

## Synaxaria + Holy Week

### **Holy Monday.**

***Jacob lamented the loss of Joseph, but he was valorously seated in a chariot and honoured as a king. For he was not enslaved to the pleasures of Egypt, but was glorified by God who seeth the hearts of all, and bestoweth upon them an incorruptible crown.***

**Ikos:** Let us now add our lamentation to the lamentation of Jacob, and let us weep with him for his ever-memorable and chaste son Joseph, who was enslaved in body but kept his soul free from bondage, and became lord over all Egypt. For God doth grant unto his servants an incorruptible crown

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**The chaste Joseph proved to be a just ruler, and a provider of corn; O abundance of good things.**

**Christ likeneth the synagogue of the Hebrews to a fig tree devoid of spiritual fruits and withered it with a curse; let us avoid its fate.**

On this day the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ begins; and first of all, Joseph the All-Comely is interpreted as a type of Christ. Joseph was the eleventh son of the Patriarch Jacob, born to him of Rachel. Envied by his brothers on account of certain dreams that he had, he was first cast into a pit. Jacob was deceived by his other sons into believing, on the basis of a bloodstained robe, that Joseph had been devoured by a wild beast. Joseph was then sold to some Ishmaelite travellers for thirty pieces of silver. The Ishmaelites in turn sold him to Potiphar, the chief eunuch of Pharaoh, the King of Egypt. When Potiphar's wife conceived a mad desire for the young man's chaste comeliness, he, not wishing to commit the iniquitous act that she proposed, left his clothing behind and fled. She slandered Joseph to her husband, who had him fettered and imprisoned. Joseph was later set free after explaining certain of Pharaoh's dreams. On being presented to the king, he was appointed Lord of all Egypt. While providing his brothers with corn during a great famine, he once again made himself known to them. After living the whole of his life in virtue, he reposed in Egypt, being highly esteemed for his chastity, in addition to his other virtues. Joseph the All-Comely is an icon of Christ, since Christ, too, was envied by the Jews, His own people, was sold by one of His

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Disciples for thirty pieces of silver, and was enclosed in the dark and gloomy pit of the tomb. Breaking forth thence by His sovereign will, He reigns over Egypt—that is, He is victorious over all sin by His Divine power—and rules over the entire world. In His love for mankind, He redeems us through the mystical provision of corn, in that He offers Himself as a sacrifice for our sake, nourishing us with the heavenly Bread of His life-giving Flesh. Such is the proper interpretation of Joseph the All-Comely. On this day, we also commemorate the fig tree that was withered.

For the Divine Evangelists, namely Saints Matthew and Mark, after the narrative concerning the Palms, add the following story. According to Saint Mark: “And on the morrow, when they were come from Bethany, he was hungry: and seeing a fig tree afar off having leaves, he came, if haply he might find anything thereon: and when he came to it, he found nothing but leaves; for the time of figs was not yet. And Jesus answered and said unto it, “No man eat fruit of thee hereafter for ever” (Mark 11:12-14). According to Saint Matthew: “In the morning as he returned into the city, he hungered. And when he saw a fig tree in the way, he came to it, and found nothing thereon, but leaves only, and said unto it, “Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever”. And presently the fig tree withered away (Matthew 21:18-19). Now, the fig tree is the Synagogue of the Jews, on which the Saviour did not find the appropriate fruit, but only the darkness of the Law. Taking even this away from it, He rendered it completely fallow. If one were to ask why the inanimate tree became dry when it received the curse, not having sinned in any way, let him learn that the Jews, seeing Christ always doing good to all men and not causing anyone even the slightest distress, supposed that He had the power only to do good, and not to chastise. In His love for mankind, the Master did not wish to show that He had the ability to act thus towards any man. Therefore, in order to convince the ungrateful people that He had sufficient power to chastise, but in His goodness did not wish to chastise them, He inflicted a punishment on inanimate and insentient nature. There is, at the same time, an apocryphal account that has come down to us from wise Elders, as Saint Isidore of Pelousion says: that the tree which caused the transgression of Adam and Eve was this fig tree, the leaves whereof the transgressors used to cover themselves. Hence, since it had not suffered this fate originally, it was withered by Christ in His love for mankind, lest it any longer bear fruit that would be the cause of sin. That sin is likened to the fig tree is quite clear; for the fig has the sweetness of pleasure, but the adhesiveness of sin, and it subsequently stings the conscience by

