship of His suffering and be conformed to His death? Can we follow Him in His suffering and ascend with Him to the Cross? Can we say with St. Paul, ***"With Christ I have been crucified; it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me"*** (Galatians 2:20)? Therefore, in order for Christ to live in us, we have to carry our cross and follow Him. If you have a cross in your life, do not complain about it. Instead, rejoice in it and bear it for Christ's sake. ***"For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him but to suffer for His sake"*** (Philippians 1:29).

5. Asceticism

Whoever puts the suffering of Christ before him will not take any pleasure in eating and drinking or pampering the body. But in order to succeed in pursuing asceticism, we must satisfy our souls with spiritual food so that it may thrive and overcome physical hunger. The tradition of the Church is to fast (abstain from food) Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday until 5pm – as much as a person is able they should do this.

6. Spiritual Readings

Spiritual readings are also food for the soul. The church has organized for us a treasure of appropriate readings for every day of Holy Week, comprised of Gospel readings, Old Testament prophecies that correspond to the events of each day, spiritual explanations and sermons of the Church Fathers. On Bright Saturday (Apocalypse night) the church reads the entire Book of Revelation.

7. Hymns

The hymns of the Passion Week are moving and full of spiritual depth. Hymns, like reading, preserve the thought from wandering and guide it in spiritual direction.

8. Prayer

Since the prayers of the Agpeya are not used during Holy Week, we are to substitute personal prayers in their place, in addition to the intensive prayers of the church, asking the Lord who bore the sins of the world and died for us to forgive and have mercy upon us according to His great mercy.

9. Confession and Communion

During this week, each person must sit with himself and remember his sins and put them on Christ's shoulders and tell Him in shame, "Carry O Lord my sins too, with the sins of the rest of humanity. Take my sins and nail them to the Cross with You, so that Your Blood may wipe them away!" Look carefully at your sins and know that they are the cause of His crucifixion. Many people cry out of their sorrow for Christ's suffering while they crucify Him every day with their sins. We should not feel sorry for Christ during this week, but should be sorry for our sins that caused Him these pains. As Jesus told the women that were crying over Him, ***"Daughters of Jerusalem, do not cry for Me, but cry for yourselves and your children"*** (Luke 23:28). Before the Cross, we all stand as sinners, all under the condemnation. ***"No one is righteous, not even one"*** (Psalm 14:3). We confess our sins and prepare ourselves for communion.

There are three liturgies during Holy Week: on Passover Thursday, Holy Saturday, and Easter Sunday (preceded, of course, by the Liturgy of Palm Sunday).

10. Spiritual Storage

Passion Week is not an opportunity to benefit for a week only, but a time to store up spiritual nourishment enough to last the whole year, particularly needed during the 50 days after the Resurrection when there is no fasting.

Daily Readings for Holy Week

Lazarus Saturday

A few days prior to today, Christ went to Bethany, where He resurrected Lazarus, the brother of Mary and Martha (John 11). Six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany where Lazarus was, whom Christ had raised from the dead. There they made a supper for Him. Martha served, Lazarus attended near Christ at the table, and Mary sat at His feet. Martha had expressed her gratitude to Christ for resurrecting her brother from the dead by preparing a meal for Him. But Mary, the less conventional sister, now takes it upon herself to perform an unthinkable act of love. She first takes a very expensive flask of perfume. This alabaster flask, alone, was precious. So much so that to release the perfume. Even more precious was the perfume, harboring a special aroma worth fortunes that came from the Himalayas. It was worth 300 dinari—a family could have lived for a year on the price of this perfume. Mary goes even further. She does not even allow a servant to wash His feet, but personally anoints Him out of her love and humility—exactly what Christ would teach His disciples within 24 hours!

To continue along the Paschal theme, there is joy within sadness and sadness in the midst of joy in these very two stories. The anointing of Christ's feet was a joyous act of thanksgiving for bringing the dead alive, while at the same time a foreshadowing of Christ's death and burial. As they celebrate the welcoming of their brother, they were saying goodbye to their Savior.

Judas had criticized her for wasting the cost of this perfume on Christ by saying it could have been used for the poor. But Christ encourages her work and service for Him, for she had done this for His burial. Mary gave out of her heart; Judas had criticized her out of his selfishness. Mary sacrificed her life and all her money for Christ; Judas stole from the moneybox and betrayed Him for 30 silver coins. Mary acted out of loyalty, Judas out of betrayal. He thought of money, while forgetting about the Lord. Mary is serving the poor through the Lord; Judas is preventing and discouraging service to both.

Sunday Before Holy Week; Feast of Palms

During the matins prayer of Palm Sunday, the church makes a procession of twelve stations around the Church, similar to the one made during the Feast of the Cross. At each station, a gospel reading is read in front of the icon commemorating a saint, group of saints, or an event. After the gospel is read, a special response is said for that saint or event with the Palm Sunday Tune (Hosanna tune).

St. John's gospel tells us that Jesus headed for Jerusalem the day after the supper, where He made a public entry (John 12:13). Thus, the following day was a Sunday, the 10th Nisan. This is the day all Israelites select a lamb from their herd, the paschal lamb, and keep it until the evening of the 14th day of the month for slaughtering (Ex. 12:1-36).

Paschal lambs were selected and preserved for few days in the holy city. Similarly, God's lamb bearing the sin of the world remained inside the walls of Jerusalem for few days, traveling between the temple and Bethany. When it was due time for the Redemption to be accomplished, Jesus entered Jerusalem

with great celebrations, as prophesied by Zechariah in the book of Zechariah. “Rejoice greatly, daughter of Zion, and proclaim daughter of Jerusalem: Behold, the King cometh unto thee: He is just and triumphal, riding upon a donkey and upon a colt...” (Zech. 9:9).

Jesus left His native land of Galilee to minister in Judea and Berea on the way to Jerusalem. The Lord Jesus Christ was received in Jerusalem with a parade of onlookers, men women and children cheering joyfully with palms in hand, spreading their garments under His feet. Jesus entered Jerusalem with a modest procession, riding upon a colt. Although Jesus entered unknown and unlike a worldly king, He inspired awe and fear (spiritual kingdom) and “... all the city was moved, saying: ‘Who is this?’” (Matt 21:10), thus declaring their acceptance of His kingdom. Children welcomed Him with joy, proclaiming His kingdom as they cried “Hosanna to the son of David (Mat. 21:15).”

Concurrently, those whose hearts were hardened said unto Him, “Hearest thou what they say?” Jesus responded by saying to them, and also to us, “out of the mouth of babes and sucklings He had perfected praise” (Matthew 21:16). With the entrance of the King into our hearts and our lives, we are welcoming a new life in Christ. The Church commemorates the entrance of our Lord into our inward Jerusalem to establish His Kingdom in us and gather all to Himself. During the Matins prayer, there is a procession inside the sanctuary, indicating that the procession of the redeemed believers starts by God’s plan of Christ’s self-oblation. The procession then proceeds through the nave, before the icons of all the apostles, martyrs and saints. During the Liturgy, each of the four gospels are read, each one facing a different direction as the fulfillment of the prophesy that the gospel will be preached throughout the world (N, S, E, W). The four gospels clearly announce the beginning of Christ’s Kingdom and delineate the conditions to accept His Kingdom. (Matt 21:1-17); (Mark 11:1-11); (Luke 9:29-48) and (John 12:12-19).

But this joy is neither complete nor consistent. The scribes, Pharisees and Sadducees envied Him and the love that the people had for Him. As the children cheered the Messiah these Jewish leaders questioned Him by saying, **“By what authority are You doing these things?”** (Matthew 21:23) Even the city itself soon would be split against Him. Some were shouting “Hosanna!” but in a few days, others (lead by the priests) would be shrieking, **“Crucify Him, crucify Him!”** (Luke 23:21) Such a great paradox and irony is one of the main themes throughout the entire week, some accept Him into their lives and some crucify Him.

On Saturday, our Lord Jesus resurrected Lazarus from the death, in a village called Bethany (house of sorrow). As told in the gospel of St. John, the supper occurred six days before the Passover. “During the supper, Mary took a very costly ointment of spikenard and anointed Jesus’ feet and wiped them with her hair” (John 12:12). Six days before the Passover was a Sabbath day. On Sunday, Jesus entered the temple and cast out sin and hypocrisy. Jesus makes it clear that He rejects those who sell the gifts of the Holy Spirit. He also shows the extent of relentless judgment for those who reject the Kingdom of Jesus Christ. Having established His reign, Jesus can say “My house” while claiming His zeal for its cleanliness. This is the day of extreme happiness and the beginning of the week of sorrows. We enter the church with palm leaves and hymns of joy; we leave draped in sorrow and mourning. As St. Andrew, bishop of Crete said, *“Let us run to accompany Him as He hastens toward His passion, and imitate those who met Him then, not by covering His path with garments, olive branches or palms, but by doing all we can to prostrate ourselves before Him by being humble and trying to live as He would wish.”*

Origen of Alexandria, Homily 37: Luke 19:29-40

From the Gospel according to Luke, the account was read of how, when the savior had come “to Bethpage and Bethany near Mount Olivet, he sent two of his disciples” to untie “the foal of a donkey” that had been tied, “on which no man ever sat.” This seems to me to pertain more to the deeper sense

than to the simple narrative. The donkey had been bound. Where? “Across from Bethpage and Bethany.” “Bethany” means “house of obedience,” and “Bethpage” “house of jaws”—that is, a priestly place. For, jaw-bones were given to priests, as the law commands. So, the Savior sends his disciples to the place where “obedience” is, where “the place given over to priests” is, to unbind “the foal of a donkey, on which no man had ever sat.”

But who else besides a man can sit on a donkey? I wish for a moment to give an example, so that what I am going to say can be understood. It is written in Isaiah, “A vision of four-footed beasts in tribulation and straits,” and the rest, up to the point where it says, “The wealth of asps will not profit them.” Each one of us should consider what great wealth of asps he has previously carried, what great riches of beasts, and how a rational man has never sat on our donkey—not the word of Moses, nor of Isaiah, nor of Jeremiah, nor of all the rest of the prophets. Then he will see that the Word of God, and Reason, have sat upon us, when the Lord Jesus came and commanded his disciples to go and untie “the colt of a donkey,” which had previously been bound, so that it could walk free. Thus the “colt of a donkey” is untied and led to Jesus. When he sent his disciples to untie it he said, “If anyone asks you why you are untying the foal, say to him, ‘Because the Lord has need of it.’”

Many people were lords of this colt before the Savior needed it. But, after he began to be its Lord, the many ceased to be its lords, for “no one can serve God and mammon.” When we serve wickedness, we are subjected to many passions and vices. Hence, the colt is untied, “because the Lord has need of it.” Even now the Lord “has need of” the colt. You are the colt of the donkey. Why does the Son of God “have need of” you? What does he seek from you? He needs your salvation. He wants you to be untied from the bonds of sin.

Then the disciples lay “their garments upon the donkey” and have the Savior sit down. They take the Word of God and put it on the souls of the hearers. They take off their garments and “spread them out on the road.” The garments of the apostles are upon us; their good works are our adornment. The apostles want us to tread upon their garments. And, indeed, when the donkey imitates the disciples’ teaching and their life, it is untied by the disciples, bears Jesus, and treads on the apostles’ garments. Who of us is so blessed that Jesus sits on him? As long as he was on the mountain, he dwelt only with the apostles. But, when he begins to descend, a crowd of people runs to meet him. If he had not come to the descent, the crowd could not have run to meet him. He descended, and sat upon the colt of a donkey, and the whole people praised God in a harmonious voice.

The Pharisees saw this and said to the Lord, “Reprove them.” He said to them, “If they are silent, the stones will cry out.” When we speak, the stones are silent. When we are silent, the stones cry out. “For, the Lord can raise up from these stones sons for Abraham.” When shall we be silent? When “the charity of many grows cold,” and when the prophecy that the Savior uttered is fulfilled, “Do you think that, when the Son of Man comes, he will find faith upon the earth?” We invoke the Lord’s mercy, lest we should be silent and the stones cry out. We should speak out and praise God, in Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, to whom is glory and power for ages and ages. Amen.

Monday

Monday we focus first on the story of Adam and Eve: their creation (1st hour prophecy), their sin, and their removal from the Garden of Eden (9th hour prophecy). We see once they sinned they could not remain any longer in Eden because good and evil cannot coexist. (11th hour Homily). On the evening of Palm Sunday our Lord went with his disciples outside the city. Along the way to Bethany, Christ was hungry; and He cursed a fig tree with many leaves but no fruit (1st & 3rd hour). This was a symbol of the Jewish nation, which had the outward appearance of fruits, because they had followed the letter of the law. But they lacked fruit in that they did not abide by the Spirit of the law and “neglected the weightier things of the law.” They continued to question His authority even to the last moment (9th hour gospel). Christ had rejected the Jews, as they were plotting to slaughter Him. The church is reminding us that we should not think of this week as simply an outer appearance of worship without sowing the fruits of repentance, love, and meekness.

As Adam and Eve covered their sin with the fig tree, Christ rebukes the fig tree to tell us that we can no longer cover our sins with a cloak of hypocrisy. As St. John Chrysostom said, *“The fig tree with its broad leaves represents the wide road. Also it reminds us of the sin which Adam tried to cover with its leaves.”* Adorn yourselves with virtue so we will not experience the wrath of God, but His mercy. We cannot be hypocritical (11th hour prophesy of Sirach). Even our churches cannot have good and bad fruits (11th hour Homily).

VIGIL OF MONDAY

The objective of this evening is to get ready. We are to get ready to share Christ’s sufferings. This can only be achieved through faith. We are also to get ready for His Second Coming. This starts at the Cross, as the Cross is doom for those who refuse to be saved, and victory for the saved. “For the message of the Cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.” (I Cor. 1:18).

The five readings of this evening (the first, third, sixth, ninth and eleventh hours) call our attention, warning us that the day of the Lord is near and calling us to get ready. In these readings, the Lord explains to His disciples the inevitable necessity of the Cross for the salvation of the world.

EVENTS

Jesus leaves the house of Bethany, situated on the Mount of Olives. Bethany is referred to as the village of Lazarus, Martha and Mary, and is located about 15 minutes from Jerusalem (John 11:18). Jesus goes to the temple, where He spends His days during the week. The evenings are spent resting in Bethany (Luke 21:27-38). On His way to the temple, Jesus curses a fruitless fig tree (Mat. 20:18,19) and (Mark 11:12-20). Jesus curses the fig tree because it has leaves, but no fruits. Usually, fruits grow at the same time as leaves on a fig tree. St. Mark remarks that this is no season for ripe figs and that there should be no leaves on the tree, either. Thus, the presence of leaves is a false promise of fruits, a kind of pretense. Jesus takes the tree as a symbol of the Jewish nation. The nation boasts to be a blessed people because of the Law, the temple and the religious rituals related to the fasting and offering of sacrifices.

However, the nation lacks the faith, love and holiness to accept Jesus Christ and obey His commandments. It appears that the Lord did not curse the tree because it had no fruits, but because the leaves gave a false promise of fruits. This is how God rebukes a fruitless person. “These are spots in your love feasts, while they feast with you without fear, serving [only] themselves. [They are] clouds without water, carried about by the winds; late autumn trees without fruit, twice dead, pulled up by the roots; raging waves of the sea, foaming up their own shame; wandering stars for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever.” (Jude 1:12,13).

On the same day, Jesus enters the temple. In the temple, Jesus casts out the people who are selling and buying. Jesus will not suffer anyone to carry vessels through the temple (Mark 11:15,16). Jesus compares the temple to a 'den of thieves' because the buyers and sellers are disturbing the holiness of the temple, referred to as "My Father's house". Jesus wants to tell them, "You have dishonored my house with your trade. You are cheating God's rights. You have transformed the divine sanctuary into a marketplace for material profit, depriving those who come for worship from the opportunity to raise their hearts to God in the holy place designed for adoration. You are robbing the strangers, extorting their money against the goods they are buying for sacrifices.

The cursing of the fig tree and the casting out of the traders are the most important events on Monday. Throughout the rest of the day, Jesus is teaching and performing miracles, infuriating the high priests and the guardians of the temple. For this purpose, the Church organizes the readings of Monday and the vigil of Tuesday to be centered around the cursed tree that had leaves and no fruits and the use of the temple for a materialistic trade. The Church makes it clear that to be able to live in Christ, as our Savior teaches us through the parables, we should be aware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. The true physician of souls knows the danger of hypocrisy and where the disease lies. He loves the publicans and the sinners whose healing He can foresee.

Furthermore, Jesus tells the woman caught in sin, "Neither I, do condemn thee" (John 8:11). On the other hand, Jesus has no pity for hypocrisy because it is the root of all diseases. By justifying the sinner in his own eyes, hypocrisy prevents a sinner from healing. As we begin to commemorate the sufferings of our Lord, let us prepare our hearts for the Holy Spirit to help us escape from hypocrisy so that we may benefit from His fruits during the Holy Pascha.

Saint John Chrysostom, On Matthew, Homily 67: The Fruit of Labor

Matthew 21:12-13

" And Jesus went into the temple, and cast out all them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the money-changers and the seats of them that sold doves, and says unto them, It is written, my house shall be called a house of prayer; but you have made it a den of thieves."

This John likewise says, but he in the beginning of his Gospel, this at the end. Whence it is probable this was done twice, and at different seasons.

And it is evident both from the times, and from their reply. For there He came at the very Passover, but here much before. And there the Jews say, "What sign do you show us?" John 2:18 but here they hold their peace, although reprov'd, because He was now marvel'd at among all men.

And this is a heavier charge against the Jews, that when He had done this not once only, but a second time, they continued in their trafficking, and said that He was an adversary of God, when they ought even from hence to have learned His honor for His Father and His own might. For indeed He also wrought miracles, and they saw His words agreeing with His works.

