

HOLY WEEK 2020

ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH

Dear Parishioners,

This year, we will experience Holy Week as we never have before. I will celebrate in an empty church. You will be watching from home. Never in our lives has this happened. No one thought last year at Holy Week that there would be any possibility that this could happen this year. Nonetheless, there are many times in life that we will be called to be in less than ideal conditions. I supposed the measure of our character is reflected by how we adjust and express ourselves when the conditions are less than ideal. With this in mind, please read a few guidelines below as to how we will mark Holy Week in 2020:

1. The most up to date information as far as schedule will be on our website and any changes to the schedule will be sent out in constant contact to the community. Please read all constant contacts to stay up to date as far as our schedule goes. The schedule reflects our plan as of this day. Any further restrictions may result in some services times being moved.
2. The schedule as of this date appears below this message and also on our website.
3. The regular issue of the *April Messenger* has a lot of helpful information about Holy Week, so please refer to it if you have not already. Obviously, a lot of activities are not being held but the theological articles and guidelines are still very valid.
4. Holy Week challenge—Here is a challenge to everyone this week. Every service that we normally attend in church includes time get ready, drive here, drive home, and get settled once we get home. Conservatively, we each spend at last one hour commuting to church. Add up the number of services you will attend in Holy Week. If it's four, you have saved four hours. Here is the challenge: Add the same number of hours you'd spend commuting and add more time in virtual worship. With no time needed to commute, we can hopefully all "attend" services on time and perhaps attend one or two more than usual.

Here are some additional notes on Holy Week, in addition to what was published in the *Messenger*:

1. Saturday of Lazarus—April 11—Father Stavros will still do the Proskomide (service of preparation of the Holy Gifts) on the solea in front of the camera at 9:30 a.m. This is an excellent opportunity for those who have never seen this service, especially our children, to learn how the Holy Gifts are prepared before each Liturgy. Father Stavros will offer the service and narrate while he is doing it. You can submit a question on line during the livestream and we will try to answer it.
2. Palm Sunday afternoon—The Vespers of Holy Monday—No one in our community has ever seen this service because I have never done this service. There is a short vespers service of Holy Monday that is generally suppressed in parish usage. The Bridegroom Service is done Palm Sunday night. The Vespers of Holy Monday is the transition from the joy of Palm Sunday to the sorrow of Holy Week. The service begins with bright colors, green for Palm Sunday, and in the middle of the service, the colors change to the dark purple of Holy Week. The service will be from 5:00-5:45 p.m., with the Bridegroom Service beginning at 6:30 p.m. A text of this service will be posted on the website and made available to the community via email.
3. Pre-Sanctified Liturgy on Holy Monday, Holy Tuesday, and Holy Wednesday mornings—Why

celebrate Liturgy when no one can attend? These three Pre-Sanctified Liturgies include important Scripture readings—from Exodus, from Job and from the Gospels. The Gospel readings are the last teachings of Jesus to His disciples on Holy Monday and Holy Tuesday. The Gospel of Holy Wednesday morning is the first act of the Passion, the betrayal by Judas. The Scripture readings of these services are an important part of the Holy Week narrative.