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its harshness. The Fathers placed the story of the fig tree here in order to arouse us to compunction, and the commemoration of Joseph because he is an image of Christ. The fig tree is every soul that is devoid of all spiritual fruit. The Lord, not finding any refreshment on it in the morning, that is, during the present life, withers it through a curse and consigns it to the eternal fire. It stands as a withered reminder, inspiring fear in those who do not bring forth the appropriate fruit of virtue.

**By the intercessions of Joseph the All-Comely, O Christ God, have mercy on us. Amen.**

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### **Holy Tuesday.**

***Think, O soul, upon the hour of thine end; and recall with fear how the fig tree was hewn down. Work diligently, O wretched one, with the talent that hath been granted thee; be vigilant and cry aloud: May we not be left outside the bridal chamber of Christ.***

**Ikos:** Why art thou melancholic, O my wretched soul? Why dost thou waste thy days consumed by unprofitable cares? Why art thou cumbered about much with things fleeting? The very last hour approaches and we shall soon be parted from this vale of tears. While time doth remain, return to soberness and cry: I have sinned against Thee, O my Saviour, cut me not down like the unfruitful fig tree; but since Thou art compassionate and exceedingly good, O Christ, be merciful to me who in Fear calleth upon Thee: May we not be left outside the bridal chamber of Christ!

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**Holy and Great Tuesday bringeth us ten Virgins. Who win a victory from the impartial Master.**

On Holy and Great Tuesday, we commemorate the parable of the ten virgins, because the Lord related this parable to His disciples as He was going toward Jerusalem to His Holy Passion. He told the parable of the ten virgins to call attention to almsgiving, at the same time teaching that every man must be ready before the end comes. He had spoken many times to them about chastity.

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Virginité is held in great honour, because it is indeed a great thing. Yet, lest anyone, while practicing this one virtue, neglect the others, and particularly love, by which the lamp of virginity is given light, he will be put to shame by the Lord. The Holy Gospel introduces this parable, calling five of the virgins wise, because they represent readiness to practice both love and virginity, and five of them foolish because, though they had virginity, they did not have love commensurate with it. They are foolish, therefore, because they practiced a great virtue yet neglected one that is easier and were reckoned as being no better than harlots; the latter were defeated by bodily pleasures, whereas the former, by possessions. As the night of the present life was going by, all the virgins fell asleep, that is, they died, for death is called a sleep. While they were sleeping, a cry rang out in the middle of the night, "Behold, the Bridegroom is coming; go out to meet Him!" (Matt. 25:6). Those who had their oil ready and lamps trimmed went inside to the Bridegroom when the doors were opened.

Earlier, the others, who had insufficient oil after their sleep, had asked the first for oil. The wise virgins wished to give them some, but could not. Before they went inside, they replied, "No, lest there should not be enough for us and you; but go rather to those who sell, and buy for yourselves" (Matt. 25:9). While they went to buy, the Bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with Him to the wedding, and the door was shut (See Matt. 25:10). The foolish virgins knocked on the doors and called out, "Lord, Lord, open to us" (Matt. 25:11). But the Lord Himself uttered the terrible reply: "Assuredly, I say to you, I do not know you" (Matt. 25:12). For how can you see the Bridegroom if you lack the dowry of mercy? On account of this depiction, the parable of the ten virgins was given its place here by our God-bearing Fathers to teach us always to be watchful and ready to meet the true Bridegroom with good works, especially almsgiving, because the day and hour of the end are unknown to us.

Therefore, it is made quite clear that after death, correction of mistakes and wicked acts shall be impossible, a teaching which is also found in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus the beggar. (See Luke 16:19-31) In the same way, we are taught by the All-comely Joseph to practice chastity and by the fig tree to produce spiritual fruit at all times. He who practices one virtue - and a great one indeed - but neglects the others, especially love, does not enter into eternal life with Christ but is turned back and is put to shame.