But not even so were they persuaded, but "were sore displeased," and this while they heard the prophet crying aloud, and the children in a manner beyond their age proclaiming Him. Wherefore also

He Himself sets up Isaiah against them as an accuser, saying, "My house shall be called a house of prayer." Isaiah 56:7

But not in this way only does He show His authority, but also by His healing various infirmities. "For the blind and the lame came unto Him, and He healed them," Matthew 21:14 and His power and authority He indicates.

But they not even so would be persuaded, but together with the rest of the miracles hearing even the children proclaiming, were ready to choke, and say, "Do you not hear what these say?" And yet it was Christ's part to have said this to them, "Hear ye not what these say?" for the children were singing to Him as to God.

What then says He? Since they were speaking against things manifest, He applies His correction more in the way of reproof, saying, "Have ye never read, Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings You have perfected praise?" And well did He say, "Out of the mouth." For what was said was not of their understanding, but of His power giving articulation to their tongue yet immature.

And this was also a type of the Gentiles lisping, and sounding forth at once great things with understanding and faith.

And for the apostles also there was from hence no small consolation. For that they might not be perplexed, how being unlearned they should be able to publish the gospel, the children anticipate them, and remove all their anxiety, teaching them, that He would grant them utterance, who made even these to sing praises.

And not so only, but the miracle showed that He is Creator even of nature. The children then, although of age immature, uttered things that had a clear meaning, and were in accordance with those above, but the men things teeming with frenzy and madness. For such is the nature of wickedness.

Forasmuch then as there were many things to provoke them, from the multitude, from the casting out of the sellers, from the miracles, from the children, He again leaves them, giving room to the swelling passion, and not willing to begin His teaching, lest boiling with envy they should be the more displeased at His sayings.

"Now in the morning as He returned into the city, He was an hungered." Matthew 21:18 How is He an hungered in the morning? When He permits the flesh, then it shows its feeling. "And when He saw a fig tree in the way, He came to it, and found nothing thereon, but leaves only." Matthew 21:19 Another evangelist says, "The time of figs was not yet;" but if it was not time, how does the other evangelist say, "He came, if haply He might find fruit thereon." Whence it is manifest that this belongs to the suspicion of His disciples, who were yet in a somewhat imperfect state. For indeed the evangelists in many places record the suspicions of the disciples.

Like as this then was their suspicion, so also was it too to suppose it was cursed for this cause, because of having no fruit. Wherefore then was it cursed? For the disciples' sakes, that they might have confidence. For because everywhere He conferred benefits, but punished no man; and it was needful that He should afford them a demonstrative proof of His power to take vengeance also, that both the disciples might learn, and the Jews, that being able to blast them that crucify Him, of His own will He submits, and does not blast them; and it was not His will to show forth this upon men; upon the plant did He furnish the proof of His might in taking vengeance. But when unto places, or unto plants, or unto brutes, any such thing as this is done, be not curious, neither say, how was the fig-tree justly dried up, if it was not the time of figs; for this it is the utmost trifling to say; but behold the miracle, and admire and glorify the worker thereof.

Since in the case also of the swine that were drowned, many have said this, working out the argument of justice; but neither there should one give heed, for these again are brutes, even as that was a plant without life.

Wherefore then was the act invested with such an appearance, and with this plea for a curse? As I said, this was the disciple's suspicion.

But if it was not yet time, vainly do some say the law is here meant. For the fruit of this was faith, and then was the time of this fruit, and it had indeed borne it; "For already John 4:35 are the fields white to harvest," says He; and, "I sent you to reap that whereon ye bestowed no labor." John 4:38

2. Not any therefore of these things does He here intimate, but it is what I said, He displays His power to punish, and this is shown by saying, "The time was not yet," making it clear that of this special purpose He went, and not for hunger, but for His disciples' sake, who indeed marveled exceedingly, although many miracles had been done greater; but, as I said, this was strange, for now first He showed forth His power to take vengeance. Wherefore not in any other, but in the moistest of all planted things did He work the miracle, so that hence also the miracle appeared greater.

And that you might learn, that for their sakes this was done, that He might train them to feel confidence, hear what He says afterwards. But what says He? "You also shall do greater things, if you are willing to believe and to be confident in prayer." Do you see that all is done for their sake, so that they might not be afraid and tremble at plots against them? Wherefore He says this a second time also, to make them cleave to prayer and faith. "For not this only shall you do, but also shall remove mountains; and many more things shall you do, being confident in faith and prayer."

But the boastful and arrogant Jews, wishing to interrupt His teaching, came unto Him, and asked, "By what authority do you do these things?" Matthew 21:23 For since they could not object against the miracles, they bring forward against Him the correction of the traffickers in the temple. And this in John also they appear to ask, although not in these words, but with the same intent. For there too they say, "What sign do you show unto us? Seeing that you do these things." But there He answers them, saying, "Destroy this temple, and I in three days will raise it up," whereas here He drives them into a difficulty.

Whence it is manifest, that then indeed was the beginning and prelude of the miracles, but here the end.

But what they say is this: Have you received the teacher's chair? Have you been ordained a priest, that you displayed such authority? It is said. And yet He had done nothing implying arrogance, but had been careful for the good order of the temple, yet nevertheless having nothing to say, they object against this. And indeed when He cast them out, they did not dare to say anything, because of the miracles, but when He showed Himself, then they find fault with Him.

What then says He? He does not answer them directly, to show that, if they had been willing to see His authority, they could; but He asks them again, saying, "The baptism of John, whence is it? From heaven, or of men?"

And what sort of inference is this? The greatest surely. For if they had said, from heaven, He would have said to them, why then did ye not believe him? For if they had believed, they would not have asked these things. For of Him John had said, "I am not worthy to loose the latchet of His shoe;" and, "Behold the Lamb of God, which takes away the sins of the world;" and, "This is the Son of God;" and, "He that comes from above is above all;" John 4:31 and, "His fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly purge His floor." Matthew 3:12 So that if they had believed him, there was nothing to hinder them from knowing by what authority Christ does these things.

After this, because they, dealing craftily, said, "We know not," He said not, neither know I, but what? "Neither tell I you." Matthew 21:27 For if indeed they had been ignorant it would have been requisite for them to be instructed; but since they were dealing craftily with good reason He answers them nothing.

And how was it they did not say that the baptism was of men? "They feared the people" Matthew 21:26 it is said. Do you see a perverse heart? In every case they despise God and do all things for the sake of men. For this man too they feared for their sakes not reverencing the saint but on account of men, and they were not willing to believe in Christ, because of men, and all their evils were engendered to them from hence.

After this, He says, "What do you think? A man had two sons; and he says to the first, go, work today in the vineyard. But he answered and said, I will not: but afterward he repented, and went. And he came to the second, and said likewise. And he answered and said, I go sir: and went not. Whether then of them two did the will of his father? They say, the first."

Again He convicts them by a parable, intimating both their unreasonable obstinacy, and the submissiveness of those who were utterly condemned by them. For these two children declare what came to pass with respect to both the Gentiles and the Jews. For the former not having undertaken to obey, neither having become hearers of the law, showed forth their obedience in their works; and the latter having said, "All that the Lord shall speak, we will do, and will hearken," Exodus 19:8 in their works

were disobedient. And for this reason, let me add, that they might not think the law would benefit them, He shows that this self-same thing condemns them, like as Paul also says, "Not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified." For this intent, that He might make them even self-condemned, He causes the judgment to be delivered by themselves, like as He does also in the ensuing parable of the vineyard.

3. And that this might be done, He makes trial of the accusation in the person of another. For since they were not willing to confess directly, He by a parable drives them on to what He desired.

But when, not understanding His sayings, they had delivered the judgment, He unfolds His concealed meaning after this, and says, "Publicans and harlots go into the kingdom of Heaven before you. For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and you believed him not; but the publicans believed him; and you, when you had seen it, repented not afterwards, that you might believe him." Matthew 21:31-32

For if He had said simply, harlots go before you, the word would have seemed to them to be offensive; but now, being uttered after their own judgment it appears to be not too hard.

Therefore He adds also the accusation. What then is this? "John came," He says, "unto you," not unto them, and not this only, but; also "in the way of righteousness." "For neither with this can you find fault, that he was some careless one, and of no profit; but both his life was irreprehensible, and his care for you great, and you gave no heed to him."

And with this there is another charge also, that publicans gave heed; and with this, again another, that "not even after them did ye. For you should have done so even before them, but not to do it even after them was to be deprived of all excuse;" and unspeakable was both the praise of the one, and the charge against the other. "To you he came, and you accepted him not; he came not to them, and they receive him, and not even them did ye take for instructors."

See by how many things is shown the commendation of those, and the charge against these. To you he came, not to them. You believed not, this offended not them. They believed, this profited not you.

But the word, "go before you," is not as though these were following, but as having a hope, if they were willing. For nothing, so much as jealousy, rouses the grosser sort. Therefore He is ever saying, "The first shall be last, and the last first." Therefore He brought in both harlots and publicans, that they might provoke them to jealousy.

For these two indeed are chief sins, engendered of violent lust, the one of sexual desire, the other of the desire of money. And He indicates that this especially was hearing the law of God, to believe John. For it was not of grace only, that harlots entered in, but also of righteousness. For not, as continuing harlots, did they enter in, but having obeyed and believed, and having been purified and converted, so did they enter in.

Do you see how He rendered His discourse less offensive, and more penetrating, by the parable, by His bringing in the harlots? For neither did He say at once, wherefore believed ye not John? But what was much more pricking, when, He had put forward the publicans and the harlots, then He added this, by the order of their actions convicting their unpardonable conduct, and showing that for fear of men they do all things, and for vainglory. For they did not confess Christ for fear, lest they should be put out of the synagogue; and again, of John they dared not speak evil, and not even this from reverence, but for fear. All which things He convicted by His sayings, and with more severity afterwards did He go on to inflict the blow, saying, "But you, when you knew it, repented not afterwards, that you might believe him."

For an evil thing it is not at the first to choose the good, but it is a heavier charge not even to be brought round. For this above all makes many wicked, which I see to be the case with some now from extreme insensibility.

But let no one be like this; but though he be sunk down to the extremity of wickedness, let him not despair of the change for the better. For it is an easy thing to rise up out of the very abysses of wickedness.

Heard ye not how that harlot, that went beyond all in lasciviousness, outshone all in godly reverence. Not the harlot in the gospels do I mean, but the one in our generation, who came from Phœnice, that most lawless city. For she was once a harlot among us, having the first honors on the stage, and great was her name everywhere, not in our city only, but even as far as the Cilicians and Cappadocians. And many estates did she ruin, and many orphans did she overthrow; and many accused her of sorcery also, as weaving such toils not by her beauty of person only, but also by her drugs. This harlot once won even the brother of the empress, for mighty indeed was her tyranny.

But all at once, I know not how, or rather I do know well, for it was being so minded, and converting, and bringing down upon herself God's grace, she despised all those things, and having cast away the arts of the devils, mounted up to heaven.

And indeed nothing was more vile than she was, when she was on the stage; nevertheless, afterwards she outwent many in exceeding continence, and having clad herself with sackcloth, all her time she thus disciplined herself. On the account of this woman both the governor was stirred up, and soldiers armed, yet they had not strength to carry her off to the stage, nor to lead her away from the virgins that had received her.

This woman having been counted worthy of the unutterable mysteries, and having exhibited a diligence proportionate to the grace (given her) so ended her life, having washed off all through grace, and after her baptism having shown forth much self-restraint. For not even a mere sight of herself did she allow to those who were once her lovers, when they had come for this, having shut herself up, and having passed many years, as it were, in a prison. Thus "shall the last be first, and the first last;" thus do we in every case need a fervent soul, and there is nothing to hinder one from becoming great and admirable:

4. Let no man then of them that live in vice despair; let no man who lives in virtue slumber. Let neither this last be confident, for often the harlot will pass him by; nor let the other despair, for it is possible for him to pass by even the first.

Hear what God says unto Jerusalem, "I said, after she had committed all these whoredoms, Turn thou unto me, and she returned not." Jeremiah 3:7 When we have come back unto the earnest love of God, He remembers not the former things. God is not as man, for He reproaches us not with the past, neither does He say, Why were you absent so long a time? When we repent; only let us approach Him as we ought. Let us cleave to Him earnestly, and rivet our hearts to His fear.

Such things have been done not under the new covenant only, but even under the old. For what was worse than Mansseh? But he was able to appease God. What more blessed than Solomon? But when he slumbered, he fell. Or rather I can show even both things to have taken place in one, in the father of this man, for he the same person became at different times both good and bad. What more blessed than Judas? But he became a traitor. What more wretched than Matthew? But he became an evangelist. What worse than Paul? But he became an apostle. What more to be envied than Simon? But he became even himself the most wretched of all.

How many other such changes would you see, both to have taken place of old, and now taking place every day? For this reason then I say, Neither let him on the stave despair, nor let him in the church be confident. For to this last it is said, "Let him that thinks he stands, take heed lest he fall;" 1 Corinthians 10:12 and to the other, "Shall not he that falls arise?" Jeremiah 8:4 and, "Lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees." Again, to these He says, "Watch;" but to those, "Awake, you that sleep and arise from the dead." Ephesians 5:14 For these need to preserve what they have, and those to become what they are not; these to preserve their health, those to be delivered from their infirmity, for they are sick; but many even of the sick become healthy, and of the healthy many by remissness grow infirm.

To the one then He says, "Behold, you are made whole, sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto you;" John 5:14 but to these, "Will you be made whole? Arise, take up your bed, and go unto your house." For a dreadful, dreadful palsy is sin, or rather it is not palsy only, but also somewhat else more grievous. For such a one is not only in inactivity as to good works, but also in the active doing of evil works. But nevertheless, though thou be so disposed, and be willing to rouse yourself a little, all the terrors are at an end.

Though you have been so "thirty and eight years," and art earnest to become whole, there is no one to hinder you. Christ is present now also, and says, "Take up your bed," only be willing to rouse yourself, despair not. Have you no man? But you have God. Have you no one to put you into the pool? But you have Him who suffers you not to need the pool. Have you had no one to cast you in there? But you have Him that commands you to take up your bed.

You may not say, "While I am coming, another steps down before me." John 5:7 For if it be your will to go down into the fountain, there is none to hinder you. Grace is not consumed, is not spent, it is a kind

of fountain springing up constantly; by His fullness are we all healed both soul and body. Let us come unto it then even now. For Rahab also was a harlot, yet was she saved; and the thief was a murderer, yet he became a citizen of paradise; and while Judas being with his Master perished, the thief being on a cross became a disciple. Such are the wonderful works of God. Thus the magi approved themselves, thus the publican became an evangelist, thus the blasphemer an apostle.

5. Look at these things, and never despair, but be ever confident, and rouse yourself. Lay hold only on the way that leads there, and you will advance quickly. Shut not up the doors, close not up the entrance. Short is the present life, small the labor. But though it were great, not even so ought one to decline it. For if you toil not at this most glorious toil that is spent upon repentance and virtue, in the world you will assuredly toil and weary yourself in other ways. But if both in the one and the other there be labor, why do we not choose that which has its fruit abundant, and its recompense greater.

Yet neither is this labor and that the same. For in worldly pursuits are continual perils, and losses one upon another, and the hope uncertain; great is the servility, and the expenditure alike of wealth, and of bodies, and of souls; and then the return of the fruits is far below our expectation, if perchance it should grow up.

For neither does toil upon worldly matters everywhere bear fruit; nay but even, when it has not failed, but has brought forth its produce even abundantly, short is the time wherein it continues.

For when you are grown old, and hast no longer after that the feeling of enjoyment in perfection, then and not till then does the labor bear you its recompense. And whereas the labor was with the body in its vigor, the fruit and the enjoyment is with one grown old and languid, when time has dulled even the feeling, although if it had not dulled it, the expectation of the end suffers us not to find pleasure.

But in the other case not so, but the labor is in corruption and a dying body, but the crown in one incorruptible, and immortal, and having no end. And the labor is both first and short-lived; but the reward both subsequent and endless, that with security you may take your rest after that, looking for nothing unpleasant.

For neither may thou fear change any more or loss as here. What sort of good things, then, are these, which are both insecure, and short-lived, and earthly, and vanishing before they have appeared, and acquired with many toils? And what good things are equal to those, that are immovable, that grow not old, that have no toil, that even at the time of the conflicts bring you crowns?

For he that despises money even here already receives his reward, being freed from anxiety, from rivalry, from false accusation, from plotting from envy. He that is temperate, and lives orderly, even before his departure, is crowned and lives in pleasure, being delivered from unseemliness, ridicule, dangers of accusation, and the other things that are to be feared. All the remaining parts of virtue likewise make us a return here already.

In order therefore that we may attain unto both the present and the future blessings, let us flee from vice and choose virtue. For thus shall we both enjoy delight, and obtain the crowns to come, unto which God grant we may all attain, by the grace and love towards man of our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom be glory and might forever and ever. Amen.

Tuesday

After Christ comments on the fig tree that has died, Christ began to teach in many parables such as the Parable of the Talents (11th hour gospel). Christ also prophesied about the destruction of the Temple, the signs of Jerusalem's desolation and of His Second Coming (9th hour gospel). In the evening the Jews plotted with Judas to betray our Lord.

