



Russian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate)

PASSION WEEK

A week before Easter, all Orthodox Christians remember the passions of Christ, His death and burial – the last days of the Savior's earthly life. This week is called Passion Week.

If we did not have the opportunity to fast on Holy Lent, then we should spend at least this week in fasting and prayer, every day of which is called Holy and Great – in memory of the greatness of the events that transpired. For faithful, each of these days is a holiday, because through the suffering and death of the Savior we received deliverance from sin, damnation and death. For that reason in these days the services in honor of saints are not done, there are no prayers for the dead, nor ordinary prayer



The shroud is placed in the center of the temple. After that, there is a reading of the canon about the crucifixion of the Savior and the lamentation of the Most Holy Theotokos, then, mourning together with the Mother of God Her deceased Son, we kiss the Shroud.

The **Holy Saturday** encourages us to remember the burial of Jesus Christ, the stay of His body in the tomb, the descent of His Soul into hell to proclaim there victory over death and deliverance from hell of the souls of those dead who believed in His coming and waited for it, as well as the introduction of a prudent robber into Paradise. Matins of this day are held at night or in the evening on Friday. Christians, according to the ancient custom, with lit candles, sing the psalms that the Savior sang when he went out from the Last Supper to the Passion of the Cross (Ps. 115-118). After the psalm, the singing of Sunday hymns begins – services on this holy Saturday begin in the early morning and continue until the end of the day, and the last Saturday hymns merge with the beginning of the solemn Easter chants – at the Easter matins. After the great praise, the Shroud is carried around the temple, remembering the burial of Christ, then the prophecy of Ezekiel about the universal Resurrection is read. The Gospel reading talks about how the Jews tried to hide the Resurrection of the Lord with deceit and how, by God's will, this, on the contrary, turned out to be the best evidence of its authenticity. On



Holy Saturday, the liturgy of Basil the Great is held, starting with vespers and therefore already related to Easter. In this service, all readings are made before the Shroud. After the small entrance with the Gospel, 15 parimii (readings from the Old Testament) are read, which contain the main prophecies and prototypes relating to Jesus Christ, who redeemed us from sin, damnation and death by His death on the Cross and His Resurrection. The parimian reading ends with the song of the Three Youths in the oven: "Sing to the Lord and praise Him forever and ever," calling all creation to praise the Creator. In the Ancient Church, at this time, the baptism of the catechumens was performed and therefore, instead of the Trisagion, the hymn "all of you who were baptized into Christ" is sung and the Book of Acts of the Apostles is read about the mysterious power of Baptism. After Books of the Apostles is read, instead of Hallelujah, seven verses are sung, selected from the psalms with prophecies about the Resurrection of the Lord. During this singing, all priests are change from dark robes into white ones – in the likeness of Angels greeting the Risen Lord. The deacon, coming out of the altar, announces the resurrection to everyone. Then at the Liturgy, instead of the Cherubic song, the song "Let all human flesh be silent..." is sung. The great entrance is made so that it ends up in front of the Shroud. Instead of "Every living thing rejoices in You", the Irmos of the 9th song of the Holy Saturday canon



"Do not weep for Me, Mother" is sung. At the end of the Divine Liturgy, during the dismissal, bread and wine are blessed to reinforce the strength of Christians at the Easter vigil. This rite recalls the ancient custom of Christians to wait for the coming of Easter in the temple, listening to the reading of the Acts of the Apostles. Since strict fasting was observed for a whole day before the feast of the Bright Resurrection of Christ, the Church reinforced the strength of Christians blessed with bread and wine.

Consecration of Easter cakes, curd "Easter" and Easter eggs begins, as a rule, already on the morning of the Holy Saturday. One can also bring meat for blessing, but rules forbid to bring meat to the temple.

We wish every reader a worthwhile Holy Week and to meet Risen Christ with a pure heart!



Please do not throw away or use this leaflet for household purposes. If you no longer need it, give it to someone else or return it to the Church.

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СТРАСТНАЯ СЕДМИЦА (АНГЛ.)



services, there are instead special services reserved only for these holy days.

All faithful should participate in the services of Passion Week. The lithurgies are arranged in such a way that in them we see the story of the passions of Jesus Christ, we hear His last sermons for us.

Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday are dedicated to the remembrance of the last conversations of the Savior with the people and his disciples, in the lithurgies of these three days the penitential character is still held.