4. The Service of the Bridegroom of Holy Wednesday—We will not have an afternoon Holy Unction service this year. Instead we will have one Holy Unction service at 6:30 p.m. The Service of the Bridegroom is usually either abridged or skipped in parish usage. We will celebrate it in its entirety from 4:00-5:30 p.m. This service speaks in hymns and Scriptures of the betrayal of Christ and the Last Supper. A text of this service will be available on our website, and circulated to the community via email.
5. Why celebrate Holy Unction since no one will be anointed? The answer is simple, as well as personal. I do not receive Holy Unction on Holy Wednesday, as we have not had a second priest here save for one of my 15 previous Holy Week experiences. I usually receive Holy Unction from another priest during Lent and I didn't do that this year. However, what I have benefited greatly from is the prayers of this service. Not only do we receive the grace of the Holy Spirit through prayer, the prayers are powerful, affirming and motivating. They speak of healing of soul and body. And boy do we need that in the world this year—healing of bodies that are sick, healing of souls that are anxious. There probably isn't a better year to hear these prayers than this year. Further, during the administration of Holy Unction, every person is prayed for out loud by name. While all of your names will be offered in prayer at the Divine Liturgy in the preparation of the Holy Gifts (the Proskomide), every name in our community will be offered out loud throughout the Holy Unction service.
6. The Passion of Christ, the Royal Hours, and the Apokathelosis—These are the services where Christ hangs on the cross in the midst of our church. This year, we will celebrate them with historical accuracy. There were not hundreds of people present at the crucifixion, only one disciple and a few women stood at the foot of the cross. This year, we will celebrate with only a few people at the foot of the cross. The rest of us will watch from afar, just like at the crucifixion.
7. **We can all be present at the Crucifixion**—many people stay away from the service on Holy Thursday night because of its length. Even my offer of coming late and leaving early does not convince some. This year, since there is NO commute time, I want to encourage our entire community to tune in at the moment of the procession. It will occur on Holy Thursday evening between 8:00 and 8:30 p.m., somewhere in that time span. **I would love to see our entire community “present” virtually from 8:00-8:30 p.m. on Holy Thursday, to witness the procession of the Crucified Christ.**
8. A virtual vigil—we are going to keep our tradition of a vigil at the cross this year, we will just do it virtually. We will be sending out information how to sign up for the vigil via zoom. You'll sign up for a time slot, join a zoom conference, the computer will be set up in front of the Cross and you can be there with Christ, reading quietly from your home. The livestream will stay on throughout the night for anyone who want to listen to the vigil. We are looking for people to keep vigil on Holy Thursday night from 10:00 p.m.-9:00 a.m. on Friday morning, from 11:15 a.m. - 3:00 p.m. on Good Friday afternoon, and again from 4:30-7:00 p.m. We hope that doing this from home will encourage more people to participate.
9. **Sunday school Good Friday Retreat materials to be sent out**—We are sending materials for a Sunday school Good Friday retreat. More information forthcoming. We will still adhere to a schedule as far as asking our children to tune in to the Royal Hours at 10:30 a.m. When this service concludes, there will be a live-stream presentation, including opportunities for live questions

(either by live-stream or via phone). Then there will be several videos that our teachers are preparing that you can watch from home, and you are then invited to participate in the Vespers of Apokathelosis at 3:00 p.m.

10. A Trisagion for all the members of our community who have passed away will be held in front of the tomb at the conclusion of the Apokathelosis, at roughly 4:15 p.m. on Good Friday. During the Lamentations, we will remember all those who passed away in the past year, but the Trisagion at 4:15 will commemorate the names of all of our loved ones.
11. The Lamentations will be historically accurate as well. The funeral for Christ was a secret affair. Joseph of Arimathea, Nicodemus and a few women saw the Lord laid in the tomb. There weren't hundreds of people, an elaborate procession or any pageantry. The followers of Christ were huddled in small groups behind closed doors. Hopefully this year will be the only year in our lives that we experience Holy Week like this. If there is a bright side to Holy Week, if it is supposed to reenact the week of Christ's Passion, we will probably be more historically accurate this year than ever.
12. A document with the Lamentations will be posted to the website and circulated via email to everyone on Holy Thursday, so please be on the lookout for that.
13. Holy Saturday morning is a history lesson. Many of us do not come to church Holy Saturday morning, and if we do, we don't get there for the beginning. Because there is no Good Friday evening reception to keep us at church late this year, nor is there a commute Holy Saturday morning, "attend" the Liturgy from the beginning. Early on in the service, there is a reading from Genesis 1, about the creation of the world. This is followed by a prophecy from Jonah which prefigures the three-day entombment of Christ. Following this is a reading from Daniel the prophet. Leaves are scattered around the church as we hear the first announcement of Christ's Resurrection. The Gospel is the Resurrection and the Great Commission. The prayers of the Liturgy of St. Basil, offered for the final time this liturgical year, give a beautiful summary of the history of humanity, from the Creation to the Second Coming.
14. The Paschal service will take place at the normal time (unless there are changes in the government restrictions). Again, with historical accuracy, it will occur in the dead of night with only a few people present. The message still spread throughout the world, despite the very few who came to the empty tomb.
15. There are a few surprises in the works for Holy Week so please stay tuned. We are working very hard on our technology to see if we can make some nuanced even possible. That's why I don't want to write what we are working on, just in case we can't make some of it work. But we are working to make this as meaningful of an experience as possible, especially under the circumstances that we find ourselves in.

What we won't miss this year—this is very important.