EVENTS

Throughout this day, the Lord explains ideas and secrets that the disciples had wondered about. According to the events narrated in the four gospels, the Lord starts the day by passing the fig tree that had been cursed the previous day. The tree was now dry to the roots. Peter says, "O Master, the fig tree You cursed has dried". Jesus immediately answers "Have faith in God" (Mark 11:21). Jesus spends the remainder of the day answering questions from His disciples, as well as from the Pharisees and Sadducees, who had come to trap Him through malicious questions. They ask if it is lawful to pay tribute to Caesar (Matt. 22:15-22). The Sadducees, who deny the resurrection, ask about the resurrection (Matt. 22:34-40). The Lord speaks about His Second Coming and Doomsday, warning us to keep watch and be ready, throughout the majority of the day. He tells the parable of the wicked vineyard keepers (Matt. 21:33-46), of the marriage of the king's son (Matt. 22:1-14), of the temple falling into ruins (Matt. 24:1-14), and of the ten virgins (Matt. 25:1-13). After the day's teaching, Jesus goes to Bethany to rest. Meanwhile, the high priests and the elders of the people plan His death (Matt. 26:1-16). On Tuesday, the Church stresses the Second Coming, the end of the world and the urge to get ready. This is the day our Savior lovingly invites us to keep watching with our lamps lit.

SIXTH HOUR

The first three hours invite the believers to unite with the Lord. Believers are urged to not forget His covenant, His judgments and His commandments that lead to eternal life. "I know that the LORD has given you the land, that the terror of you has fallen on us, and that all the inhabitants of the land are fainthearted because of you." (Josh. 2:9). This is the life promised in the Second Coming. The prophecy of Joshua, on the Third Hour, stresses the importance of going through the narrow gate (as already attested on Monday), in order to obtain eternal life. The prophecy from I Kings tells how Israel erred and killed the prophets, causing our Savior to lament over Jerusalem. This is repeated in the Gospel of the hour, "O Jerusalem, you killed the Prophets ..." (Mat. 23:37). The description of the ruin of Jerusalem and the destruction of the temple is a pale image of the tribulations of the end of the world.

The readings show that the Kingdom is no longer the monopoly of a chosen nation or people.

"...because Israel has not obtained what He seeks for; rather those who were chosen have obtained it" (Rom. 11:7). Furthermore, the Gospel according to St. Matthew tells us "The Kingdom of God shall be taken from (Israel), and given to a nation bringing forth fruits" (Matt. 21:43). The Lord opens paradise to people from any nation or language since they have kept the covenant.

NINTH HOUR

The prophesy from Genesis 6:1 – 9:6 relates the story of the flood and Noah's ark, and is explained in the Gospel of the Third Hour of Wednesday vigil. The Gospel tells us "before the flood, the sons of men used to eat, drink, and multiply until the day Noah entered the ark as ordered by God (Matt. 24:36).

They knew not about the flood by which "every living substance was destroyed which was upon the face

of the earth" (Gen. 7:23). In the same way, on His second coming, all will be taken by surprise. In the same way eight people only were spared by the flood. "Who formerly were disobedient, when once the Divine longsuffering waited in the days of Noah, while [the] ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water." (1 Peter 3:20). We must remember Jesus' alarming words, "For many are called, but few are chosen" (Matt. 22:14). This gospel is read on the First Hour of the evening.

ELEVENTH HOUR

The readings of the Psalm and the Gospel, in perfect accordance, are inspired by the Holy Spirit to illustrate God sitting in His glory to judge and reward each one according to his acts. Psalm 44 exclaims, "Your throne, o God..." (Psalm 44:6). The Gospel makes a similar exclamation, saying "...on the throne of Your glory" (Matt. 25:31). Psalm 41 gives us the promise, "...in the day of distress, God shall save him" (Psalm 41:1). The Gospel echoes this encouragement, "And the King will answer and say to them, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did [it] to one of the least of these My brethren, you did to Me.'" (Matt. 25:40). The Psalms are sung as a beautiful symphony, glorifying the One seated on His throne.

Starting at the Eleventh Hour of Tuesday, we add "My Good Savior" to "Thine is the glory...". The Church wants us to realize that our Lord Jesus has specified the time of His crucifixion as we read the Gospel of that hour. "After two days is the feast of the Passover and the Son of Man shall be betrayed to be crucified" (Matt. 26:2).

Saint Augustine, Sermon #43: Our Beloved Bridegroom

1. You who were present yesterday remember my promise; which with the Lord's assistance is to be made good today, not to you only, but to the many others also who have come together. It is no easy question, who the ten virgins are, of whom five are wise, and five foolish. Nevertheless, according to the context of this passage which I have wished should be read again to you today, Beloved, I do not think, as far as the Lord vouchsafes to give me understanding, that this parable or similitude relates to those women only who by a peculiar and more excellent sanctity are called Virgins in the Church, whom by a more usual term we are wont also to call, "The Religious;" but if I mistake not this parable relates to the whole Church. But though we should understand it of those only who are called "the Religious," are they but ten? God forbid that so great a company of virgins should be reduced to so small a number! But perhaps one may say, "But what if though they be so many in outward profession, yet in truth they are so few, that scarce ten can be found!" It is not so. For if he had meant that the good virgins only should be understood by the ten, He would not have represented five foolish ones among them. For if this is the number of the virgins which are called, why are the doors of the great house shut against five?

2. So then let us understand, dearly Beloved, that this parable relates to us all, that is, to the whole Church together, not to the Clergy only of whom we spoke yesterday; nor to the laity only; but generally to all. Why then are the Virgins five and five? These five and five virgins are all Christian souls together. But that I may tell you what by the Lord's inspiration I think, it is not souls of every sort, but such souls as have the Catholic faith, and seem to have good works in the Church of God; and yet even of them, "five are wise, and five are foolish." First then let us see why they are called "five," and why "virgins," and then let us consider the rest. Every soul in the body is therefore denoted by the number five, because it makes use of five senses. For there is nothing of which we have perception by the body, but

by the five folded gate, either by the sight, or the hearing, or the smelling, or the tasting, or the touching. Whoever then abstains from unlawful seeing, unlawful hearing, unlawful smelling, unlawful tasting, and unlawful touching, by reason of his incorruptness has gotten the name of virgin.

3. But if it be good to abstain from the unlawful excitements of the senses, and on that account every Christian soul has gotten the name of virgin; why are five admitted and five rejected? They are both virgins, and yet are rejected. It is not enough that they are virgins; and that they have lamps. They are virgins, by reason of abstinence from unlawful indulgence of the senses; they have lamps, by reason of good works. Of which good works the Lord says, "Let your works shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." Again He says to His disciples, "Let your loins be girded and your lamps burning." In the "girded loins" is virginity; in the "burning lamps" good works.

4. The title of virginity is not usually applied to married persons: yet even in them there is a virginity of faith, which produces wedded chastity. For that you may know, Holy Brethren, that every one, every soul, as touching the soul, and that incorruptness of faith by which abstinence from things unlawful is practiced, and by which good works are done, is not unsuitably called "a virgin;" the whole Church which consists of virgins, and boys, and married men and married women, is by one name called a Virgin. Whence prove we this? Hear the Apostle saying, not to the religious women only but to the whole Church together; "I have espoused you to One Husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ." And because the devil, the corrupter of this virginity, is to be guarded against, after the Apostle had said, "I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ;" he subjoined, "But I fear, lest as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ." Few have virginity in the body; in the heart all ought to have it. If then abstinence from what is unlawful be good, whereby it has received the name of virginity, and good works are praiseworthy, which are signified by the lamps; why are five admitted and five rejected? If there be a virgin, and one who carries lamps, who yet is not admitted; where shall he see himself, who neither preserves a virginity from things unlawful, and who not wishing to have good works walks in darkness?

5. Of these then, my Brethren, yea, of these let us the rather treat. He who will not see what is evil, he who will not hear what is evil, he that turns away his smell from the unlawful fumes, and his taste from the unlawful food of the sacrifices, he who refuses the embrace of another man's wife, breaks his bread to the hungry, brings the stranger into his house, clothes the naked, reconciles the litigious, visits the sick, buries the dead; he surely is a virgin, surely he has lamps. What seek we more? Something yet I seek. What do you seek yet, one will say? Something yet I seek; the Holy Gospel has set me on the search. It has said that even of these, virgins, and carrying lamps, some are wise and some foolish. By what do we see this? By what make the distinction? By the oil. Some great, some exceedingly great thing does this oil signify. Do you think that it is not charity? This we say as searching out what it is; we hazard no precipitate judgment. I will tell you why charity seems to be signified by the oil. The Apostle says, "I show unto you a way above the rest." Though I speak with the tongues of men and of Angels, and have not charity, I have become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. This, that is "charity," is

"that way above the rest," which is with good reason signified by the oil. For oil swims above all liquids. Pour in water, and pour in oil upon it, the oil will swim above. Pour in oil, pour in water upon it, the oil will swim above. If you keep the usual order, it will be uppermost; if you change the order, it will be uppermost. "Charity never falls."

6. What is it then, Brethren? Let us treat now of the five wise and the five foolish virgins. They wished to go to meet the Bridegroom. What is the meaning of "to go and meet the Bridegroom"? To go with the heart, to be waiting for his coming. But he tarried. "While he tarries, they all slept." What is "all"? Both the foolish and the wise, "all slumbered and slept." Think we is this sleep good? What is this sleep? Is it that at the tarrying of the Bridegroom, "because iniquity abounds, the love of many waxes cold"? Are we to understand this sleep so? I like it not. I will tell you why. Because among them are the wise virgins; and certainly when the Lord said, "Because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold;" He went on to say, "But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved." Where would you have those wise virgins be? Are they not among those that "shall endure unto the end"? They would not be admitted within at all, Brethren, for any other reason, than because they have "endured unto the end." No coldness of love then crept over them, in them love did not wax cold; but preserves its glow even unto the end. And because it glows even unto the end, therefore are the gates of the Bridegroom opened to them; therefore are they told to enter in, as that excellent servant, "Enter into the joy of your Lord." What then is the meaning of they "all slept"? There is another sleep which no one escapes. Remember ye not the Apostle saying, "But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep," that is, concerning them which are dead? For why are they called "they which are asleep," but because they are in their own day? Therefore "they all slept." Do you think that because one is wise, he has not therefore to die? Be the virgin foolish, or be she wise, all suffer equally the sleep of death.

7. But men continually say to themselves, "Lo, the day of judgment is coming now, so many evils are happening, so many tribulations thicken; behold all things which the Prophets have spoken, are nearly fulfilled; the day of judgment is already at hand." They who speak thus, and speak in faith, go out as it were with such thoughts to "meet the Bridegroom." But, lo! war upon war, tribulation upon tribulation, earthquake upon earthquake, famine upon famine, nation against nation, and still the Bridegroom comes not yet. Whilst then He is expected to come, all they who are saying, "Lo, He is coming, and the Day of Judgment will find us here," fall asleep. Whilst they are saying this, they fall asleep. Let each one then have an eye to this his sleep, and persevere even unto his sleep in love; let sleep find him so waiting. For suppose that he has fallen asleep. "Will not He who falls asleep afterwards rise again?" Therefore "they all slept;" both of the wise and the foolish virgins in the parable, it is said, "they all slept."

8. "Lo, at midnight there was a cry made." What is, "at midnight"? When there is no expectation, no belief at all of it. Night is put for ignorance. A man makes as it were a calculation with himself: "Lo, so many years have passed since Adam, and the six thousand years are being completed, and then immediately according to the computation of certain expositors, the Day of Judgment will come;" yet these calculations come and pass away, and still the coming of the Bridegroom is delayed, and the

virgins who had gone to meet him sleep. And, lo, when He is not looked for, when men are saying, "The six thousand years were waited for, and, lo, they are gone by, how then shall we know when He will come?" He will come at midnight. What is, "will come at midnight"? Will come when you are not aware. Why will He come when you are not aware of it? Hear the Lord Himself, "It is not for you to know the times or the seasons which the Lord has put in His own power." "The day of the Lord," says the Apostle, "will come as a thief in the night." Therefore watch by night that you be not surprised by the thief. For the sleep of death — will you, or nill ye — it will come.

9. "But when that cry was made at midnight." What cry was this, but that of which the Apostle says, "In the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump"? "For the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed"? And so when the cry was made at midnight, "Behold, the Bridegroom comes;" what follows? "Then all those virgins arose." What is, "they" all arose? "The hour will come," said the Lord Himself, "when all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth." Therefore at the last trumpet they all arose. "Now those wise virgins had brought oil with them in their vessels; but the foolish brought no oil with them." What is the meaning of "brought no oil with them in their vessels"? What is "in their vessels"? In their hearts. Whence the Apostle says, "Our glorying is this, the testimony of our conscience." There is the oil, the precious oil; this oil is of the gift of God. Men can put oil into their vessels, but they cannot create the olive. See, I have oil; but did you create the oil? It is of the gift of God. You have oil. Carry it with you. What is "carry it with you"? Have it within, there please God.

10. For, lo, those "foolish virgins, who brought no oil with them," wish to please men by that abstinence of theirs whereby they are called virgins, and by their good works, when they seem to carry lamps. And if they wish to please men, and on that account do all these praiseworthy works, they do not carry oil with them. Do you then carry it with you, carry it within where God sees; there carry the testimony of your conscience. For he who walks to gain the testimony of another, does not carry oil with him. If you abstain from things unlawful, and do good works to be praised of men; there is no oil within. And so when men begin to leave off their praises, the lamps fail. Observe then, Beloved, before those virgins slept, it is not said that their lamps were extinguished. The lamps of the wise virgins burned with an inward oil, with the assurance of a good conscience, with an inner glory, with an inmost charity. Yet the lamps of the foolish virgins burned also. Why burnt they then? Because there was yet no want of the praises of men. But after that they arose, that is in the resurrection from the dead, they began to trim their lamps, that is, began to prepare to render unto God an account of their works. And because there is then no one to praise, every man is wholly employed in his own cause, there is no one then who is not thinking of himself, therefore were there none to sell them oil; so their lamps began to fail, and the foolish betook themselves to the five wise, "give us of your oil, for our lamps are going out." They sought for what they had been wont to seek for, to shine that is with others' oil, to walk after others' praises. "Give us of your oil, for our lamps are going out."

11. But they say, "Not so, lest there be not enough for us and you, but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves." This was not the answer of those who give advice, but of those who mock. And why mock they? Because they were wise, because wisdom was in them. For they were not wise by ought of

their own; but that wisdom was in them, of which it is written in a certain book, she shall say to those that despised her, when they have fallen upon the evils which she threatened them; "I will laugh over your destruction." What wonder then is it, that the wise mock the foolish virgins? And what is this mocking?

12. "Go to them that sell, and buy for yourselves:" ye who never were wont to live well, but because men praised you, who sold you oil. What means this, "sold you oil"? "Sold praises." Who sell praises, but flatterers? How much better had it been for you not to have acquiesced in flatterers, and to have carried oil within, and for a good conscience-sake to have done all good works; then might ye say, "The righteous shall correct me in mercy, and reprove me, but the oil of the sinner shall not fatten my head." Rather, he says, let the righteous correct me, let the righteous reprove me, let the righteous buffet me, let the righteous correct me, than the "oil of the sinner fatten mine head." What is the oil of the sinner, but the blandishments of the flatterer?

13. "Go " then "to them that sell," this have you been accustomed to do. But we will not give to you. Why? "Lest there be not enough for us and you." What is, "lest there be not enough"? This was not spoken in any lack of hope, but in a sober and godly humility. For though the good man have a good conscience; how knows he, how He may judge who is deceived by no one? He has a good conscience, no sins conceived in the heart solicit him, yet, though his conscience be good, because of the daily sins of human life, he says to God, "forgive us our debts;" seeing he has done what comes next, "as we also forgive our debtors." He has broken his bread to the hungry from the heart, from the heart has clothed the naked; out of that inward oil he has done good works, and yet in that judgment even his good conscience trembles.

14. See then what this, "Give us oil," is. They were told "Go rather to them that sell." In that you have been used to live upon the praises of men, you do not carry oil with you; but we can give you none; "lest there be not enough for us and you." For scarcely do we judge of ourselves, how much less can we judge of you? What is "scarcely do we judge of ourselves"? Because, "When the righteous King sits on the throne, who will glory that his heart is pure?" It may be you do not discover anything in your own conscience; but He who sees better, whose Divine glance penetrates into deeper things, discovers it may be something, He sees it may be something, He discovers something. How much better may you say to Him, "Enter not into judgment with Your servant"? Yea, how much better, "Forgive us our debts"? Because it shall be also said to you because of those torches, because of those lamps; "I was hungry, and you gave Me meat." What then? Did not the foolish virgins do so too? Yea, but they did it not before Him. How then did they do it? As the Lord forbids, who said, "Take heed that you do not your righteousness before men to be seen of them, otherwise you have no reward of your Father which is in heaven: and when you pray, be not as the hypocrites, for they love to pray, standing in the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, they have received their reward." They have bought oil, they have given the price; they have bought it, they have not been defrauded of men's praises, they have sought men's praises, and have had them. These praises of men aid them not in the judgment day. But the other virgins, how have they done? "Let your works shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." He did not say, "may glorify you." For you have

no oil of your own self. Boast yourself and say, I have it; but from Him, "for what have you that you have not received?" So then in this way acted the one, and in that the other.

15. Now it is no wonder, that "while they are going to buy," while they are seeking for persons by whom to be praised, and find none; while they are seeking for persons by whom to be comforted, and find none; that the door is opened, that "the Bridegroom comes," and the Bride, the Church, glorified then with Christ, that the several members may be gathered together into their whole. "And they went in with Him into the marriage, and the door was shut." Then the foolish virgins came afterwards; but had they bought any oil, or found any from whom they might buy it? Therefore they found the doors shut; they began to knock, but too late.

