

Come receive the light from the light that is never overtaken by night and glorify Christ who is risen from the dead.

— From the
Resurrection
Service



JOURNEY

THROUGH HOLY WEEK
PARENT GUIDE

Dear Parents,

On Holy Saturday Evening, we sit in church surrounded by darkness and reverently wait for a single flame to bring forth light to us all. The priest comes out of the royal gate carrying this light. As he chants the above hymn, a warm glow creeps slowly from candle to candle, and suddenly a once darkened church is beautifully illuminated and burning bright. The challenge of the Resurrection is to carry the light home with us each Pascha—not just with our candles but with our hearts, letting this light radiate through all we do as individuals and families. We must remember that long after our Pascha candle has melted, the light of Christ still burns strongly in us; we need to become human candles that pass Christ's light to each person we encounter!

Journey through Holy Week was created for young people in grades 6–9. This guide is offered as a companion to use alongside the zine to help you and your family walk through this most holy of weeks together. You can download it from <http://religioused.goarch.org/holyweekguide.pdf>. As we proceed toward the Resurrection, we pray that this resource will help your family grow closer to our Lord and Savior. May we all experience the joy of the Resurrection so that we proclaim triumphantly: Christ is Risen! Truly He is Risen!

With Love in Christ,

Center for Family Care
Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America

FAMILY RESOURCES FOR HOLY WEEK

There are many wonderful resources to guide you through your Holy Week and Paschal journey. For more, visit the special Lenten section of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese Web site at lent.goarch.org.

BOOKS FOR CHILDREN

Christ Has Risen, Children! by Svetlana Visotskaya—The story of Pascha as celebrated in the Orthodox Church, told through magnificently colorful iconographic art. Available from Light and Life Publishing.

BOOKS FOR TEENAGERS

Holy Week and Pascha by Euphemia Brière—The period in the life of Christ from the raising of Lazarus to the Resurrection, as reflected in the Divine Services of the Orthodox Church. Simply explained, with beautiful full-color icons and iconographic illustrations, it is a treasure for ages 10 to adult. Published by St. Nectarios Press.

BOOKS FOR ADULTS

Making God Real in the Orthodox Christian Home by Fr. Anthony Coniaris—This very popular book on the

Church at home devotes an entire section on how to make Holy Week and Pascha an integral part of family life. Published by Light and Life.

HOLY WEEK AND PASCHAL MUSIC

Thy Passion by the Boston Byzantine Choir—This CD brings the listener the most beautiful moments of Holy Week from the morning of Lazarus Saturday to the evening of Holy Friday. It celebrates the Passion of Christ in the tones and hymns of the most ancient Christian church yet understandable to English speakers. It can be ordered at www.conciliarpress.com.

INTERNET RESOURCES

Phyllis Onest (www.phyllisonest.com)—Go to the "Resources" section under "Lent and Pascha" and you will find many resources for families. We especially recommend the booklets *Getting Ready for Holy Week and Pascha* and *A Young Person's Guide to the Lenten and Holy Week Services*, as well *Preparing Our Children for Holy Week Services and Pascha*, a guide for parents and teachers.

PREPARING FOR HOLY WEEK

On Holy Tuesday (at the service held Monday evening), we commemorate the Parable of the Ten Virgins. As the parable goes, all of the women took lamps with them to meet the bridegroom, but only five brought extra oil with them so that their lamps wouldn't extinguish.

These women took the time to properly prepare themselves to enter into the Feast. Let us look to the example of the wise virgins to properly prepare ourselves for the Feast of Pascha by making sure we have enough "oil" to make it through Holy Week. Here are some suggestions for how to get your family ready.

ASSESS YOUR WEEK

- Get a copy of your Church's Holy Week schedule of services and other activities.
- Decide how your family will be participating in the different services and activities taking place, and then write them on your family calendar for all to see.

SET ASIDE WHAT YOU CAN

- Consider your typical household tasks, and your typical weekly running around. Are they really necessary? If you can, postpone them and move them to do another time.
- Consider canceling piano lessons, ballet, baseball and other extra-curricular activities for this week—missing one week will not matter in the grand scheme of life.
- There are other things you need to eliminate as well—jealousy, anger, gossip, etc. there is no time for these things this week. Actually, working to rid yourself of these permanently would be even better, but for now let's start with this week.

PREPARE! PREPARE! PREPARE!

- Anything you can do before Holy Week, you should do.

- Set a family workday to prepare for Holy Week, perhaps between the Saturday of Lazarus morning service and the evening vespers. Clean the house, wash and iron the clothes, and do all of the week's cooking.

- Make a list of things that despite your family's workday will still need attention during the week. Divide up the tasks and allot the proper time to complete them during the week. Remember you need to keep things simple!

- Make a big pot of beans and rice (yes, you can eat it several nights in a row), pre-make peanut butter and jelly sandwiches, and lay out everyone's clothes for the week.