On the **Holy Monday** we are invited with hymns to make ready for the beginning of the Passions of Christ. In them the story of the Old Testament patriarch Joseph the Beautiful, whom the brothers sold to Egypt out of envy, foreshadows the suffering of the Savior, who was betrayed by his disciples. Also on the Holy Monday we are reminded how the Lord cursed the fig tree, thickly covered with foliage, but barren, to dry out – which serves as an image of hypocritical scribes and Pharisees. Any soul that does not bear spiritual fruit – repentance, faith, prayer and good deeds – is like a barren, withered fig tree.

On **Holy Tuesday** we are reminded of the Lord's chastisement of the scribes and Pharisees, His parables about the tribute to Caesar, about the resurrection of the dead, the Last Judgment, about the ten virgins and about the talents.



Holy Wednesday is dedicated to the memory of the betrayal of Christ by Judas, who decided to betray his Divine Teacher to the Jewish elders for 30 pieces of silver. In addition, on Holy Wednesday, the Church remembers the sinner who washed the feet of the Savior with her tears and anointed them with precious mirra. By doing so, she prepared Christ for his burial.

Before the Divine Liturgy on the Holy Wednesday, just as right before the beginning of Great Lent, the rite of forgiveness is performed. At the end of the Divine Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts, after the prayer behind ambo, the prayer of St. Ephraim the Syrian is offered for the last time with three deep bows – and from that moment until the day of Pentecost, deep bows are not made by faithful either in the temple or at home (the exceptions are bows before the Shroud of the Savior and the Holy Sacraments at the Divine Liturgy). From the Holy Wednesday until the St Thomas week, the reading of the Psalms is also stopped.

Holy Thursday is the day of the Last Supper, at which the Lord established the Sacrament of Holy Communion (the Eucharist) of the New Testament, the Sacrament of His Flesh and Blood. The Church recalls how Christ at the Last Supper washed the feet of His disciples – as a sign of the deepest humility and His love for them – thereby setting an example for us to act the same way towards each other. On this day we also remember the prayer of the Savior in the Garden of Gethsemane and the



betrayal of Judas. The Holy Thursday is popularly called Clean Thursday. But this name does not come from the custom to do deep cleaning or go to the bath to wash on this day. On this day, all Christians try to go to the temple to partake of the life-giving Sacraments of the Lord.

On Holy Thursday, the main Divine Liturgy of the entire church year is celebrated: it is combined with the vespers as a sign of remembrance of the Last Supper. In the cathedrals, a touching rite of washing the feet is performed on this day, and in the Patriarchal Cathedral in Moscow, at the Liturgy of Holy Thursday, His Holiness the Patriarch consecrates the Holy Myrrh for the Sacrament of Confirmation. Before the consecration of the Myrrh, there is a rite of myrrh-making, which begins on the Holy Monday; it is accompanied by the reading of the Gospel, special prayers and hymns.

The **Good Friday** is dedicated to the memory of the Savior's condemnation to death, crucifixion, His suffering on the Cross and death. The divine service of this day calls us to look with fear and awe at the Lord's redemptive suffering, as if standing at the foot of His Cross. At the Matins of the Good Friday (usually celebrated on Thursday evening), 12 Gospel passages narrating the suffering of the Lord, the Gospels of the Holy Passion, are read. By tradition, Christians bring home the fire of candles that burned during the reading of the holy Gospels, and put signs of the cross on the



doorframes of their houses' entrances with this flame.

The Divine Liturgy is not served on this day because Christ Himself on this day offered Himself as a Sacrifice on the Cross of the Golgotha, but the so-called royal hours of divine service are read (the king was always present on them before). On the royal hours of divine service, we read psalms predicting the crucifixion and death of the Lord, apostolic letters about the atoning Sacrifice, as well as the Gospel about the events of the Passion.

Lent of Good Friday is the strictest of the year: those who are healthy do not eat anything until the end of the Divine Liturgy on the Good Saturday.

In the afternoon, at the time when the Lord died, a great vespers is held in all temples, the center of which is the narrative of the death of Christ collected from the four Gospels. But after the singing of the evening hymn, with the onset of another day, through the agony of the Passion, the radiance of victory over death breaks out – hell cannot hold the divine soul of the Savior. While still grieving, we remember how Joseph of Arimathea took the body of the Son of God off the Cross, and now, at the end of Great Friday vespers, the rite of bringing out the Shroud of Christ (the image of the deceased Lord) is performed, depicting His position in the tomb.