16. It is said, and it is true, and no deceiving saying, "Knock, and it shall be opened unto you;" but now when it is the time of mercy, not when it is the time of judgment. For these times cannot be confounded, since the Church sings to her Lord of "mercy and judgment." It is the time of mercy; repent. Can you repent in the time of judgment? You will be then as those virgins, against whom the door was shut. "Lord, Lord, open to us." What! Did they not repent, that they had brought no oil with them? Yes, but what profits them their late repentance, when the true wisdom mocked them? Therefore "the door was shut." And what was said to them? "I know you not." Did not He know them, who knows all things? What then is, "I know you not?" I refuse, I reject you. In my art I do not acknowledge you, my art knows not vice; now this is a marvellous thing, it does not know vice, and it judges vice. It does not know it in the practice of it; it judges by reproofing it. Thus then, "I know you not."

17. The five wise virgins came, and "went in." How many are you, my Brethren, in the profession of Christ's Name! let there be among you the five wise, but be not five such persons only. Let there be among you the five wise, belonging to this wisdom of the number five. For the hour will come, and come when we know not. It will come at midnight, Watch ye. Thus did the Gospel close; "Watch, for you know neither the day nor the hour." But if we are all to sleep, how shall we watch? Watch with the heart, watch with faith, watch with hope, watch with charity, watch with good works; and then, when you shall sleep in your body, the time will come that you shall rise. And when you shall have risen, make ready the lamps. Then shall they go out no more, then shall they be renewed with the inner oil of conscience; then shall that Bridegroom fold you in His spiritual embrace, then shall He bring you into His House where you shall never sleep, where your lamp can never be extinguished. But at present we are in labour, and our lamps flicker amid the winds and temptations of this life; but only let our flame burn strongly, that the wind of temptation may increase the fire, rather than put it out.

Wednesday

This is another day of extremes. In this one day, we read of the extreme love of the sinful woman at Jesus's feet—how much she sacrificed her livelihood to anoint Him for His burial. At the same time, we witness the betrayal of one of Christ's disciples that He chose, raised and taught for over three years.

Bethany was just over the hill from Jerusalem. A few weeks earlier, Christ had come at Martha and Mary's request to raise their brother Lazarus from the dead. After this great event, He had avoided Jerusalem because the Jewish authorities became determined to arrest Him.

As the Jews separated the Passover lamb until its slaughter day, Jesus rested in Bethany during that day before offering Himself to be slaughtered.

Judas also sought opportunity to betray Jesus. According to church tradition, kisses are forbidden from the First Hour of the Eve of Thursday (Wednesday night) until the end of the Divine Liturgy on Bright Saturday. This is to remember the betrayal of Christ by Judas with a kiss.

The prophecies continue along the story of Moses and the Israelites in the wilderness. In the first hour prophesy, the people are complaining that there is no water to drink. After we see their lack of faith, the remaining prophecies remind us of how faithful God was to them in their escape from Egypt. In the third hour, we read of the first instance where God the Israelites a guides His people with a cloud of smoke by day and a pillar of fire by night. In the Sixth Hour, we are reminded of how the children of Israel miraculously escaped from the hands of Pharaoh and his army when crossing the Red Sea. Despite all of these blessings and rescues, the people continue to complain that they don't have figs, vines, fruit or water in the prophesy of the ninth hour.

EVENTS

The Lord spends the day in Bethany. He left the temple on Tuesday evening with no intent of coming back. On Tuesday, Jesus said to the Jews "your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say 'Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord'" (Matt. 23:38,39). Both Matthew 26:6-13 and Mark 14:3-9 tell us about the jar of spikenard that was spread on Jesus head. The betrayal of Judas the Iscariot, including his agreement with the chief priests on the price he would get, is narrated in the four gospels, (Matt. 16:14), (Mark 14:10,11), (Luke 12:3-6) and (John 13:1-3).

FIRST HOUR

The first prophecy is from Moses. "All the congregation of Israel left the wilderness of the Sinai Desert according to God's commandment. They went to Rephidim. There was no water for them to drink and the people revolted against Moses asking for water... Moses told them: "Why are you blaming me and why tempting God?" And he called the place 'Massah' for the chiding of Israel and tempting God when they were asking: "Is the Lord among us or not?" (Ex. 17:1-7).

The children of Israel tempted the Lord, saying "Is the Lord among us or not?". We leave room for sin when we begin asking if God is among us and begin doubting His presence. The Gospel tells us about the chief priests gathering and consulting to seize the Lord (John 11:46). Had those murderers realized that the Lord was among them, would they do what they did? Would Judas the Iscariot set a price for Jesus, had he known that the Lord was there?

The second Prophecy is from Proverbs 3:5-14. "For the merchandise of wisdom is better than the merchandise of silver and the gain of gold" (Proverbs 3:14). Judas should have reflected on this great piece of wisdom, as he sold Jesus. We too should recall these words when tempted to betray Jesus. The first lesson of that day is to trust that Jesus is our God, even on the Cross, where He doesn't have the image of a Savior. He is our Lord even if "there is no beauty that we should desire Him" (Is. 53:2).

THIRD HOUR

The first Prophecy is from Moses. "When Pharaoh let the Israelites go, God did not lead them towards Palestine... but He directed them in the wilderness towards the Red Sea and He walked in front of them

in the shape of a column of clouds in daytime, and a column of light in the night showing them the way” (Exodus 13:17).

The story of the crossing of the Israelites is related in the readings of the Sixth hour, the first prophecy is from Exodus 14: “... the angel of God that was walking in front of them, went behind them with the column of clouds entering between the soldiers of the Egyptians and those of Israel”. God carefully protects His people. As the enemy approaches, He interferes, going between His people and the enemy, in order to save them. In contrast, Man (represented in Judas) interferes between his Savior and the Chief Priests’ forces not as peacemaker, but as a traitor, delivering God and denying His covenant. The second prophecy is from Joshua 22:7-18. We should be reminded of the Lord’s words about His unfaithful disciple “it were good for that man if he had never been born” (Mark 14:21).

The Third Hour ends with Solomon indicating that the source of evil is in the impure heart (Sirach 20:3-18). This message goes along with the Psalm and Gospel of this hour. Psalm 40:1,6 tells us “I waited patiently for the LORD; And He inclined to me, and heard my cry... Sacrifice and offering You did not desire; My ears You have opened. Burnt offering and sin offering You did not require.”

SIXTH HOUR

The Psalm speaks of the conspiracy against the Lord. “They have consulted together with one consent; they are confederate against thee” (Psalm 83:5). The Gospel then condemns the traitor and shows that his betrayal was not an accidental sin. Rather, Judas’ nature was perverse and his behavior originated from his wicked heart. We are reminded of the incident that happened on Saturday when Judas objected to the 300 dinars wasted in the ointment Mary had spread on Jesus feet. Judas suggests that the money could have been given to the poor. He didn’t speak out of compassion but because he was a thief (John 12:1-8). This same gospel is repeated in the Third Hour of the evening readings, the eve of Thursday. It is meant to remind us that the disciple delivered his Master. Having opened his heart to evil, Judas committed sin after sin, denying the covenant, stealing the treasure and finally delivering God. He, who sins in one of the commandments, has sinned in all of them. Sin is the leaven that grows in the heart, culminating in the betrayal of the Lord and the denial of faith. May God deliver us from such fall.

NINTH HOUR

The first Prophecy, from Ex. 24:1-9, tells the story of Isaac’s marriage. Abraham sent his servant to choose a wife for Isaac “from his country and his kinsmen”. The prophecy reminds us that the Church, Christ’s bride, belongs to the bridegroom, Christ. He came in the flesh to choose us as His bride. He says “... they are not from this world as Myself, am not of this world either” (John 17:15). And the second Prophecy from Solomon in Proverbs 1:10 says “My son, if sinners entice you, Do not consent.” ... continues the reference to Judas. At the same time that Jesus’ disciple was selling Him for thirty pieces of silver, the woman was washing His feet with love. The woman who anointed Jesus’ head is the symbol of the soul making amendment to God for the treason of the disciple. We pray that we may wash Jesus’ feet with tears of repentance, like the woman cited in the Gospel.

Saint Ambrose of Milan, On Repentance, Book II: The Aroma of Repentance

Chapter 7

An exhortation to mourning and confession of sins for Christ is moved by these and the tears of the Church. Illustration from the story of Lazarus. After showing that the Novatians are the successors of those who planned to kill Lazarus, St. Ambrose argues that the full forgiveness of every sin is signified by the odour of the ointment poured by Mary on the feet of Christ; and further, that the Novatian heretics find their likeness in Judas, who grudged and envied when others rejoiced.

52. Let us, then, mourn for a time, that we may rejoice for eternity. Let us fear the Lord, let us anticipate Him with the confession of our sins, let us correct our backslidings and amend our faults, lest of us too it be said: "Woe is me, my soul, for the godly man is perished from the earth, and there is none among men to correct them."

53. Why do you fear to confess your sins to our good Lord? "Set them forth," He says, "that you may be justified." The rewards of justification are set before him who is still guilty of sin, for he is justified who voluntarily confesses his own sin; and lastly, "the just man is his own accuser in the beginning of his speaking." Proverbs 18:17 The Lord knows all things, but He waits for your words, not that He may punish, but that He may pardon. It is not His will that the devil should triumph over you and accuse you when you conceal your sins. Be beforehand with your accuser: if you accuse yourself, you will fear no accuser; if you report yourself, though you were dead you shall live.

54. Christ will come to your grave, and if He finds there weeping for you Martha the woman of good service, and Mary who carefully heard the Word of God, like holy Church which has chosen the best part, He will be moved with compassion, when at your death He shall see the tears of many and will say: "Where have you laid him?" John 11:34 that is to say, in what condition of guilt is he? In which rank of penitents? I would see him for whom you weep, that he himself may move Me with his tears. I will see if he is already dead to that sin for which forgiveness is entreated.

55. The people will say to Him, "Come and see." John 11:34 What is the meaning of "Come"? It means, Let forgiveness of sins come, let the life of the departed come, the resurrection of the dead, let Your kingdom come to this sinner also.

56. He will come and will command that the stone be taken away which his fall has laid on the shoulders of the sinner. He could have removed the stone by a word of command, for even inanimate nature is wont to obey the bidding of Christ. He could by the silent power of His working have removed the stone of the sepulcher, at Whose Passion the stones being suddenly removed many sepulchers of the dead were opened, but He bade men remove the stone, in very truth indeed, that the unbelieving might believe what they saw, and see the dead rising again, but in a type that He might give us the power of lightening the burden of sins, the heavy pressure as it were upon the guilty. Ours it is to remove the burdens, His to raise again, His to bring forth from the tombs those set free from their bands.

57. So the Lord Jesus, seeing the heavy burden of the sinner, weeps, for the Church alone He suffers not to weep. He has compassion with His beloved, and says to him that is dead, "Come forth," John 11:43 that is, You who lies in darkness of conscience, and in the squalor of your sins, as in the prison-house of the guilty, come forth, declare your sins that you may be justified. "For with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." Romans 10:10

58. If you have confessed at the call of Christ the bars will be broken, and every chain loosed, even the stench of the bodily corruption be grievous. For he had been dead four days and his flesh stank in the tomb; but He Whose flesh saw no corruption was three days in the sepulcher, for He knew no evils of the flesh, which consists of the substances of the four elements. However great, then, the stench of the dead body may be, it is all done away so soon as the sacred ointment has shed its odour; and the dead rises again, and the command is given to loose his hands who till now was in sin; the covering is taken from his face which veiled the truth of the grace which he had received. But since he has received forgiveness, the command is given to uncover his face, to lay bare his features. For he whose sin is forgiven has nothing whereof to be ashamed.

59. But in the presence of such grace given by the Lord, of such a miracle of divine bounty, when all ought to have rejoiced, the wicked were stirred up and gathered a council against Christ, John 11:47 and wished moreover to kill Lazarus also. John 12:10 Do you not recognize that you are the successors of those whose hardness you inherit? For you too are angry and gather a council against the Church, because you see the dead come to life again in the Church, and to be raised again by receiving forgiveness of their sins. And thus, so far as in you, you desire to slay again through envy those who are raised to life.

60. But Jesus does not revoke His benefits, nay, rather He amplifies them by additions of His liberality, He anxiously revisits him who was raised again, and rejoicing in the gift of the restored life, He comes to the feast which His Church has prepared for Him, at which he who had been dead is found as one among those sitting down with Christ.

61. Then all wonder who look upon him with the pure gaze of the mind, who are free from envy, for such children the Church has. They wonder, as I said, how he who yesterday and the day before lay in the tomb is one of those sitting with the Lord Jesus.

62. Mary herself pours ointment on the feet of the Lord Jesus. John 12:3 Perchance for this reason on His feet, because one of the lowliest has been snatched from death, for we are all the body of Christ, 1 Corinthians 12:27 but others perchance are the more honorable members. The Apostle was the mouth of Christ, for he said, "You seek a proof of Christ that speaks in me." 2 Corinthians 13:3 The prophets through whom He spoke of things to come were His mouth, would that I might be found worthy to be His foot, and may Mary pour on me her precious ointment, and anoint me and wipe away my sin.

63. What, then, we read concerning Lazarus we ought to believe of every sinner who is converted, who, though he may have been stinking, nevertheless is cleansed by the precious ointment of faith. For faith has such grace that there where the dead stank the day before, now the whole house is filled with good odour.

64. The house of Corinth stank, when it was written concerning it: "It is reported that there is fornication among you, and such fornication as is not even among the Gentiles." 1 Corinthians 5:1 There was a stench, for a little leaven had corrupted the whole lump. A good odour began when it was said: "If you forgive anything to any one I forgive also. For what I also have forgiven, for your sakes have I done it in the person of Christ." 2 Corinthians 2:10 And so, the sinner being set free, there was great joy in that place, and the whole house was filled with the odour of the sweetness of grace. Wherefore the Apostle, knowing well that he had shed upon all the ointment of apostolic forgiveness, says: "We are a sweet savour of Christ unto God in them that are saved." 2 Corinthians 2:15

65. At the pouring forth, then, of this ointment all rejoice; Judas alone speaks against it. John 12:4 So, too, now he who is a sinner speaks against it, he who is a traitor blames it, but he is himself blamed by Christ, as he knows not the remedy of the Lord's death, and understands not the mystery of that so great burial. For the Lord both suffered and died that He might redeem us from death. This is manifest from the most excellent value from His death, which is sufficient for the absolution of the sinner, and his restoration to fresh grace; so that all may come and wonder at his sitting at table with Christ, and may praise God, saying: "Let us eat and feast, for he was dead and is alive again, had perished and is found." Luke 15:24 But any one devoid of faith objects: "Why does He eat with publicans and sinners?" This is his answer: "They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick." Matthew 9:11-12

Thursday

Pascha is the word for "Passover" in all languages. But its meaning lies much deeper than this direct translation. St. Paul describes the life of Christianity as one that passes **"from glory to glory."** In a similar way, the story of the Passover increases in intensity, meaning, and holiness throughout the ages. There are essentially three Passovers: each the fulfillment of God's promise to save His people, allowing them to pass over from death to life. Each are a symbol of the final forgiveness of sins through the Holy Cross and the Lamb crucified upon its wood. These laws and commandments of the Old Testament were always **"a shadow of the good things to come"** (Hebrews 10:1).

The First Passover: Overcoming Temptation and Sin

The Passover first began with the commandment of the Lord given to Moses, that the blood of the lamb be placed on the door poses of the houses of the Israelites in Egypt. That night, they were to eat bitter herbs, have their loins girded, their sandals on their feet, their staff in their hand (Exodus 12). It continued that through the shedding of blood of the lamb, there came forgiveness. **"And according to the law almost all things are purified with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no remission."** (Hebrews 9:22).

On the night of their exodus from Egypt, the Lord commanded the Israelites to roast the lamb, and eat unleavened bread with bitter herbs (Exodus 12:8). The meat that the Jews would feast upon was not raw or unbaked, but cooked in fire. The lamb had to suffer through fire; it had to suffer. This meat had a

sweet smell, but a bitter taste. Such is the great reminder of sin—however pleasing it may seem to our senses, however alluring it may be to us, we must never forget the bitter sadness of its consequences. This bitterness lies within the cross: ***“He has filled me with bitterness, he has made me drink wormwood”*** (Lamentations 3:15).

The Christian life is full of bitter herbs that bring forth a sweet, saintly aroma. One type of herb comes from loving of our enemies. Another comes from serving the Lord in difficult circumstances—either a family difficulty or a conflict in our schedules. There is a garden of bitter herbs awaiting you in prayer and vigil in times of weakness, sorrow, or confusion. When you fast, you taste of these bitter herbs...you have experienced the Cross. By choosing to take this narrow and difficult path, by submitting to travel along the Via Dolorosa, ***“we are to God the fragrance of Christ among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing”*** (2 Corinthians 2:15). Christ, Himself became the true and ultimate Passover Lamb, the fulfillment of this prophesy. ***“For indeed, Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us”*** (1 Corinthians 5:7). After the disciples had eaten the Passover Meal, the Old Testament had been fulfilled. Our Lord and Savior perfected the Passover meal by offering His Body and Blood in the form of bread and wine. This was the “marriage supper of the Lamb” discussed in Revelation 19:9. This however, was only the first Passover.

The Second Passover: Faith and Baptism

The Second Passover was the crossing of the Red Sea by Moses and the Israelites. Just as Moses had parted its waters and crushed Pharaoh’s soldiers, Christ had destroyed the soldiers of Satan at the bottom of the sea. Moses used his staff; Christ used the cross. They both spread their arms as an eagle, one divided waters between two nations; the Other separated the gap between two worlds.

In our lives, this Passover is the grave importance of baptism. Just as the waters of the Jordan saved the Israelites from the evil army of Pharaoh, so does the baptismal waters save us from Satan’s forces. Once the Jews had crossed the river, they began a new life and were in search of a new home. So too do we begin this Christian Journey through baptism, seeking for eternal rest in Heavenly Jerusalem.