BE STILL AND QUIET

- Turn off the television. Turn off the radio (or turn on church music).
- If you can, disconnect completely from your cell phone and email. If you cannot do this because of necessity, designate certain times of the day when both are off limits (perhaps from the time you get home from work until you leave the next morning).
- Create a quiet time when your family refrains from talking unless there is an emergency. For children, make sure they have something to help them focus their attention on God during this quiet time through prayer, reading, writing, or even drawing a picture.

Take yourself out of the world just for one week—it will still be waiting for you when you come back. Holy Week is just seven days; set them apart and commit as a family to live your lives radically different for this time. Give your life completely to God—after all, He gave His life completely for us!

—Adapted from "Preparing for the Feast" by Melissa K. Tsongranis (*Orthodox Observer*, March 2008).

DAY-BY-DAY THROUGH HOLY WEEK

At Home and In Church with Your Family

As we walk through Holy Week, there are a few things we as parents can do to help our children become active participants in all that the week has to offer. To begin, learn about the different days and what is commemorated on each (a good source for information on this is your child's zine). Also, look at the service ahead of time in a Holy Week service book. Familiarizing our children with the service will help them know what to expect, listen, and look for. If your children are young and won't be able to handle all of the services, integrate the Bible readings, prayers, and themes from the services into their bedtime routine. Again, keep it simple; inspire their hearts, but don't bombard them with a detailed analysis of each service. Here are some additional activities you can do to live out Holy Week each day both in the home and in church.

Saturday of Lazarus

Learn through icons. Holy Week has a treasure trove of beautiful icons that tell the story. Before you go to church, familiarize your children with the various icons they will see this week. You can find many of the icons in your child's zine and on various Orthodox Web sites. Consider ordering a Holy Week Ornament Kit. This kit has seven Holy Week icons on shrink plastic. The icons can be colored and shrunk to ornament size when briefly baked in the oven. Available from Paidea Classics at www.paideaclassics.org.

At Church Today: Today many Churches enlist the help of the children to fold palms for Palm Sunday. If this is a practice in your parish, have your child join the fun.

Palm Sunday

Learn about Holy Week through its beautiful hymns. Look ahead and start teaching some of them to your children. In doing this, you will help your child better connect with the service they are attending. Look on the Great Lent, Holy Week and Pascha Web site of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America at www.lent.goarch.org/holy_pascha/learn to listen and learn some of these hymns.

At Church Today: The first of the Bridegroom services begins this evening. If you can, attend as a family. Let your child know that the priest will process out with the icon of the Bridegroom. Have your children take note of the difference between this icon of Jesus and the other icons of Him in your church.

Holy Monday

There are two important themes we will hear about in tonight's service—preparedness and hypocrisy. Today take sometime time to read the parable of the wise and foolish virgins (Matthew 25:1–13) and discuss how we can prepare to receive our risen Lord. Also, consider discussing hypocrisy. How do we strive to live sincere lives as Christians and not be hypocrites to the world?

At Church Today: Last night your child heard for the first time the beautiful hymn “Behold the Bridegroom Comes.” Encourage them tonight to try to chant it along with the chanters/choir.


Holy Tuesday

Today the theme of repentance rings loudly as we learn about the story of the sinful woman. Read Luke 7:35–50, the Gospel lesson that tells her story. Have your children think of something they can offer to honor Christ just as she did. It can be as simple as a drawing or a prayer, or more complex like volunteering time to help those less fortunate.

At Church Today: During tonight's Bridegroom service, we have the beautiful hymn of Kassiani. For older children, have them listen closely to the hymn (or read it in English if it is being chanted in Greek). Have them take note of how it tells the story from the Gospel lesson read at home earlier in the day. It is important for our children to realize that our Church's hymnology is based on the tradition and scriptures of our faith.

Holy Wednesday

Today at many Orthodox parishes the Sacrament of Holy Unction is offered. Learn more about it by reading “Preparation



for the Sacrament of Holy Unction,” a wonderful article by Fr. Theodore Petrides (from the March 2007 *Youth Worker Pulse* e-mail, available via <http://tinyurl.com/cwzqggb>). For additional information about the sacrament, read page 9 of the zine.

At Church Today: The service of Holy Unction consists of seven Epistle and seven Gospel readings. The length of the service can be challenging for children. Come equipped with paper and crayons and let them know you expect them to pay close attention to the Gospel readings and then draw a picture about each one. When you go home, have your children share their creations and recount the different Gospel lessons.

Holy Thursday

Today plan to dye your Pascha eggs. Learn about the symbolism of the eggs by reading page 17 of the zine. Dye some the traditional red, and allow more creativity with other eggs. Allow children to decorate these eggs with religious symbols using a variety of special egg-decorating materials (found at a craft supply store). For older children, consider learning the techniques used to create Ukrainian eggs. These ornately decorated eggs will provide you with a beautiful keepsake from your Pascha festivities.

