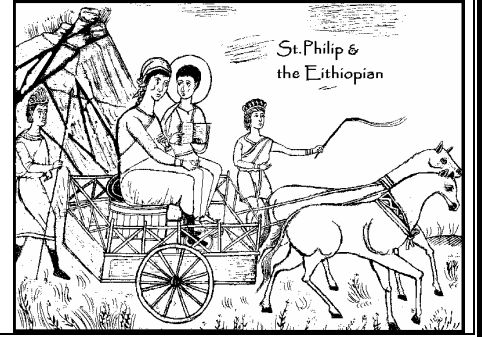


NEWS & NOTES FOR THE ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN EDUCATOR

Vol. XVI No. 2, Spring 2010

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Church School Directors: Please distribute copies of this Newsletter *this weekend* to your teachers. They need this information for Palm Sunday & Holy Week. Do not delay.

- + Message from Dr. Tony Vrame, Archdiocese DRE
- + Review & Outline of the Revised *Holy Friday Retreat Handbook*
- + Teacher Recruiting article
- + The 11 Matins Gospels & an Activity about Jesus' post-Resurrection appearances

A Holy Week Message from the Archdiocese Director of Religious Education

Dear Fellow Religious Educators,

March 17, 2010

With Holy Week just ten days away, you might want to include some of the following brief points about Holy Week in your upcoming lessons.

Saturday of Lazarus and the Entrance of Christ into Jerusalem (Palm Sunday)

- The second is one of the Twelve Great Feasts of the Church
- They are both joyous in nature and serve as an interlude between Great Lent (which ends the evening before Saturday of Lazarus) and Holy Week (which begins with the Orthros of Holy Monday, usually celebrated on the evening of Palm Sunday).
- **Saturday of Lazarus** recalls the miracle of Jesus raising his friend Lazarus from the dead after 4 days in the tomb (John 11:1-44).
- **The Entry of Jesus into Jerusalem** brings Christ into the city for Passover, where he will also begin his final days.

With **Palm Sunday evening**, we begin the transposition of the usual order of services, celebrating morning services the evening before and evening services in the morning.

Holy Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday - The Focus is on the Bridegroom – the *Nymfios*.

- Christ is the Bridegroom who offers His entire being for His bride, the Church, the people of God.
- The image is one of tremendous love, care, and intimacy.
- The Bridegroom image is from the *Parable of the Ten Virgins* (Matthew 25:1-13), who wait for the arrival of the Bridegroom for the wedding feast.
- This image also became an image of the Parousia of Christ – God's intervention in history.
- During this part of Holy Week, we will hear about
 1. *Joseph the Patriarch* (Genesis)
 2. *Cursing of the Fig Tree* (Matthew 21:18-22)
 3. *Ten Virgins* (Matthew 25:1-13)
 4. *Parable of the Talents* (Matthew 25:14-30)
 5. *Sinful Woman who anoints the feet of Christ* (Matthew 26:6-13) – [Plus the Hymn about the unknown Sinful Woman by Kassiane the Hymnographer. pmo]
 6. Judas Iscariot, the Betrayer of the Lord.

Holy Wednesday

- In Greek Orthodox practice, the **Sacrament of Holy Unction** will be celebrated on Holy Wednesday. The sacrament can be celebrated at any time during the year, of course, but on Holy Wednesday, the sacrament is especially connected to the relationship between penitence and illness.

Holy Thursday

- The focus is on the *Upper Room, the Last Supper*, and the events at the *Garden of Gethsemane*, that is, Christ's prayer and his arrest.
- In addition, in a few parishes the service of the *Washing of the Feet* is being celebrated (connected to events in the Upper Room in the Gospel of John).
- Beginning in the Orthros of Friday (Thursday evening), we hear the *Passion of the Lord* -His arrest, trials, beatings, crucifixion, death and burial.

Holy Friday

- On Friday afternoon, in the Vespers Service, much of this is repeated when we hear and see the *Removal of Christ from the Cross*, and the Procession of the Icon of the *Epitaphios Threnos* (which means the Lamentation at the Tomb) and its placement in the sepulcher (the *kouvouklion*) which has been decorated with flowers. [The two Greek words are sometimes misused. The Kouvouklion is the tomb or sepulcher and the Epitaphios is the cloth icon depicting Christ laid in the tomb FYI: The kuvouklion is a relatively modern addition to Holy Friday about 800 years ago. pmo]
- On Friday evening, in the Orthros of Saturday, we participate in the *Lamentations*, (the *Encomia*).
 1. While we call them lamentations, the hymns are in fact *hymns of praise - encomia*).
 2. These verses date from the early 1500's.
 3. They retell the story of the burial of Christ, depict the disposition of the Theotokos and others involved with the burial of Christ (notice the dialogue between Christ and His Mother in the third stanza), and reflect theologically on the meaning of Christ's death for the people of God.

Holy Saturday

The Paschal Vigil has begun.

- On Saturday morning, we celebrate the *Vespers Liturgy of St. Basil*, which is Paschal and quite joyous in nature. In this Liturgy, many themes relating to Baptism are repeated, because it was at the Paschal Vigil when the catechumens were baptized in the early Church. [The priest tosses bay/laurel leaves throughout the church signifying Christ's victory over death. Liken this to the olive wreaths given to winners of the Olympic Games. Pmo]
- On Saturday evening, the Orthros of Sunday is celebrated. It begins with the *Service of the Light*, moves into Orthros and finally the celebration of the Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom. The theme is the *Resurrection of Christ*.

On Sunday

- The Vespers, the *Agape Vespers*, remind us that the Good News – the Resurrection of Christ – is a universal message and is to be proclaimed to all people.

For more details about Holy Week, see

- Calivas, *Great Week and Pascha in the Greek Orthodox Church* (Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1992).
- *Journey through Holy Week* (Student Text and Teacher's Guide) for your classes.
In addition, many parishes have placed copies of *Journey through Holy Week* in pews and at the candle stand for visitors. Some parishes have even mailed a copy to everyone in the parish.
- The Department also has available copies of the *Holy Week Service Book* (Papadeas).

Wishing you and your loved ones a most joyous Pascha! *Anton C. Vrame, Ph.D.*