To live this new life in Christ, we cannot seek after the sacramental waters of baptism without faith. An ancient Jewish legend has it that the parting of the Red Sea did not actually take place when Moses had spread his arms, but when the first person took the first step on the water. This legend demonstrates that this miracle was based on the faith that God would fight and work a miracle for His people. We are no longer slaves to doubt, captives of anxiety; we are princes of confidence, kings of faith. As Saint Paul so boldly declared, ***“we walk by faith, not by sight”*** (2 Corinthians 5:7).

The Third Passover: The Institution of the Eucharist

Jesus delegated Peter and John for the preparation of the bread, the wine, the herbs and all that was needed for the celebrations. However, Peter and John didn’t know the place of the Passover. He answered their question by giving them a sign to recognize the house’s owner -- a man carrying a jar of water. Our Savior intentionally did not mention the place at an earlier time, lest Judas would tell the Jews who would keep Him under arrest until the end of the feast. When Peter and John told Jesus that everything was ready, He took His disciples to eat the paschal meal. The disciples argued about who would be the first and last among them. Jesus rebuked them for their evil thinking, saying that the greatest among them should behave as the smallest. Jesus then started washing their feet.

Jesus instituted the Godly Supper, giving us the bread that comes from heaven, the giver of life -- His Holy Body and His Precious Blood. He fulfilled the prophecy, showing them its content. Jesus replaced the first covenant, eating the paschal meal, with a new covenant. ***“...after supper, He took bread ... and the cup...and gave it to them saying ‘take, this is my body... this is my blood which is the new covenant... do this in memory of me.’”***(John 20). He told them about Judas’s betrayal, saying ***“one of you shall deliver me”*** (John 13:21). Judas who took the bread when he did not deserve it gave Satan power over him. Judas left immediately after being revealed and went to the Jews to agree with them on thirty pieces of silver (Ex. 21:33).

On the same day Jesus foretold Peter about his denying Him three times. He then went to the Garden of Gethsemane where He prayed with such anguish that His sweat turned into blood. An Angel appeared to comfort Him saying: "Yours is the strength, the glory, the blessing and the majesty o Emanuel, our God and King", which is the only psalm the church keeps repeating the whole Holy Week. Judas arrived with an armed crowd on behalf of the High priests to arrest our Good Savior.

Morning:

1st Hour: The betrayal of Judas

- *The prayers of the first hour are celebrated in the first section of the church, in the Chorus of Deacons. There, the altar curtain is opened as the church prepares for the Liturgy. After the prophesy from Exodus is read, the readings and prayers follow the basic structure of the Divine Liturgy, with some exceptions.*
- The first prophecy demonstrates the great symbol of the Holy Cross when Moses had lifted up his arms against the Amelikitites (Exodus). This is the power and glory of God we proclaim during the Paschal Doxology. Through this prophesy of the Cross, we begin the entry into the Liturgy.
- Special Hymn : ***He who offered Himself***
- Acts : Unlike normal liturgy, there are no readings from the Pauline or
- Catholic Epistles. The first reading is from Acts 1:15-20, regarding the explanation of David's prophecy concerning Judas. St. Peter explains how the land that Judas bought with the money he denied His Lord was cursed, and how Judas had died on this land, "the field of blood."
- Chanting of Judas: Then, the deacons chant the famous hymn of Judas, while circling the church in the opposite direction. This is to remember that Judas, had broken the law, and acted contrary to the proper Christian way.
- Trisagion sung in Paschal tone
- Psalm: The prophecy of the Psalm stresses the subtlety of the sin, as well as the extreme moral pain caused to the Lord "...had it been the enemy, I could have endured..." (Ps. 54:10). We are assured that man's denial does not prevent our salvation. God's infinite love has overcome all Man's corruption. The tune of the Psalm is the 'maluki', adopted by the church on Tuesday of the holy week for the Psalm when we sing "Your Throne O God". The same tune will be used again on the Holy Friday at the time of internment. "If You are sold today as a slave O my Lord God... if You entered the grave to untie the bonds of my sin... Your Church and bride You redeemed with Your blood knows Who You are ...You are the King seated on the throne of His glory, holding His reign in His hands".
- Gospel: The gospel explains the preparations of the Passover Meal that Christ tells the disciples. As Christ is preparing for the feast, the Devil is preparing for His death. As the First Passover draws nearer, the Christ, the Lamb is about to be offered and slain.

3rd Hour: Prepare for His Coming

- *The prayers of the Third, Sixth and Ninth hours are conducted at the second section of the church, as the rest of the Paschal prayers.*
- First prophesy continues with God speaking to the Israelites regarding their stiff necks and unwillingness to accept His commandments. The reading of Sirach explains the might and glory of God, dwelling on high and enthroned in majesty through the "tabernacle" in Zion. This is a symbol of His coming into Jerusalem and His High Priesthood.
- The gospel of the third hour again speaks of the preparation of the Passover from the book of Matthew. The 1st, 3rd, 6th, and 9th hour gospels all speak of this same topic of preparation for the Passover. Each is drawn from the synoptic gospels (Luke, Matthew, Mark, Matthew, respectively). Just as Christ is preparing for the partaking of the Passover, we are preparing for the partaking of communion in the Divine Liturgy.

6th Hour: Prepare the House

The Lord is pushing His people to repent. He urges them to help the neighbor, the stranger, the orphan and the widow. The Lord pushes them to prepare *His house*, so that it is not a den of robbers. In the same manner, our God is asking us to prepare our hearts and to respect the sacrament that is being prepared before us (Jeremiah). At the same time, Our Lord Christ explains to the disciples how they shall meet a man (St. Mark the Apostle) who shall show them *the house* where they will eat the Passover meal. This house is the first Church, our Church, which must be prepared for Christ's coming.

9th: Sacrifice and Salvation; Struggle and Hope

Again this hour of the Pascha illustrates two great ironies. That salvation must come through sacrifice; and that hope is created through such struggle. The first prophecy mentions the Story of Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac in Genesis. This is an additional symbol of the cross and a father's sacrifice of his son. The prophesy of Isaiah speaks of both the initial punishment that man had as a consequence of sin and the restoration of man through salvation. As a consequence, God has allowed us as priests and ministers, who shall inherit the land a second time. As Origen writes, "Isaac himself carries the wood for his own holocaust: this is a figure of Christ. For He bore the burden of the cross; yet to carry the wood for the holocaust is really the duty of the priest. He is then both victim and priest." The second theme lies in the hope of man in struggle. The final parable used by Job explains the struggle of man in the world with the will of God. Cast down by pain and trouble, he questions hope in God. This is then compared to the very special Psalm 23, which describes the Lord as our Shepherd who satisfies us from all our needs. He is the Provider of our Souls.

11th Hour: The Beginning of Suffering

The reading from Isaiah (52:13-53:12) is the fourth and final servant song mentioned in the second part of Isaiah that tells a personal message from the prophet. It is a remarkable passage that explains the suffering he endured, which suggests more clearly than anything in the Old Testament that God accepts one individual's suffering to atone for the sins of others. This reading becomes an introduction to Christ's suffering that He would endure for us. It prophesies about the Messiah as the Paschal lamb. These powerful verses are also used during the Divine Liturgy According to Saint Gregory to explain the great ordeal suffered by our Lord. It begins to predict that the disciples would betray Him, how we leave Him in the midst of our sin. ***All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, very one to his own way*** (53:6). It prophesies of His silent sorrow amidst the painful beatings. It explains in vivid detail His stripes and bruises. But why such suffering? Why such brutal torment? The Holy Spirit has explained to us hundreds of years before the Crucifixion why God had prepared the Israelites with Five different offerings: the burnt offering, the Grain Offering, the Peace Offering, and the Trespass Offering (Leviticus 1-5). This passage of Isaiah connects this Old Testament Law to explain how Christ became the final Offering to represent each of these offerings. On Holy Thursday, we taste each of these offerings.

1. **The Burnt Offering** (Leviticus 1) The first offering mentioned was the burnt offering. It required an unblemished lamb offered out of free will. Whether it was of the herd, or of the flocks, or of birds it must be without blemish (Lev. 1:3, 10) Christ had become this pure lamb, and Isaiah tells us that ***no deceit was found in His mouth*** (53:9). He was perfect. The priest would symbolically transfer the sins of the person onto the animal, and kill the animal—teaching us that the punishment of our sins are death. Once a pure creature dies for our behalf, we are saved. But this was an imperfect sacrifice, that was only completed when Christ had come. Although an animal had been offered in the Old Testament, it really required the death of a human being. But because no perfect man had been found, this sacrifice could not be accomplished or accepted. That is why complete atonement was not possible until the coming of Christ. This is the hidden beauty of the Cross.
2. **The Grain Offering** (Leviticus 2) This offering was made by baking unleavened cakes of flour, oil, and incense. A part of this was cooked on the fire and offered to the Lord. Christ becomes a

symbol of this offering when He offers His Body through Bread. The other offerings are of blood, in which the animal's blood would be sprinkled around the altar to wash away our sins. But this is the only offering of the Body in the form of bread. In the New Testament, yeast is added to the offering as a representation of the Resurrection.

3. **The Peace Offering** (Leviticus 3) This, too, was offered without blemish Christ offered Himself as this Peace offering as well. But this offering was not one of forgiveness or atonement, but was one of thanksgiving and peace. Before Christ breaks the bread, He offers thanksgiving to God and after the meal, He repeatedly blesses His disciples with this peace from on high (John 14:27; 16:6, 22).
4. **The Sin Offering** (Leviticus 4) If a person had sinned unintentionally against any of the Lord's commandments (including the anointed priest) he was to bring a special offering to the temple (4:1-3). Again, these animals were all innocent of any sin; they were unblemished.
5. **The Trespass Offering** (Leviticus 5) This offering is very similar to the burnt offering and was offered for the atonement of touching any unclean thing or swearing. If he could not bring a lamb, he would bring two turtledoves or two young pigeons (one for burnt offering, and one for a sin offering). Thus, each sacrifice fulfills the sacrifice of Christ as the Lamb of God (John 1:29) who takes away the sins of the world yet remains sinless. As St. Jacob of Serga said, "the Lamb wanted to eat a lamb with His disciples and take its place and become a Sacrifice instead of all other sacrifices."

The gospel of the 11th hour is the only one of the five during the morning prayers that does not concern the preparation of the Passover by the Disciples. It is the special *Laka'an Gospel* and is the only one of the five that is read from the Gospel According to St. John. It speaks of how the Lord, despite all of this suffering, was prepared to offer Himself as this acceptable sacrifice out of His will. He offered willfully, submitting to the Father His life, exactly as the burnt offering must be offered out of free will. (Leviticus 1:3)

Evening

As we approach the crucifixion, the number and intensity of the events steadily increase. This evening's events include the Last Supper, the Eucharist, the Final Message to the Apostles, prayer at Gethsemane, Judas' Betrayal, and the round of trials. In the first hour, we read three gospels from the same evangelist. For the remainder of the Evening of Friday and Great Friday, every hour contains four gospel readings, one from each evangelist.

1st HOUR: CHRIST SPEAKS WITH US AND PRAYS FOR US

On Thursday evening, after eating of the Last Supper and the Body and Blood, Christ gives His last Discourse to his people (John 14-17). This passage is so powerful that many Christians in the early church and in the church today have memorized these three chapters. This message is a very special one, for it is only spoken to the disciples and it is only mentioned in the Gospel of John. In plain language, He speaks to them and announces His departure, recalls His ministry full of deeds, words, and miracles.

He urges them to keep the commandments and to preserve unity among themselves.

And at last, He prays for them. In the first hour prophesy (Jeremiah 8:17-9:6), the Lord explains how the sins of His people has saddened and perplexed Him. He is to the point of tears. This revelation of His saddened love for us continues throughout the readings of the gospels. The Psalm of the first hour also whispers in our ears the distress of the Lord, where we hear the Lord cry through David the Prophet, ***"My enemies have approached me all day long, those who deride me swear an oath against me"*** (Psalm 108:8).

Through this wonderful first hour of the evening of Good Friday, the church reads from John 13:33-17:26. This is the only time in the entire year that three gospel readings are read consecutively from the same evangelist! It is perhaps the longest continuous message of Christ mentioned in all of the gospels—even longer than the Sermon on the Mount. For this was not just a sermon, but a private lesson to His disciples. Even more, these passages contain the longest and most personal prayer from Blessed Son to the Heavenly Father. Here, He prays for us personally that we may not fall into sin and that we stay strong in the coming time of trouble and danger. We read the only instance where He refers to Himself as “Jesus Christ” (John 17:3). The final three words of the gospel reading are **“I in them.”** His life for us. His prayer for us. The offering of His Body and Blood on our behalf. Eucharist is intertwined with this one verse. Let us remember this as our focus.

The exposition, as well, is wholly dedicated on this passage, and even begins by repeating part of Christ’s prayer for us. Truly, this passage is one of the very special moments of the entire week. May we listen carefully and swim in the sea of His love during these readings.

To prepare us for this message of love, the church adds the words *“The Lord is my Strength, my Praise and has become my Salvation”* to the Paschal hymn *“Thine is the Power” (Thok te ti gom)*. This is another reminder that the Lord is preparing Himself and us for the Crucifixion.

3rd HOUR: THE GARDEN OF GETHSEMANE

Gethsemane is the Aramaic word for “oil press.” It is a garden east of Jerusalem beyond the Kidron valley and near the Mount of Olives (Matthew 26:30). Christ often retreated with His disciples in the garden. It was the place where Christ met the Father, where man betrays God.

In the first garden, the Garden of Eden, Adam fell to temptation. But in the Second Garden (of Gethsemane), the Second Adam prevailed over temptation. Such power is only given through prayer and submission to God’s will. The First Adam was cast out of the Garden and kept out by an Angel; God sent an angel to strengthen and comfort the Second Adam (Luke 22:43-44)

“Just as He, in us, became sin although He remained utterly sinless, so we, in Him have become utterly without sin, although we are sinful human beings.” As we chant in the Friday Theotokia of the Holy Psalmody, *“He took what is ours and gave us what is His.”*

As Christ and the disciples did not journey to Gethsemane before “singing a hymn,” so too the Church does not progress without chanting the paschal hymns. Christ had warned the disciples they would betray Him and take offense to Him. Around the same time, Judas plotted with the Jews seeking to capture and kill Christ. In remembrance of such talk, a prophetic psalm is read: **“They have surrounded me with words of hatred, and fought against me without a cause”** (Psalm 109: 1, 3). This psalm is the most violent of the “cursing” psalms which explains the cruelty of the Lord’s adversaries.

6th HOUR: CONTINUOUS PRAYER

During this hour, Christ asks the disciples to sit with Him and stay awake. He urges them three times to stay awake and pray, for His betrayers are at hand. Through such persistence, the Lord teaches us the importance of vigil in times of trouble. The Psalm of the hour conjoins two prophetic psalms regarding the betrayal and capture of Christ by His enemies. When King Saul sent men to watch over David in order to kill him, David cries out to the Lord saying, **“Deliver me from my enemies, O my God; Defend me from those who rise up against me”** (Psalm 59:1). This verse is part of a long prayer for comfort and deliverance from evildoers. The church reads this psalm as a prayer for the deliverance of God from the hands of these evil men.

9th HOUR: SEIZING CHRIST

The first part of the psalm prophesies the nature Judas who spoke in peace and even kissed the Savior, but had evil in his heart to betray his Master (Psalm 28:3,4). In the second, David declares the

punishment of those who seek to kill him, "***Let those bet put to shame and brought to dishonor who seek after my life, let those be turned back and brought to confusion who plot my hurt***" (Psalm 35:4). A later verse from Psalm 35 is read during the first hour of Good Friday. Thus, Psalm 35 is known as a Passion psalm for it introduces the persecutors who speedily seek destruction.

11th HOUR: TRIALS BEGIN

We read during this hour four verses from the messianic Psalm 2. In other orthodox services, this chapter is read during Christmas Eve, as the refrain for one of the hymns; and on Good Friday, where the entire psalm is sung in the First Hour prayers. The exposition of the hour explains further how this psalm is a prophecy that the kings of the earth would condemn Him with false testimony.

Saint John Chrysostom, Homily 70: On the Gospel of John

John 13:2

"And supper being ended, the devil having now put it into the heart of Judas to betray Him."

This the Evangelist has said amazed, showing that Jesus washed the man who had already chosen to betray Him. This also proves his great wickedness, that not even the having shared the salt restrained him, (a thing which is most able to restrain wickedness;) not the fact that even up to the last day, his Master continued to bear with him.

John 13:3

"Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come from God, and went to God."

Here the Evangelist says, even wondering, that one so great, so very great, who came from God and went to Him, who rules over all, did this thing, and disdained not even so to undertake such an action. And by the "giving over," methinks St. John means the salvation of the faithful. For when He says, "All things are given over to Me of My Father" Matthew 11:27, He speaks of this kind of giving over; as also in another place He says, "Yours they were, and You gave them Me" John 17:6; and again, "No man can come unto Me except the Father draw him" John 6:44; and, "Except it be given him from heaven." John 3:27 The Evangelist then either means this, or that Christ would be nothing lessened by this action, since He came from God, and went to God, and possessed all things. But when you hear of "giving over," understand it in no human sense, for it shows how He honors the Father, and His unanimity with Him. For as the Father gives over to Him, so He to the Father. And this Paul declares, saying, "When He shall have given over the kingdom to God, even the Father." 1 Corinthians 15:24 But St. John has said it here in a more human sense, showing His great care for them, and declaring His unutterable love, that He now cared for them as for His own; teaching them the mother of all good, even humble mindedness, which He said was both the beginning and the end of virtue. And not without a reason is added the, "He came from God and went to God": but that we may learn that He did what was worthy of One who came thence and went there, trampling down all pride.

John 13:4

"And having risen from supper, and laid aside His garments."