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There is nothing sadder and more shameful than to see virginity set at naught by possessions.

**O Christ our Bridegroom, unite us with the wise virgins and join us to Thy chosen flock, and have mercy on us and save us. Amen.**

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### **Holy Wednesday.**

*More than the harlot have I sinned, O Good One, yet never have I offered Thee flowing tears. But in silence I fall down before Thee, and beseeching Thee with love I kiss Thy most pure feet, that as Master, Thou mayest grant me remission of sins; Wherefore I cry to Thee, O Saviour, from the filth of my works do Thou Deliver me.*

**Ikos:** The Woman who was once a harlot, became suddenly chaste, and hating the shameful works of sin and the pleasures of the flesh, she thought upon her deep disgrace and the judgment of torment that awaits harlots and those defiled, of whom I am the first, wherefore I am afraid, yet mindlessly I continue in my evil ways. But the Woman who was a harlot, filled with fear, made haste and came crying to the Redeemer: "O Lord, Thou merciful Lover of mankind, from the filth of my Works deliver me."

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### **The woman who poured Myrrh on the body of Christ Anticipated the Myrrh and Aloes of Nikodemos.**

On Holy and Great Wednesday, the Divine Fathers decreed that we should commemorate the harlot who anointed the Lord with myrrh, because this took place shortly before His saving Passion. As the Lord was going up to Jerusalem, He came to the house of Simon the leper, where a woman who was a harlot approached Him and poured precious myrrh upon His head. This episode is placed here, in order that, according to the word of the Saviour, her act of fervent devotion might be proclaimed everywhere. What moved her to come to Simon's house? Because she saw His compassion and the fact that He kept company with all people, and especially now, when she noticed that He had entered the house of a leper, with whom, being unclean, it was forbidden by the Law to associate. The woman reckoned that, just as He had put up with Simon's leprosy,

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so also He would tolerate the disease of her soul. Thus, as Christ was reclining at supper, she poured on His head myrrh that was worth three hundred denarii. The Disciples, and Judas in particular, rebuked her for this. But Christ came to her defence, lest they thwart her good intention. He then alluded to His entombment, deterring Judas from betraying Him and deeming the woman worthy of honour, saying that her good deed would be proclaimed throughout the world. It should be known that some are of the opinion that one and the same woman is mentioned by all of the Evangelists; but such is not the case. As the Divine Chrysostomos says, the same woman is cited by three of the Evangelists, and she is thus called a harlot. It is not she who is mentioned by Saint John, but another woman, admirable and of chaste life, Mary the sister of Lazarus, whom Christ would not have loved had she been a harlot. Of these women, Mary performed the act of pouring out myrrh six days before the Passover, at her house in Bethany, while the Lord was reclining at supper. She poured out the myrrh on His beautiful feet and wiped them with her hair, showing Him exceeding honour and offering the myrrh as to God. For she knew very well that at sacrifices olive oil was offered to God, that priests were anointed with myrrh, and that Jacob of old had anointed a pillar with oil and dedicated it to God. Thus, she offered the myrrh to Christ, honouring her teacher as God in return for the resuscitation of her brother. For this reason, she is not promised any reward. On that occasion, Judas alone, being a lover of money, murmured against her. The other woman, that is, the harlot, two days before the Passover, when Christ was still in Bethany, in the house of Simon the leper, likewise reclining at supper, poured very costly myrrh upon His head, as Saints Matthew and Mark recount. The Disciples were indignant at this harlot, being fully aware how earnest Christ was with regard to almsgiving. This woman was given the recompense of having her good deed proclaimed throughout the world. Some commentators, therefore, say that one woman was mentioned by the four Evangelists, whereas St. John the Golden-tongued says that there were two women. There are others who maintain that there were three women. Two of them were the aforementioned—that is, the harlot and Mary, the sister of Lazarus—when the Lord's Passion was drawing near. The third was another, who performed such a deed prior to these—or rather, being the first of them—around the middle of the Gospel narrative; she was a harlot and a sinner. She poured out myrrh only on Christ's feet and in the house not of Simon the leper, but of Simon the Pharisee. On that occasion, only the Pharisee was scandalized. Upon her the Saviour bestowed the recompense of the remission of