1. At some point in 2020, we will all sing Christos Anesti in our parish. We will not go a year without singing this hymn, even if we return to church after Ascension.
2. We won't miss Holy Unction—the first Wednesday after the first Sunday we are in church, we will hold Holy Unction.
3. The choir will sing Soma Christou, the beautiful Communion Hymn of the Paschal season sometime in 2020 as well. We won't miss that either.

We will hold Paraklesis Services every Wednesday from 6:00-7:00 p.m. beginning on Bright Wednesday and lasting until we are able to return all together to our church.

Here are some helpful suggestions for how to worship in your home this year:

1. Make a plan for which services you will attend. The schedule appears below, with start and approximate ending times listed.
2. Since we will all experience Holy Week from some technological advice, please give the services your full attention. Don't "channel flip" or check the phone during the service. Treat it as if you were in church.
3. Come on time. No one has to commute, so there is no traffic to fight. Come on time, and try to stay for the entirety. Whereas the Paschal Liturgy usually ends at 2:00 a.m., it will end closer to 1:30 a.m. this year, because there won't be a long line for Holy Communion. While attending the Paschal Liturgy normally would have you getting home and into bed by 3:00 a.m. at the earliest, you could attend the whole service and be in bed by 1:45 a.m. this year.



4. Do not eat during the service. Again, treat this as if you were in church.

5. Do not watch TV after the evening services. With services most evenings beginning at 6:30 p.m., have dinner, get your kids ready for bed and at 6:30 p.m. gather around the computer. When the service is over, discuss it with your family and then go to bed early. You'll be well rested for the lengthier services at the end of the week. Plus, I can't imagine going from watching a service to two minutes later flipping the channel to a comedy or action movie.

6. Worship—Stand and sit as appropriate. Please make sure to always stand during the reading of the Gospels. Make your cross as appropriate, kneel during the processions. Sing along when you know the hymns and especially with the responses.

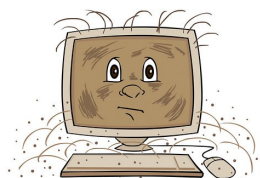
7. Use your Holy Week book and any other materials that are posted on-line
8. Create some sacredness to your space at home. Perhaps put an icon next to the computer or TV, wherever you watch the service. Create an atmosphere by turning down the lights, or lighting candles.
9. Create some special moments in your home. For instance, before the Resurrection service, completely darken the house except for the live-stream feed of the service. At midnight, as the Light is brought from the altar, light a few candles in your house.
10. Print out icons of the different days of Holy Week. A quick google search of "icon of Saturday of Lazarus," or "icon of Crucifixion" will yield instant results. Display the icon of the day on your kitchen table and put it near the computer when you attend the service.



11. Get off screens (besides virtual worship) as much as possible. That should happen anyway during Holy Week. We should put aside as much as possible to focus on the services.

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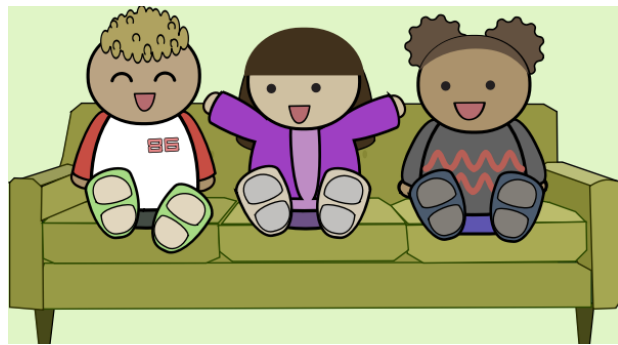
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12. Clean the area around your computer where you will worship. Don't have the church services going on top of a bunch of junk.

13. Clean your house on Holy Saturday. Sure, none of us is hosting a Pascha dinner, but if all things are supposed to begin anew in the Light of the Resurrected Christ, a clean feel to the house is in line with this.

14. Let your children go to more services or more of them. Because you can get them ready for bed before the service starts, let them try to stay up for part of Holy Thursday night or Good Friday night or even try the Anastasi if you can.



15. Keep a journal of your thoughts this year. At summer camp, many times we have had campers write letters to themselves and we mail those letters to them six months after camp, so they can remember how they felt. Keep a journal of how you feel this Holy Week and use it as motivation in future years and as a remembrance of this year.