2. Observe how not by the washing only, but in another way also He exhibits humility. For it was not before reclining, but after they had all sat down, then He arose. In the next place, He does not merely wash them, but does so, putting off His garments. And He did not even stop here, but girded Himself with a towel. Nor was He satisfied with this, but Himself filled (the basin), and did not bid another fill it; He did all these things Himself, showing by all that we must do such things, when we are engaged in well doing, not merely for form's sake, but with all zeal. Now He seems to me to have washed the feet of the traitor first from its saying,

John 13:5

"He began to wash the disciples' feet," and adding,

John 13:6

"Then comes He to Simon Peter and Peter says unto Him, Lord, do You wash my feet?"

"With those hands," he says, "with which You have opened eyes, and cleansed lepers, and raised the dead?" For this (question) is very emphatic; wherefore He needed not to have said any more than the, "Thou"; for even of itself this would have sufficed to convey the whole. Someone might reasonably enquire, how none of the others forbade Him, but Peter only, which was a mark of no slight love and reverence. What then is the cause? He seems to me to have washed the traitor first, then to have come to Peter, and that the others were afterwards instructed from his case. That He washed some one other before him is clear from its saying, "But when He came to Peter." Yet the Evangelist is not a vehement accuser, for the "began," is the expression of one implying this. And even if Peter were the first, yet it is probable that the traitor, being a forward person, had reclined even before the chief. For by another circumstance also his forwardness is shown, when He dips with his Master in the dish, and being convicted, feels no compunction; while Peter being rebuked but once on a former occasion, and for words which he spoke from loving affection, was so abashed, that being even distressed and trembling, he begged another to ask a question. But Judas, though continually convicted, felt not. John 13:24 When therefore He came to Peter, he says unto Him, "Lord, dost Thou wash my feet?"

John 13:7

"He says unto him, What I do you know not now, but you shall know here after."

That is "you shall know how great is the gain from this, the profit of the lesson, and how it is able to guide us into all humble-mindedness." What then does Peter? He still hinders Him, and says,

John 13:8

"You shall never wash my feet." "What doest thou, Peter? Rememberest thou not those former words? Did you not say, 'Be merciful to Yourself,' and heardest thou not in return, 'Get behind Me, Satan'? Matthew 16:22 Are you not even so sobered, but are you yet vehement?" "Yea," he says, "for what is being done is a great matter, and full of amazement." Since then he did this from exceeding love, Christ

in turn subdues him by the same; and as there He effected this by sharply rebuking him, and saying, "You are an offense unto Me," so here also by saying,

"If I wash you not, you have no part with Me." What then says that hot and burning one?

John 13:9

"Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head."

Vehement in deprecation, he becomes yet more vehement in acquiescence; but both from love. For why said He not wherefore He did this, instead of adding a threat? Because Peter would not have been persuaded. For had He said, "Suffer it, for by this I persuade you to be humble-minded," Peter would have promised it ten thousand times, in order that his Master might not do this thing. But now what says He? He speaks of that which Peter most feared and dreaded, the being separated from Him; for it is he who continually asks, "Where are You going?" John 13:36 Wherefore also he said, "I will give even my life for You." John 13:37 And if, after hearing, "What I do you know not now, but you shall know hereafter," he still persisted, much more would he have done so had he learned (the meaning of the action). Therefore said He, "but you shall know hereafter," as being aware, that should he learn it immediately he would still resist. And Peter said not, "Tell me, that I may suffer You," but (which was much more vehement) he did not even endure to learn, but withstands Him, saying, "You shall never wash my feet." But as soon as He threatened, he straightway relaxed his tone. But what means, "You shall know after this"? "After this?" When? "When in My Name you shall have cast out devils; when you shall have seen Me taken up into Heaven, when you shall have learned from the Spirit that I sit on His right hand, then shall you understand what is being done now." What then says Christ? When Peter said, "not my feet only, but also my hands and my head," He replies,

John 13:10-11

"He that is washed, needs not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit; and you are clean, but not all. For He knew who should betray Him."

"And if they are clean, why washes He their feet?" That we may learn to be modest. On which account He came not to any other part of the body, but to that which is considered more dishonorable than the rest. But what is, "He that is washed"? It is instead of, "he that is clean." Were they then clean, who had not yet been delivered from their sins, nor deemed worthy of the Spirit, since sin still had the mastery, the handwriting of the curse still remaining, the victim not having yet been offered? How then calls He them "clean"? That you may not deem them clean, as delivered from their sins, He adds, Behold, "you are clean through the word that I have spoken unto you." That is, "In this way you are so far clean; you have received the light, you have been freed from Jewish error. For the Prophet also says, 'Wash you, make you clean, put away the wickedness from your souls' Isaiah 1:16, Septuagint; so that such a one is washed and is clean." Since then these men had cast away all wickedness from their souls, and had companied with Him with a pure mind, therefore He says according to the word of the Prophet, "he that is washed is clean already." For in that place also It means not the "washing" of water, practiced by the Jews; but the cleansing of the conscience.

3. Be we then also clean; learn we to do well. But what is "well"? "Judge for the fatherless, plead for the widow; and come, let us reason together, says the Lord." Isaiah 1:7 There is frequent mention in the Scriptures of widows and orphans, but we make no account of this. Yet consider how great is the reward. "Though," it says, "your sins be as scarlet, I will whiten them as snow; though they be red like crimson, I will whiten them as wool." For a widow is an unprotected being, therefore He takes much care for her. For they, when it is even in their power to contract a second marriage, endure the hardships of widowhood through fear of God. Let us then all, both men and women, stretch forth our hands to them, that we may never undergo the sorrows of widow-hood; or if we should have to undergo them, let us lay up a great store of kindness for ourselves. Not small is the power of the widow's tears, it is able to open heaven itself. Let us not then trample on them, nor make their calamity worse, but assist them by every means. If so we do, we shall put around ourselves much safety, both in the present life, and in that which is to come. For not here alone, but there also will they be our defenders, cutting away most of our sins by reason of our beneficence towards them, and causing us to stand boldly before the judgment-seat of Christ. Which may it come to pass that we all obtain, through the grace and lovingkindness of our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Saint Ambrose of Milan, On the Holy Spirit, Book I: Wash My Feet, Lord

12. Let us come now to the Gospel of God. I find the Lord stripping Himself of His garments, and girding Himself with a towel, pouring water into a basin, and washing the disciples' feet. John 13:4 That heavenly dew was this water, this was foretold, namely, that the Lord Jesus Christ would wash the feet of His disciples in that heavenly dew. And now let the feet of our minds be stretched out. The Lord Jesus wills also to wash our feet, for He says, not to Peter alone, but to each of the faithful: "If I wash not your feet you will have no part with Me." John 13:8

13. Come, then, Lord Jesus, put off Your garments, which You put on for my sake; be stripped that You may clothe us with Your mercy. Gird Yourself for our sakes with a towel, that You may gird us with Your gift of immortality. Pour water into the basin, wash not only our feet but also the head, and not only of the body, but also the footsteps of the soul. I wish to put off all the filth of our frailty, so that I also may say: "By night I have put off my coat, how shall I put it on? I have washed my feet, how shall I defile them?" Song of Songs 5:3

14. How great is that excellence! As a servant, You wash the feet of Your disciples; as God, You send dew from heaven. Nor do You wash the feet only, but also invite us to sit down with You, and by the example of Your dignity exhort us, saying: "You call Me Master and Lord, and you do well, for so I am. If, then, I the Lord and Master have washed your feet, you ought also to wash one another's feet." John 13:13-14

15. I, then, wish also myself to wash the feet of my brethren, I wish to fulfil the commandment of my Lord, I will not be ashamed in myself, nor disdain what He Himself did first. Good is the mystery of humility, because while washing the pollutions of others I wash away my own. But all were not able to

exhaust this mystery. Abraham was, indeed, willing to wash feet, Genesis 18:4 but because of a feeling of hospitality. Gideon, too, was willing to wash the feet of the Angel of the Lord who appeared to him, but his willingness was confined to one; he was willing as one who would do a service, not as one who would confer fellowship with himself. This is a great mystery which no one knew. Lastly, the Lord said to Peter: "What I do you know not now, but shall know hereafter." John 13:7 This, I say, is a divine mystery which even they who wash will enquire into. It is not, then, the simple water of the heavenly mystery whereby we attain to be found worthy of having part with Christ.

16. There is also a certain water which we put into the basin of our soul, water from the fleece and from the Book of Judges; water, too, from the Book of Psalms. It is the water of the message from heaven. Let, then, this water, O Lord Jesus, come into my soul, into my flesh, that through the moisture of this rain the valleys of our minds and the fields of our hearts may grow green. May the drops from You come upon me, shedding forth grace and immortality. Wash the steps of my mind that I may not sin again. Wash the heel of my soul, that I may be able to efface the curse, that I feel not the serpent's bite Genesis 3:15 on the foot of my soul, but, as You Yourself hast bidden those who follow You, may tread on serpents and scorpions Luke 10:19 with uninjured foot. You have redeemed the world, redeem the soul of a single sinner.

17. This is the special excellence of Your loving-kindness, wherewith You have redeemed the whole world one by one. Elijah was sent to one widow; Elisha cleansed one; You, O Lord Jesus, have at this day cleansed a thousand. How many in the city of Rome, how many at Alexandria, how many at Antioch, how many also at Constantinople! For even Constantinople has received the word of God, and has received evident proofs of Your judgment. For so long as she cherished the Arians' poison in her bosom, disquieted by neighbouring wars, she echoed with hostile arms around. But so soon as she rejected those who were alien from the faith she received as a suppliant the enemy himself, the judge of kings, whom she had always been wont to fear, she buried him when dead, and retains him entombed. How many, then, have You cleansed at Constantinople, how many, lastly, at this day in the whole world!

18. Damasus cleansed not, Peter cleansed not, Ambrose cleansed not, Gregory cleansed not; for ours is the ministry, but the sacraments are Yours. For it is not in man's power to confer what is divine, but it is, O Lord, Your gift and that of the Father, as You have spoken by the prophets, saying: "I will pour out of My Spirit upon all flesh, and their sons and their daughters shall prophesy." Joel 2:28 This is that typical dew from heaven, this is that gracious rain, as we read: "A gracious rain, dividing for His inheritance." For the Holy Spirit is not subject to any foreign power or law, but is the Arbiter of His own freedom, dividing all things according to the decision of His own will, to each, as we read, severally as He wills. 1 Corinthians 12:11

Good Friday

By far, the one day of the entire church year in which the church prays together is Good Friday. More prayers are prayed, more readings read, more hymns chanted than any other time. All because of the perfect sacrifice; all focused on God and on the Cross. The prophecies read on this day far outweigh

those read throughout any other day of the week. In the first hour, 11 prophecies are read; in the 3rd hour, 6 are read and one final prophecy is read in the evening.

FIRST HOUR

On Friday, Jesus began to be judged in front of a series of councils. The chief priests convened together and condemned the Savior so that they might deliver Him to Pilate to kill him. (Exposition) False witnesses came forth to falsely accuse Him. The “fierce witnesses” mentioned in Psalm 35:11 specifically refers to these false witnesses at the trial of Christ.

The prophecies mostly condemn the priests for this atrocity. Jeremiah says,
“Woe to the shepherds that destroy and scatter the sheep of their pasture!”

The Wisdom of Solomon shows how the Jews will spitefully examine and torture Him. Because of their wickedness, they are blind and will not receive the reward of forgiveness as the rest of the world. But in each prophesy, the Lord promises to save His people. This one glimmer of hope shined forth through the Cross on this Great Friday. As Micah the prophet proclaims, “for I have fallen yet shall arise; for though I should sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light to me.” When Judas saw that He was condemned, he brought the **thirty pieces of silver** to the chief priests and elders to avoid the responsibility for innocent blood (Matthew 23:34-35; Deuteronomy 21:9, 27:25). His love of money led to his demise, as explained in the homily of St. John Chrysostom. Ironically, Judas has the same name as Judah, one of the twelve sons of Jacob, who rather than shedding his brother Joseph’s blood, sold him for twenty (or thirty) pieces of silver. (Genesis 37:26-28). The chief priests took the silver and bought a potter’s field with it to bury strangers in. This itself was the fulfillment of two prophecies (Zechariah 11:12-13;

Jeremiah 19:1-13, 32:9). Judas hung himself, unable to acknowledge the forgiveness of God, and unwilling to depend on Christ. Instead of repentance, Judas turned a transgression into another transgression. Then, they had bound Jesus and delivered Him to Pontius Pilate, the governor. A set of charges is presented to Pilate. When Pilate discovers that our Lord was from Galilee, he sent Him to Herod, who questioned and mocked Him. Then the Accused is then returned back to Pilate to without being found guilty. When Christ is returned to Pilate, he tries twice to release Him, even offering a lesser penalty of whipping. Finally, Pilate gives in to the “will” of the Jews. It was a custom to release one of the prisoners at the time of the feast, but the people chose to release Barabbas instead of Jesus. Then Pilate washed his hands in front of them, denying any responsibility for the Innocent One. At the end of this hour, the Icon of the crucifixion is placed on an icon holder in the chorus of deacons. Candles, lamps, crosses, gospels, and censor(s) and rose petals are placed before the icon of Crucifixion.

THIRD HOUR: VIA DOLOROSA

The third hour has many incredibly deep prophecies regarding the road to the cross. We see in Isaiah 63 “Who is this who comes from Edom, in crimsoned garments...splendid in his apparel... ‘I have trodden the winepress alone and from the peoples no one was with me.’” We see here Christ walking Via Dolorosa as a Lamb brought to the slaughter, all covered in the bruises that are healing to each of us. The blameless Lamb, the ultimate sacrifice, carries His cross out of His own will – for our sins and redemption. The third hour begins the painful torment of Lamb. After Pilate washes his hands, the soldiers took Him into the common hall, paraded around Him, stripped Him and divided his garments. All of this was prophesied about in Psalm 22:17, ***“They look and stare at Me. They divide My garments among them, and for My clothing they cast lots.”*** They dressed Him in a scarlet robe, platted a crown of thorns, and placed a reed in His hand. ***“He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him and with His stripes we are healed. All we like***

sheep have gone astray, we have turned everyone to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all" (Isaiah 5:6).

This is the day of pain, the day of sorrows. It is the commandment for us, ***"not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake"*** (Philippians 1:29). By actively participating in the Holy Passion Week, through fasting, prayer and repentance we suffer for His sake. Suffering is a gift from God, so that we can experience His satisfaction and capture the quiet endurance of the saints. Through meditation of the Cross, we witness His Divine Love for us. ***"Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."*** ***My Lord and Savior, Your body is torn by whips and I wear nice clothes, living lavishly and carelessly. You are given the myrrh to drink, and I enjoy the desires of life. You comfort my pains and sufferings and I refuse to repent. I ask You to have mercy upon me, for I know how tender is Your overflowing mercy.***

Because of us, we who have been uncovered because of sin, the God of Glory, Jesus, was stripped of His clothes, was tied to the post, and was whipped with ropes and rods in which there was a chain of bones...Until this innocent body is scattered and its flesh dispersed in compensation; and His blood is shed to protect our wounds and to cure them. May we praise Him, for it is He who has killed death by death with His crown of thorns! (St. Ephraim the Syrian) This day of sufferings for God is at the same time a day of rejoicing for all humankind, who obtained Salvation through the Cross, achieving what was unthinkable -- Salvation and eternal life at the price of Jesus' blood. "For whom He foreknew, He also predestined [to be] conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren." (Rom. 8:29).

The sign of the Cross appears for the first time in Genesis 48:1-9. When Joseph presented his two sons, Ephraim and Manassah to be blessed by his father Jacob, Joseph placed Ephraim on the left side of Jacob, and Manassah on his right side. Jacob put his right hand on Ephraim, although he was the youngest, and his left hand on Manassah, thus crossing his hands. Joseph protested telling his father that his right hand should be on the eldest but Jacob replied: "I know my son, I know." All the prophecies that are read during the Third Hour describe Jesus' sufferings in words similar to the words used in the Gospels.

The Prophecy	The New Testament
I did not defend myself, but offered my back to be lashed	Jesus was delivered to be lashed (Mark 15:15)
and my cheeks to be slapped	and they slapped Him (John 19:3)
and I did not turn my face away from the shame of the spitting (Is. 50:4-9).	and they were spitting at His face (Mark 15:9).
They conspired between them-selves saying: let us tie the innocent (Is. 3:9-15)	They tied Him and took Him (Matt. 27:2).

SIXTH HOUR: THE CRUCIFIXION

There is only one theme for this entire hour: the Cross. The first prophecy introduces the Moses' the brazen serpent—a symbol of the powerful cross crushing Satan and all death. We remember the events of this hour each day throughout the year during the Agpeya prayers of the sixth hour. The second prophecy is a powerful sign of Christ as the Lamb, brought to the slaughter. In the Jewish times, the lambs that were used for the temple sacrifices were born in Nazareth, grazed throughout Jerusalem, and then slaughtered on Golgotha outside of the temple. This practice becomes an amazing foreshadow of Christ, the true and perfect Lamb of God. Isaiah 53 is one of the most powerful selections read in the entire week. It tells of the crucifixion, the burial, and the inheritance of salvation in a deeply prophetic manner.

Following these great prophecies, the Epistle of St. Paul to the Galatians is read. Its simple and essential theme: *Glory in the Cross*. Afterwards, six litanies are said by the priest, along with responses from the congregation. These prayers are patterned after those that follow the gospel readings in the Agpeya prayers. Following this, the hymn of Omonogenis (O Only Begotten) is chanted. The initial part of the hymn discuss the incarnation and crucifixion, and is accompanied by a somber paschal tune. Yet, near the end, there is a glimpse of hope when discussing the promise of the resurrection. Once the congregation chants “tramped down death...” (Thanato Thanaton...), the hymn regains life in a lively tempo and lighter beat. The Trisagion (Agios) is then chanted twice, in two separate tunes. When Christ breathed His last, darkness came over all the land from the sixth to the ninth hour. The church recreates this eclipse by turning off all of the lights in the church after this one verse is read.