At Church Today: Today begins with the Divine Liturgy of St. Basil. Try to attend as a family before going to work or school. The day will end with the evening service, which includes the reading of Twelve Gospels telling the story of Christ’s Crucifixion. This is a beautiful but very long service, and it can be a challenge for children and their bedtimes. If this is an issue, try to come for part of the service. Make sure to properly prepare your children by letting them know what to expect and look for during the service. Just after the fifth Gospel reading, Jesus is put on the cross.

Holy Friday

Today, try to keep your home as quiet as possible. Consider keeping schoolchildren home for the day so they can spend it preparing for the Resurrection. As you will want to bring the light of the Resurrection home with you after the midnight service, have your children prepare for this by decorating a large jar candle. You can decorate it with religious symbols using paint pens and paper icons.

At Church Today: There are three services today: the Imperial Hours in the morning, Vespers in the afternoon, and the Great Friday evening service. In addition, many parishes offer a Holy Friday youth retreat. If your parish doesn’t offer a retreat, consider asking your priest how your family might help out with preparations for the Resurrection, such as cleaning, decorating, or anything else the priest needs done.

Holy Saturday

Today, plan to bake Pascha Cookies with your children. Every step of making these cookies teaches about the story of Pascha. The recipe and teaching instructions can be found at www.phyllisonest.com in the “Resources” section under “Lent and Pascha.” Start making them on Holy Saturday and they will be done when you return from the Resurrection service—with a special surprise awaiting your family.

At Church Today: The Holy Saturday morning service is the first announcement of the Resurrection. Ask your children to listen closely to the Old Testament reading of the story of the three youths. Encourage them to sing the response to the Hymn of the Three Youths, “Praise the Lord and exalt Him to all Ages.” Shortly after the hymn, the priest celebrates by throwing bay leaves and/or flower petals throughout the church while chanting a beautiful hymn, “Arise, O God.”

Holy Pascha of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ

Christ is Risen! Truly He is Risen! Orthodox Christians through the world victoriously proclaim this message for a full 40 days after Pascha. As a family, learn to declare the Resurrection in different languages. Start off with languages of people you know. An excellent resource for this is Pascha Polyglotta (<http://srbigham.com/en/>). This Web site offers the Resurrection greeting in 250 languages—with both written text and audio.

At Church Today: Remember that the liturgical celebration doesn’t end with the Resurrection Service; it continues with the beautiful Agape Vespers the next day. This service proclaims the Gospel in many languages. If you or your children are able to speak another language, let your parish priest know: he may ask you to read the Gospel in the language during this service.

CHALLENGE: LIVING THE RESURRECTION

When the Myrrhbearing Women came to the tomb of Jesus on the third day, the angel said to them, "He is not here, but is risen!" and they quickly brought the good news to the Apostles. Likewise, on the road to Emmaus, Christ joined two of His disciples and revealed Himself to them after He had broken bread with them. They, too, returned to Jerusalem and joyfully proclaimed that, "The Lord has risen indeed!"

In the Orthodox Church we are blessed to have the beautiful tradition of the Paschal Resurrection service. After we receive the light of Christ from the priest and proclaim, "Christ is Risen! Truly He is Risen!" some of us will remain until the end of the Resurrection service to receive Holy Communion, and to experience the "glory" and "splendor" of the "new and Holy Pascha." Sadly, however, many of us will instead return home early carrying our lit candles, and conclude this "Feast of feasts" by merely keeping the tradition of making a cross in the doorway of our home and enjoying the delicious Paschal food.

What are some ways we as families can keep the flame from the light of the Resurrected Christ burning in our hearts after the Paschal celebrations are over? How can we continue to imitate the joy of the Myrrhbearing Women and the disciples who were visited by the Risen Lord? Here are some challenges:

Focus on the fact that the Resurrection doesn't end on Pascha—the Church gives us 40 days to celebrate it. We sing "Christ is Risen" in our daily prayers and we light our Pascha candle as a physical reminder of Christ's coming out of darkness. We also continue to proclaim "Christ is Risen! Truly He is Risen!" every time we greet someone.

More than just with words, Christ spoke with His actions. Make Pascha a time for you and your family's own "Paschal resolutions." As a family, create a list of simple things you want to change or improve. Make it fun by creating a reward chart for parents as well as children. Be sure to hold one other accountable, but don't forget to have fun!

Bringing the Light of Christ home means not only continuing all of the good habits we strove to establish throughout Lent but also sharing the "light" with others. By continuing to pray, serve the needy, and witness to others in our daily activities, we keep Christ's light bright. As a family, start a service project or continue one you started during Lent.

If finding time for Bible study hasn't been easy, this is a great time to start. For daily readings from Pascha until Pentecost, follow the lectionary of the Church, who, in Her wisdom, focuses on the Gospel of John and the Book of Acts. For young children, read from a children's Bible or try to make the original understandable at their level.



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