A fun contest—take a picture of your family worshipping in your home, your worship space, anything special you are doing. Please submit pictures to office email at office@stjohntpa.org by April 20 and we will include the best ones in the *May Messenger*.

Can you write a short paragraph about your Holy Week Experience? We are looking for people to write reflections on their Holy Week experience of worshipping at home. If you'd like to write a couple of paragraphs, please send them to Fr. Stavros at frstav@gmail.com by Tuesday, April 21.

Finally, please know that Charlie, John and I are working really hard to make this a meaningful Holy Week. It absolutely stinks that we won't have people in the pews this year. I pray that we will never have to do this like this again in our lifetimes. I do also hope that we will each be more creative and intentional this Holy Week, and when we are finally able to return to church to worship together, we won't take it for granted, ever. If we all do our part in our own way, this Holy Week can actually be beautiful. I am so thankful to Charlie and John for all of their help. I believe we will still have a powerful and meaningful Holy Week journey. As we make it, let us make it with purposeful and intentional pray for our fallen world, now beset with sickness and crisis.

The Light of Christ will shine in the darkness at the Resurrection, as it always does, reminding us that no darkness, no sadness, can put out His Light. This is our hope, especially this year.

I wish you all a blessed and meaningful Holy Week and a Kali Anastasi!

With love in the Lord,

+Fr. Stavros



Holy Week Schedule

April 11-19, 2020

****PLEASE BEAR IN MIND THAT THIS SCHEDULE CAN CHANGE AT ANY TIME, BASED ON ANY GOVERNMENT REGULATIONS THAT CHANGE. PLEASE STAY TUNED FOR OUR WEBSITE FOR ANYTHING THAT MAY CHANGE.**

PLEASE STAY INFORMED AT STJOHNTPA.ORG

Saturday, April 11 Orthros 8:30-9:30 a.m. Service of the Proskomide 9:30-10:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00-11:15 a.m.	Saturday of Lazarus Virtual Vigil continues 11:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m. Apokathelosis (Vespers of un-nailing) 3:00-4:15 p.m. 4:15-4:30 p.m. Trisagion service for the community will be offered in front of the Cross Virtual Vigil Continues 4:30-7:00 p.m. Lamentations 7:00-10:30 p.m.
Sunday, April 12 Palm Sunday Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00-11:30 a.m. Vespers of Holy Monday 5:00-5:45 p.m. Service of the Bridegroom 6:30-8:00 p.m.	Saturday, April 18 Holy Saturday Vesperal Liturgy 8:30-11:00 a.m. Canon of the Resurrection 11:00 p.m. The Resurrection Service 11:45 p.m. Paschal Divine Liturgy 12:30-1:45 a.m.
Monday, April 13 Holy Monday 9 th Hour 9:00 a.m. Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 9:30-11:00 a.m. Service of the Bridegroom 6:30-8:00 p.m.	Sunday, April 19 PASCHA Agape Vespers 11:00 a.m.-noon
Tuesday, April 14 Holy Tuesday 9 th Hour 9:00 a.m. Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 9:30-11:00 a.m. Service of the Bridegroom 6:30-8:15 p.m.	Wednesday, April 22 Paraklesis Service 6:00 p.m.
Wednesday, April 15 Holy Wednesday 9 th Hour 9:00 a.m. Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 9:30-11:00 a.m. Service of the Bridegroom 4:00-5:30 p.m. Holy Unction 6:30-8:00 p.m.	Thursday, April 23 St. George Orthros 9:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.
Thursday, April 16 Holy Thursday Vesperal Divine Liturgy 9:15-11:00 a.m. The Passion of Christ (12 Gospels) 6:30-10:00 p.m. Virtual Vigil begins at 10:00 p.m. through 9:00 a.m. on Good Friday	Friday, April 24 Zodochos Peghe (Life-Giving Fountain of the Virgin Mary) Orthros 9:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.
Friday, April 17 Good Friday Royal Hours 9:00-11:00 a.m.	Sunday, April 26 Thomas Sunday Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.
	Wednesday, April 29 Paraklesis Service 6:00 p.m.
	Sunday, May 3 Sunday of the Myrrh-Bearers Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.
	Wednesday, May 6 Paraklesis Service 6:00 p.m.
	Friday, May 8 St. John the Theologian Orthros 9:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.