After the reading of the exposition, which sufficiently memorializes the events of this distressing hour, the church chants the hymn Ari pa mevi (Remember Me). This hymn is based on the words spoken by Didymus, the Thief on the Right. This hymn has 11 verses said by the reader, followed by repetitions of the thief’s petition.

This Hour is one of rejoicing for all the humankind, from the Prophets of the Old Testament to the believers who recognized the Cross of our Lord in the New testament. St. Paul says “I pride myself only in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Galatians 6:14). The Cross is a crown of victory. It has brought light to those blinded by ignorance. It has released those enslaved by sin. Indeed, it has redeemed the whole of mankind. Do not, then be ashamed of the Cross of Christ; rather, glory in it. Although it is a stumbling block to the Jews and folly to the Gentiles, the message of the Cross is our salvation. Of course, it is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved, it is the power of God. For it was not a mere man who died for us, but the Son of God, God made man. (St. Cyril of Jerusalem)

NINTH HOUR: DEATH

“O You Who surrendered Your soul into the hands of the Father when You were crucified on the Cross on the Ninth hour and lead the thief into Paradise, do not forsake me.” After He tasted the vinegar, Jesus said, “All is accomplished”, then He inclined His head and commended His soul to the Father (John 19:30). Then Jesus cried out loudly “O Father, in Your hands I surrender my soul” (Luke 23:46) and (Matt. 27:46).

At the Cross, the Church contemplates the great love manifest on the Cross while our Savior went through the unknown, the terror of humankind -- death. How blessed is this unique moment of death! It is the moment the devil was terrified and tied, the moment those who had slept in hope rejoiced. The dead were considered dead in their bodies, but their souls considered alive in God. (II Peter 4:6). This is also the moment the thief entered Paradise, opening the door to the humankind. Once our Savior had gone through the terror of death, this terror vanished. No longer would those who die in Christ, be enslaved by death.

The first prophesy is from Jeremiah 11:18. “Like a perfect lamb taken to be slaughtered...they conspired against me saying: ‘let us eradicate him from the living beings’”. How could they think, O our Lord and God, of suppressing from life the Origin and Giver of life! From now on, death has acquired a new meaning: death in Jesus Christ, being Life and eternal life.

The next prophesy is from Zechariah 14: “On that day, living waters will flow Jerusalem...and God shall be King over the whole world.” Even, though His death on the Cross was real, He remains alive as we chant with the Angels: “Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal”. The Spirit that inspired this prophecy reveals how far the outreach of His Kingdom, like the overflowing waters from Jerusalem for all who come to drink, be it the Jews or the nations. God shall be King over the whole world. *The spear* has supposedly entered from the right side, diagonally, ending in the heart. This was a prophesy mentioned in the Psalms: “My heart is wounded”

(literally, pierced) (Psalm 109:21, 22). The soldier who thrust this spear was named Longinus. After witnessing this majestic event, he confessed Christianity and became himself a martyr. During the 9th hour, candles are lit before the Icon of the Crucifixion. The presbyters, with their heads uncovered and wearing their liturgical robes, cense the icon. In the presence of the bishop, they cense and bow before him without kissing his hand nor the cross.

ELEVENTH HOUR: TAKING DOWN FROM THE CROSS

At this hour, the Scriptures have been fulfilled as our Savior had said (John 19:30). Moses struck the rock in the desert, and water poured out that saved the life of the people of Israel. When the soldier pierced the side of our Savior on the Cross, blood and water came out. It is now up to us to satisfy our thirst from the waters of life. The prophecy from Exodus 12:1-14 gives the details of God's order to the sons of Israel. They were to immolate the lamb and put marks of his blood on their threshold and doors... no bones were to be broken. The blood was a sign to be recognized by the angel of death to spare them from death. We find the same words in John, when the soldiers came to Him "they did not break His legs" (John 19:23) as was their habit. From His pierced side, came out "blood and water" (John 19: 33, 34). The water is the symbol of humility, peace and love, the fruits of the Holy Spirit through the waters of the baptism.

TWELFTH HOUR: BURIAL

Although the Lord Christ was taken off of the Cross during the Eleventh Hour and although the rest of the Pascha days all include an eleventh hour, Good Friday ends with the Twelfth Hour. We again remember the events of this hour each day throughout the year during the Agpeya prayers of the twelfth hour.

The Romans' conduct was to leave the crucified bodies on the crosses for the birds to prey. The Jewish people used to throw the bodies in a pit where garbage and sewerage were to be burnt. Joseph of Arimathea requested Pilate to let him take Jesus' (John 7: 50-52), helped Joseph for the inhumation with perfumes and pure linen, as predicted by Isaiah.

The Prophecy for the twelfth hour comes from the Lamentations of Jeremiah on the sufferings of the Cross and of the grave are depicted. The Gospels show us the similarity between Jesus and Jonah. Like the prophet Jonah remained inside the whale three days and three nights, "the Son of Man shall be inside the earth for three days and three nights" (Matthew 12:40). A psalm of praise follows the Gospel. "Your throne O God is for ever and ever".

The priest covers the icon with a white linen cloth and places the cross over it. He then covers them with rose petals and spices, and places two candles on each side of it—representing the two angels at the tomb of Christ. The priests, according to their ranks, start reading the Psalms 1, 2, and 3 until they reach ***I lay down and slept***" (Psalm 3:5). Then the curtain of the altar is closed and the 150 psalms are read in their entirety.

The sufferings of our Lord are the price of our salvation for which we are rejoicing. No words can be spoken! We contemplate Your sufferings and Your pierced side while we stand at the Cross, the source of our rejoicing.

Saint Gregory of Nazianzus, Third Theological Oration. 17-21: The Mystery of the Cross

XVII. For we have learnt to believe in and to teach the Deity of the Son from their great and lofty utterances. And what utterances are these? These: God—The Word—He That Was In The Beginning and With The Beginning, and The Beginning. "In the Beginning was The Word, and the Word was with

God, and the Word was God,” and “With Thee is the Beginning,” and “He who calleth her The Beginning from generations.” Then the Son is Only-begotten: The only “begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father, it says, He hath declared Him.” The Way, the Truth, the Life, the Light. “I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life;” and “I am the Light of the World.” Wisdom and Power, “Christ, the Wisdom of God, and the Power of God.” The Effulgence, the Impress, the Image, the Seal; “Who being the Effulgence of His glory and the Impress of His Essence,” and “the Image of His Goodness,” and “Him hath God the Father sealed.” Lord, King, He That Is, The Almighty. “The Lord rained down fire from the Lord;” and “A sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of Thy Kingdom;”³⁵³³ and “Which is and was and is to come, the Almighty”—all which are clearly spoken of the Son, with all the other passages of the same force, none of which is an afterthought, or added later to the Son or the Spirit, any more than to the Father Himself. For Their Perfection is not affected by additions. There never was a time when He was without the Word, or when He was not the Father, or when He was not true, or not wise, or not powerful, or devoid of life, or of splendour, or of goodness.

But in opposition to all these, do you reckon up for me the expressions which make for your ignorant arrogance, such as “My God and your God,” or greater, or created, or made, or sanctified; Add, if you like, Servant and Obedient and Gave and Learnt, and was commanded, was sent, can do nothing of Himself, either say, or judge, or give, or will. And further these,—His ignorance, subjection, prayer, asking, increase, being made perfect. And if you like even more humble than these; such as speak of His sleeping, hungering, being in an agony, and fearing; or perhaps you would make even His Cross and Death a matter of reproach to Him. His Resurrection and Ascension I fancy you will leave to me, for in these is found something to support our position. A good many other things too you might pick up, if you desire to put together that equivocal and intruded god of yours, Who to us is True God, and equal to the Father. For every one of these points, taken separately, may very easily, if we go through them one by one, be explained to you in the most reverent sense, and the stumbling-block of the letter be cleaned away—that is, if your stumbling at it be honest, and not wilfully malicious. To give you the explanation in one sentence. What is lofty you are to apply to the Godhead, and to that Nature in Him which is superior to sufferings and incorporeal; but all that is lowly to the composite condition of Him who for your sakes made Himself of no reputation and was Incarnate—yes, for it is no worse thing to say, was made Man, and afterwards was also exalted. The result will be that you will abandon these carnal and grovelling doctrines, and learn to be more sublime, and to ascend with His Godhead, and you will not remain permanently among the things of sight, but will rise up with Him into the world of thought, and come to know which passages refer to His Nature, and which to His assumption of Human Nature.

XIX. For He Whom you now treat with contempt was once above you. He Who is now Man was once the Uncompounded. What He was He continued to be; what He was not He took to Himself. In the beginning He was, uncaused; for what is the Cause of God? But afterwards for a cause He was born. And that cause was that you might be saved, who insult Him and despise His Godhead, because of this, that He took upon Him your denser nature, having converse with Flesh by means of Mind. While His inferior Nature, the Humanity, became God, because it was united to God, and became One Person because the Higher Nature prevailed in order that I too might be made God so far as He is made Man. He was born—but He had been begotten: He was born of a woman—but she was a Virgin. The first is

human, the second Divine. In His Human nature He had no Father, but also in His Divine Nature no Mother. Both these belong to Godhead. He dwelt in the womb—but He was recognized by the Prophet, himself still in the womb, leaping before the Word, for Whose sake He came into being. He was wrapped in swaddling clothes—but He took off the swathing bands of the grave by His rising again. He was laid in a manger—but He was glorified by Angels, and proclaimed by a star, and worshipped by the Magi. Why are you offended by that which is presented to your sight, because you will not look at that which is presented to your mind? He was driven into exile into Egypt—but He drove away the Egyptian idols. He had no form nor comeliness in the eyes of the Jews—but to David He is fairer than the children of men. And on the Mountain He was bright as the lightning, and became more luminous than the sun, initiating us into the mystery of the future.

XX. He was baptized as Man—but He remitted sins as God—not because He needed purificatory rites Himself, but that He might sanctify the element of water. He was tempted as Man, but He conquered as God; yea, He bids us be of good cheer, for He has overcome the world. He hungered—but He fed thousands; yea, He is the Bread that giveth life, and That is of heaven. He thirsted—but He cried, If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink. Yea, He promised that fountains should flow from them that believe. He was wearied, but He is the Rest of them that are weary and heavy laden. He was heavy with sleep, but He walked lightly over the sea. He rebuked the winds, He made Peter light as he began to sink. He pays tribute, but it is out of a fish; yea, He is the King of those who demanded it. He is called a Samaritan and a demoniac;—but He saves him that came down from Jerusalem and fell among thieves; the demons acknowledge Him, and He drives out demons and sinks in the sea legions of foul spirits, and sees the Prince of the demons falling like lightning. He is stoned, but is not taken. He prays, but He hears prayer. He weeps, but He causes tears to cease. He asks where Lazarus was laid, for He was Man; but He raises Lazarus, for He was God. He is sold, and very cheap, for it is only for thirty pieces of silver; but He redeems the world, and that at a great price, for the Price was His own blood. As a sheep He is led to the slaughter, but He is the Shepherd of Israel, and now of the whole world also. As a Lamb He is silent, yet He is the Word, and is proclaimed by the Voice of one crying in the wilderness. He is bruised and wounded, but He healeth every disease and every infirmity. He is lifted up and nailed to the Tree, but by the Tree of Life He restoreth us; yea, He saveth even the Robber crucified with Him; yea, He wrapped the visible world in darkness. He is given vinegar to drink mingled with gall. Who? He who turned the water into wine, who is the destroyer of the bitter taste, who is Sweetness and altogether desire. He lays down His life, but He has power to take it again; and the veil is rent, for the mysterious doors of Heaven are opened; the rocks are cleft, the dead arise. He dies, but He gives life, and by His death destroys death. He is buried, but He rises again; He goes down into Hell, but He brings up the souls; He ascends to Heaven, and shall come again to judge the quick and the dead, and to put to the test such words as yours. If the one give you a starting point for your error, let the others put an end to it.

XXI. This, then, is our reply to those who would puzzle us; not given willingly indeed (for light talk and contradictions of words are not agreeable to the faithful, and one Adversary is enough for us), but of necessity, for the sake of our assailants (for medicines exist because of diseases), that they may be led to see that they are not all-wise nor invincible in those superfluous arguments which make void the

Gospel. For when we leave off believing, and protect ourselves by mere strength of argument, and destroy the claim which the Spirit has upon our faith by questionings, and then our argument is not strong enough for the importance of the subject (and this must necessarily be the case, since it is put in motion by an organ of so little power as is our mind), what is the result? The weakness of the argument appears to belong to the mystery, and thus elegance of language makes void the Cross, as Paul also thought. For faith is that which completes our argument. But may He who proclaimeth unions and looseth those that are bound, and who putteth into our minds to solve the knots of their unnatural dogmas, if it may be, change these men and make them faithful instead of rhetoricians, Christians instead of that which they now are called. This indeed we entreat and beg for Christ's sake. Be ye reconciled to God, and quench not the Spirit; 3594 or rather, may Christ be reconciled to you, and may the Spirit enlighten you, though so late. But if you are too fond of your quarrel, we at any rate will hold fast to the Trinity, and by the Trinity may we be saved, remaining pure and without offence, until the more perfect shewing forth of that which we desire, in Him, Christ our Lord, to Whom be the glory forever. Amen.

Bright Saturday

Passover is a joyful celebration, from which we pass over from death to life, from sin to holiness, from Hades to Paradise. The glorious Church provides us with the same path from Good Friday to Easter through Apocalypse Saturday. This is also called "Bright Saturday" where the church is dressed in white, and filled with joyful hymns. We can hardly imagine what Eternity and the eternal life can be like. The answer is given to us this night when the Church takes us to heaven! Only those of us who have experienced this night in the church and attended the prayers can tell about their indescribable happy experience. This is the night of the passage from death to life. Joyful tunes replace the sad ones. Each tune starts sadly, then in the middle of it, becomes joyful, as we pass from death to life.

After crossing the sea, the Israelites began to sing the song of praise, victory, and salvation (Exodus 15). This is a wonderful example of how joyous life in Christ truly is. Though we face many problems and circumstances beyond our control, though there may be great tribulation, controversy or turmoil, we continue to shout to the Lord in thanksgiving and praise. This is the profession and vocation of a true Christian.

Thus far, the church has read through the entire book of Isaiah, the Psalms, and most of the other prophesies and gospels. During this festival of joy, the church continues in its prayerful meditations by reading the praises from the Old Testament— spanning the entire breadth of the Bible, from the Historical Books (Exodus), the

Prophetic Books (Isaiah, Samuel, Daniel, Habakkuk, Baruch) the poetical books (Lamentations, Job) and the Deuterocanonical books.

- The first praise is from the first part of Moses, the crossing of the Red Sea from death to life. (Exodus 15).
- The prayer of Anna, mother of Samuel, is also read (1 Sam. 2:1-11). "By God alone, one is made dead or alive...fallen in an abyss or lifted above."
- Habakkuk 3:2-19 expresses his exuberance in God his Savior, "He raises me up above... that my victory is in His praise."
- Jonah's prayer, Jonah 2:2-10, is also read. "In my tribulations, I cried to the Lord my God. He heard my voice from the abyss of hell"(Jonah 2:2). Jonah came out alive from the whale.

- We also read from Isaiah 28:10-20. Ezekiel, the Prophet and King of Judah, prayed to God and "God heard him and gave him fifteen years to live after the presumed date of his death."
- The three young men who were thrown in the fire crossed from death to life, because Christ was there with them.
- Susanna, the chaste woman was condemned to death, but God saved her.

As we see, all the prayers and rites are praises for the passage from death to life. The Church introduces us to life in Heaven. A number of processions are alternated between the praises. The priests and the deacons turn around the altar, holding crosses and icons with lit candles. The atmosphere is one of joy and delight that can be experienced only by those who have attended the rites. The feeling is that of crossing from the world's life of misery to the heavenly life.

The Church is leading us to the joy of the Resurrection and its aftermath. At dawn the readings are from the Book of Revelation. The priests, deacons and the community surround seven oil lamps, representing the seven spirits that are before the Throne (Rev. 1:4), the seven lit fires (Rev. 5:4) that are the seven Angels standing before God. They are also the seven golden tribunes (Rev. 1:12) and the seven planets He holds in His hands (Rev. 1:16). The seven planets are the angels (bishops) of the seven churches and the planets. The seven tribunes are the seven churches (Rev. 1:20). We read the Book of Revelation, a book that unveils the secrets of the aftermath of the resurrection.

There is no end to what can be said about this night. It is indeed a personal experience that cannot be described. No one can express the meaning of this night unless he shares in the readings and praises. "To him that comes victorious, I'll have him seated with Me on My throne as I have been victorious Myself and am seated with

My Father on His throne. Let him who has ears listen to what the Spirit says to the churches" (Rev. 3:21,22).

Saint Augustine, City of God, Book XXI, Chapter 26: What It is to Have Christ for a Foundation, and Who They are to Whom Salvation as by Fire is Promised.

But, say they, the catholic Christians have Christ for a foundation, and they have not fallen away from union with Him, no matter how depraved a life they have built on this foundation, as wood, hay, stubble; and accordingly the well-directed faith by which Christ is their foundation will suffice to deliver them some time from the continuance of that fire, though it be with loss, since those things they have built on it shall be burned. Let the Apostle James summarily reply to them: "If any man say he has faith, and have not works, can faith save him?" James 2:14 And who then is it, they ask, of whom the Apostle Paul says, "But he himself shall be saved, yet so as by fire?" Let us join them in their inquiry; and one thing is very certain, that it is not he of whom James speaks, else we should make the two apostles contradict one another, if the one says, "Though a man's works be evil, his faith will save him as by fire," while the other says, "If he have not good works, can his faith save him?"

We shall then ascertain who it is who can be saved by fire, if we first discover what it is to have Christ for a foundation. And this we may very readily learn from the image itself. In a building the foundation is first. Whoever, then, has Christ in his heart, so that no earthly or temporal things — not even those that are legitimate and allowed — are preferred to Him, has Christ as a foundation. But if these things be preferred, then even though a man seem to have faith in Christ, yet Christ is not the foundation to that man; and much more if he, in contempt of wholesome precepts, seek forbidden gratifications, is he

clearly convicted of putting Christ not first but last, since he has despised Him as his ruler, and has preferred to fulfill his own wicked lusts, in contempt of Christ's commands and allowances. Accordingly, if any Christian man loves a harlot, and, attaching himself to her, becomes one body, he has not now Christ for a foundation. But if any one loves his own wife, and loves her as Christ would have him love her, who can doubt that he has Christ for a foundation? But if he loves her in the world's fashion, carnally, as the disease of lust prompts him, and as the Gentiles love who know not God, even this the apostle, or rather Christ by the apostle, allows as a venial fault. And therefore even such a man may have Christ for a foundation. For so long as he does not prefer such an affection or pleasure to Christ, Christ is his foundation, though on it he builds wood, hay, stubble; and therefore he shall be saved as by fire. For the fire of affliction shall burn such luxurious pleasures and earthly loves, though they be not damnable, because enjoyed in lawful wedlock. And of this fire the fuel is bereavement, and all those calamities which consume these joys. Consequently the superstructure will be loss to him who has built it, for he shall not retain it, but shall be agonized by the loss of those things in the enjoyment of which he found pleasure. But by this fire he shall be saved through virtue of the foundation, because even if a persecutor demanded whether he would retain Christ or these things, he would prefer Christ. Would you hear, in the apostle's own words, who he is who builds on the foundation gold, silver, precious stones? "He that is unmarried," he says, "cares for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please the Lord." 1 Corinthians 7:32 Would you hear who he is that builds wood, hay, stubble? But he that is married cares for the things that are of the world, how he may please his wife. 1 Corinthians 7:33 "Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it," — the day, no doubt, of tribulation — "because," says he, "it shall be revealed by fire." 1 Corinthians 3:13 He calls tribulation fire, just as it is elsewhere said, "The furnace proves the vessels of the potter, and the trial of affliction righteous men." Sirach 27:5 And "The fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide" — for a man's care for the things of the Lord, how he may please the Lord, abides — "which he has built thereupon, he shall receive a reward," — that is, he shall reap the fruit of his care. "But if any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss," — for what he loved he shall not retain: — "but he himself shall be saved," — for no tribulation shall have moved him from that stable foundation — "yet so as by fire;" 1 Corinthians 3:14-15 for that which he possessed with the sweetness of love he does not lose without the sharp sting of pain. Here, then, as seems to me, we have a fire which destroys neither, but enriches the one, brings loss to the other, proves both.

But if this passage [of Corinthians] is to interpret that fire of which the Lord shall say to those on His left hand, "Depart from me, you cursed, into everlasting fire," Matthew 25:41 so that among these we are to believe there are those who build on the foundation wood, hay, stubble, and that they, through virtue of the good foundation, shall after a time be liberated from the fire that is the award of their evil deserts, what then shall we think of those on the right hand, to whom it shall be said, "Come, you blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you," Matthew 25:34 unless that they are those who have built on the foundation gold, silver, precious stones? But if the fire of which our Lord speaks is the same as that of which the apostle says, "Yet so as by fire," then both — that is to say, both those on the right as well as those on the left — are to be cast into it. For that fire is to try both, since it is said, "For the day of the Lord shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is." 1 Corinthians 3:13 If, therefore, the fire shall try both, in order that if any

man's work abide — i.e., if the superstructure be not consumed by the fire — he may receive a reward, and that if his work is burned he may suffer loss, certainly that fire is not the eternal fire itself. For into this latter fire only those on the left hand shall be cast, and that with final and everlasting doom; but that former fire proves those on the right hand. But some of them it so proves that it does not burn and consume the structure which is found to have been built by them on Christ as the foundation; while others of them it proves in another fashion, so as to burn what they have built up, and thus cause them to suffer loss, while they themselves are saved because they have retained Christ, who was laid as their sure foundation, and have loved Him above all. But if they are saved, then certainly they shall stand at the right hand, and shall with the rest hear the sentence, "Come, you blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you;" and not at the left hand, where those shall be who shall not be saved, and shall therefore hear the doom, "Depart from me, you cursed, into everlasting fire." For from that fire no man shall be saved, because they all shall go away into eternal punishment, where their worms shall not die, nor their fire be quenched, in which they shall be tormented day and night forever.

But if it be said that in the interval of time between the death of this body and that last day of judgment and retribution which shall follow the resurrection, the bodies of the dead shall be exposed to a fire of such a nature that it shall not affect those who have not in this life indulged in such pleasures and pursuits as shall be consumed like wood, hay, stubble, but shall affect those others who have carried with them structures of that kind; if it be said that such worldliness, being venial, shall be consumed in the fire of tribulation either here only, or here and hereafter both, or here that it may not be hereafter — this I do not contradict, because possibly it is true. For perhaps even the death of the body is itself a part of this tribulation, for it results from the first transgression, so that the time which follows death takes its color in each case from the nature of the man's building. The persecutions, too, which have crowned the martyrs, and which Christians of all kinds suffer, try both buildings like a fire, consuming some, along with the builders themselves, if Christ is not found in them as their foundation, while others they consume without the builders, because Christ is found in them, and they are saved, though with loss; and other buildings still they do not consume, because such materials as abide forever are found in them. In the end of the world there shall be in the time of Antichrist tribulation such as has never before been. How many edifices there shall then be, of gold or of hay, built on the best foundation, Christ Jesus, which that fire shall prove, bringing joy to some, loss to others, but without destroying either sort, because of this stable foundation! But whosoever prefers, I do not say his wife, with whom he lives for carnal pleasure, but any of those relatives who afford no delight of such a kind, and whom it is right to love — whosoever prefers these to Christ, and loves them after a human and carnal fashion, has not Christ as a foundation, and will therefore not be saved by fire, nor indeed at all; for he shall not possibly dwell with the Saviour, who says very explicitly concerning this very matter, "He that loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and he that loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me." Matthew 10:37 But he who loves his relations carnally, and yet so that he does not prefer them to Christ, but would rather want them than Christ if he were put to the proof, shall be saved by fire, because it is necessary that by the loss of these relations he suffer pain in proportion to his love. And he who loves father, mother, sons, daughters, according to Christ, so that he aids them in obtaining His kingdom and cleaving to Him, or loves them because they are members of Christ, God forbid that this love should be consumed as wood, hay, stubble, and not rather be reckoned a structure of gold,

silver, precious stones. For how can a man love those more than Christ whom he loves only for Christ's sake?

Bishop Gregory the Dialogist, *The Dialogues: Book II, The Life of Benedict*

At another time, Servandus, the Deacon, and Abbot of that monastery, which in times past was founded by the noble man Liberius in the country of Campania, ordinarily used to come and visit the man of God. The reason why he came so often was because he was also a man full of heavenly doctrine. So together they two often had a spiritual conference, to the end that, although they could not perfectly feed on the celestial food of heaven, yet, by means of such sweet discourses, they might, at least, with longing and fervent desire, taste of those joys and divine delights.

When it was time to go to rest, the venerable Father Benedict retired to the top of a tower, at the foot of which Servandus the Deacon was lodged. One pair of stairs went to them both. Before the tower there was a large room in which both their disciples lay.

The man of God, Benedict, being diligent in watching, rose early before the time of matins (his monks being yet at rest) and came to the window of his chamber where he offered up his prayers to almighty God. Standing there, all of a sudden in the dead of the night, as he looked forth, he saw a light that banished away the darkness of the night and glittered with such brightness that the light which shone in the midst of darkness was far more clear than the light of the day.

During this vision a marvelously strange thing followed, for, as he himself afterward reported, the whole world, gathered together, as it were, under one beam of the sun, was presented before his eyes. While the venerable father stood attentively beholding the brightness of that glittering light, he saw the soul of Germanus, Bishop of Capua, in a fiery globe, carried up by Angels into heaven.

Then, desiring to have some witness of this notable miracle, he called Servandus the Deacon with a very loud voice two or three times by his name. Servandus, troubled at such an unusual crying out by the man of God, went up in all haste. Looking out the window he saw nothing else but a little remnant of the light, but he wondered at so great a miracle.

The man of God told him all that he had seen in due order. In the the town of Cassino, he commanded the religious man, Theoprobis, to dispatch someone that night to the city of Capua, to learn what had become of Germanus their Bishop. This being done, the messenger learned that the reverent prelate had departed this life. Enquiring curiously the time, the messenger discovered that he died at the very instant in which the man of God beheld him ascending up to heaven.

PETER: A strange thing and very much to be admired. But whereas you say that the whole world, as it were under one sunbeam, was presented before his eyes, I must confess that I never had the experience of any such thing, so I cannot conceive by what means the whole world could be seen of any one man.

GREGORY: assure yourself, Peter, of that which I speak. All creatures are, as it were, nothing to that soul that beholds the Creator. For though it sees but a glimpse of that light which is in the Creator, yet all things that are created seem very small.

By means of that supernatural light, the capacity of the inward soul is enlarged, and is so extended in God, that it is far above the world. The soul of one who sees in this manner, is also above itself; for being rapt up in the light of God, it is inwardly in itself enlarged above itself. When it is so exalted and looks downward, it comprehends how little all creation is. The soul, in its former baseness, could not so comprehend.

The man of God, therefore, who saw the fiery globe, and the Angels returning to heaven, could, no doubt, not see those things but in the light of God. What marvel is it, then, that he who saw the world gathered together before him -- rapt up in the light of his soul -- was at that time out of the world? Although we say that the world was gathered together before his eyes, yet it is not that heaven and earth were drawn into any lesser room than they are of themselves.

The soul of the beholder was more enlarged, rapt in God, so that it might see without difficulty that which is under God. Therefore, in that light which appeared to his outward eyes, the inward light which was in his soul ravished the mind of the beholder to supernatural things and showed him how small all earthly things are.

PETER: I perceive now that it is more to my profit that I did not understand you before. Noting my slow capacity, you delivered a notable exposition. But now, because you have made me thoroughly understand these things, I beseech you to continue on your former narration.

Saint Epiphanius of Cyprus, *The Silence of the Earth*

Something strange is happening - there is a great silence on earth today, a great silence and stillness. The whole earth keeps silence because the King is asleep. The earth trembled and is still because God has fallen asleep in the flesh and He has raised up all who have slept ever since the world began. God has died in the flesh and Hell trembles with fear.

He has gone to search for our first parent, as for a lost sheep. Greatly desiring to visit those who live in darkness and in the shadow of death, He has gone to free from sorrow the captives Adam and Eve, He who is both God and the Son of Eve. The Lord approached them bearing the Cross, the weapon that had won Him the victory. At the sight of Him Adam, the first man He had created, struck his breast in terror and cried out to everyone, "My Lord be with you all." Christ answered him, "And with your spirit." He took him by the hand and raised him up, saying, "Awake, O sleeper, and rise from the dead, and Christ will give you light."

“I am your God, who for your sake have become your son. Out of love for you and for your descendants I now by My own authority command all who are held in bondage to come forth, all who are in darkness to be enlightened, all who are sleeping to arise. I order you, O sleeper, to awake. I did not create you to be held a prisoner in Hell. Rise from the dead, for I am the Life of the dead. Rise up, work of My hands, you who were created in My image. Rise, let us leave this place, for you are in Me and I am in you; together we form only one person and we cannot be separated.

“For your sake I, your God, became your son; I, the Lord, took the form of a slave; I, whose home is above the heavens, descended to the earth and beneath the earth. For your sake, for the sake of man, I became like a man without help, free among the dead. For the sake of you, who left a garden, I was betrayed to the Jews in a garden, and I was crucified in a garden.

“See on my face the spittle I received in order to restore to you the life I once breathed into you. See there the marks of the blows I received in order to refashion your warped nature in My image. On My back see the marks of the scourging I endured to remove the burden of sin that weighs upon your back. See My hands, nailed firmly to a tree, for you who once wickedly stretched out your hand to a tree.

“I slept on the Cross and a sword pierced My side for you who slept in Paradise and brought forth Eve from your side. My side has healed the pain in yours. My sleep will rouse you from your sleep in Hell. The sword that pierced Me has sheathed the sword that was turned against you.

“Rise, let us leave this place. The enemy led you out of the earthly Paradise. I will not restore you to that Paradise, but I will enthrone you in Heaven. I forbade you the tree that was only a symbol of life, but see, I who am Life itself am now one with you. I appointed cherubim to guard you as slaves are guarded, but now I make them worship you as God. The throne formed by cherubim awaits you, its bearers swift and eager. The Bridal Chamber is adorned, the banquet is ready, the eternal dwelling places are prepared, the treasure houses of all good things lie open. The Kingdom of Heaven has been prepared for you from all eternity. “

Resurrection Sunday

Saint Cyril of Alexandria, Commentary on the Second Letter to the Corinthians: Our Firm Hope

Those who have a sure hope, guaranteed by the Spirit, that they will rise again lay hold of what lies in the future as though it were already present.

They say: “Outward appearances will no longer be our standard in judging other men. Our lives are all controlled by the Spirit now, and are not confined to this physical world that is subject to corruption.

The light of the Only-begotten has shone on us, and we have been transformed into the Word, the source of all life. While sin was still our master, the bonds of death had a firm hold on us, but now that

the righteousness of Christ has found a place in our hearts we have freed ourselves from our former condition of corruptibility”.

This means that none of us lives in the flesh anymore, at least not in so far as living in the flesh means being subject to the weaknesses of the flesh, which include corruptibility. Once we thought of Christ as being in the flesh, but we do not do so any longer, says Saint Paul [2 Corinthians 5:16]. By this he meant that the Word became flesh and dwelt among us; he suffered death in the flesh in order to give all men life.

It was in this flesh that we knew him before, but we do so no longer. Even though he remains in the flesh, since he came to life again on the third day and is now with his Father in heaven, we know that he has passed beyond the life of the flesh; for having died once, he will never die again, death has no power over him anymore. His death was a death to sin, which he died once for all; his life is life with God [Romans 6:9].

Since Christ has in this way become the source of life for us, we who follow in his footsteps must not think of ourselves as living in the flesh any longer, but as having passed beyond it. Saint Paul’s saying is absolutely true that when anyone is in Christ he becomes a completely different person: his old life is over and a new life has begun [2 Cor. 5:17].

We have been justified by our faith in Christ and the power of the curse has been broken. Christ’s coming to life again for our sake has put an end to the sovereignty of death. We have come to know the true God and to worship him in spirit and in truth, through the Son, our mediator, who sends down upon the world the Father’s blessings.

And so Saint Paul shows deep insight when he says: This is all God’s doing: it is he who has reconciled us to himself through Christ. For the mystery of the incarnation and the renewal it accomplished could not have taken place without the Father’s will. Through Christ we have gained access to the Father, for as Christ himself says, no one comes to the Father except through him. This is all God’s doing, then. It is he who has reconciled us to himself through Christ, and who has given us the ministry of reconciliation.

Bishop Maximus of Turin, *Christ is Risen!*

Christ is Risen! He has burst open the gates of Hell and let the dead go free; He has renewed the earth through the members of His Church now born again in Baptism, and has made it blossom afresh with men brought back to life. His Holy Spirit has unlocked the doors of Heaven, which stand wide open to receive those who rise up from the earth. Because of Christ’s Resurrection the thief ascends to Paradise, the bodies of the blessed enter the Holy City, and the dead are restored to the company of the living. There is an upward movement in the whole of creation, each element raising itself to something higher. We see Hell restoring its victims to the upper regions, earth sending its buried dead to Heaven, and Heaven presenting the new arrivals to the Lord. In one and the same movement, our Savior’s Passion raises men from the depths, lifts them up from the earth, and sets them in the heights.

Christ is Risen! His rising brings life to the dead, forgiveness to sinners, and glory to the Saints. And so David the Prophet summons all creation to join in celebrating the Paschal festival. "Rejoice and be glad," He cries, "on this day which the Lord has made."

The light of Christ is an endless day that knows no night. Christ is this day, says the Apostle; such is the meaning of his words, "Night is almost over; day is at hand." He tells us that night is almost over, not that it is about to fall. By this we are meant to understand that the coming of Christ's light puts Satan's darkness to flight, leaving no place for any shadow of sin. His everlasting radiance dispels the dark clouds of the past and checks the hidden growth of vice. The Son is that Day to whom the Day, which is the Father, communicates the mystery of His Divinity. He is the Day who says through the mouth of Solomon, "I have caused an unfailing light to rise in Heaven." And as in Heaven no night can follow day, so no sin can overshadow the justice of Christ. The celestial day is perpetually bright and shining with brilliant light; clouds can never darken its skies. In the same way, the light of Christ is eternally glowing with luminous radiance and can never be extinguished by the darkness of sin. This is why John the Evangelist says, "The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has never been able to overpower it."

And so, my brothers, each of us ought surely to rejoice on this Holy Day. Let no one, conscious of his sinfulness, withdraw from our common celebration, nor let anyone be kept away from our public prayer by the burden of his guilt. Sinner he may indeed be, but he must not despair of pardon on this day which is so highly privileged; for if a thief could receive the grace of Paradise, how could a Christian be refused forgiveness?

**CHRIST
IS
RISEN!**



**TRULY
HE IS
RISEN!**