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her sins. Only the Divine Luke tells about her, around the middle of his Gospel, as we have said. In fact, after the account of this harlot, he immediately adds the following: “And it came to pass afterward, that he went throughout every city and village, preaching and shewing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God” (Luke 8:1). From this it is evident that the event in question did not occur during the time of the Passion. It seems, therefore, from the time, from those who entertained the Lord, from the location, from the persons involved, and from the houses, and also from the manner in which the myrrh was poured out, that there were three women, two of them harlots, and third Mary the sister of Lazarus, who was conspicuous for her virtuous life. As well, it seems that one house was that of Simon the Pharisee, the other that of Simon the leper, situated in Bethany, the third being that of Mary and Martha, the sisters of Lazarus, in the same city of Bethany.

Hence, it may be inferred from these considerations that two suppers were given for Christ, both of them in Bethany. One took place six days before the Passover, in the house of Lazarus, when Lazarus also ate with Christ, as the Son of Thunder relates: “six days before the Passover Jesus came to Bethany, where Lazarus was which had been dead, whom he raised from the dead. There they made him a supper; and Martha served: but Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with him. Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair” (John 12:1-3). The other supper was held for Christ two days before the Passover, when He was still in Bethany, at the house of Simon the leper, at which time the harlot went up to Him and poured out the precious myrrh. This is confirmed by Saint Matthew’s narrative, in which Christ says to His Disciples: “Ye know that after two days is the feast of the Passover” (Matthew 26:2). A little further on, the same Evangelist adds: “Now when Jesus was in Bethany, in the house of Simon the leper, there came unto him a woman having an alabaster box of very precious ointment, and poured it on his head, as he sat at table” (Matthew 26:6-7). Saint Mark concurs with this account, for he says: “After two days was the feast of the Passover, and of unleavened bread... And being in Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, as he sat at table, there came a woman having an alabaster box of ointment of spikenard very precious; and she brake the box, and poured it on his head” (Mark 14:1, 3). From this it is clear that they are incorrect who maintain and assert that one and the same woman is mentioned by the four Evangelists as having anointed the Lord with myrrh; who suppose that Simon the Pharisee and Simon the leper

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are one and the same person—some of them interpreting Simon the leper as being the father of Lazarus and his sisters, Mary and Martha; and who opine that one and the same supper took place in one and the same house, in Bethany, and that Simon prepared and furnished the upper room in which the Mystical Supper was held. For these two suppers were given for Christ in Bethany, outside Jerusalem, six days and two days, respectively, before the Jewish Passover, as we have said, when the women offered myrrh to Christ in different ways. The Mystical Supper and the furnished upper room were prepared within the city of Jerusalem one day before the Jewish Passover and the Passion of Christ. Some say that this Supper was held in the house of an unknown man, others that it took place in the house of Christ's Disciple and bosom friend John, in holy Sion, where the Disciples were hiding for fear of the Jews and where the touching by Saint Thomas occurred after the Resurrection, as did the Descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, along with other ineffable and mystical events. For this reason, it seems to me that the account given by Saint John Chrysostom is truer and more precise, that is, that there were two women about whom the Evangelists wrote. One, as we have said, was the woman mentioned by three of the Evangelists, who was a harlot and a sinner and who poured myrrh on Christ's head. The other was the woman mentioned by Saint John, Mary the sister of Lazarus, who applied myrrh solely to Christ's Divine feet by pouring it on them.

There were two suppers in Bethany, the Mystical Supper being separate from these. This is evident from the fact that, after the narrative of the harlot, the Saviour sends His Disciples into the city to make ready the Passover, as Saint Matthew says: "Go into the city to such a man, and say unto him, The Master saith, My time is at hand; I will keep the Passover at thy house with my disciples" (Matthew 26:18). Again, St. Mark says: "And...there shall meet you a man bearing a pitcher of water: follow him.... And he will shew you a large upper room furnished and prepared: there make ready for us" (Mark 14:13, 15).

The Disciples went, and found it to be just as Jesus had told them, and they prepared the Passover, that is, the Jewish Passover, which was at the doors and which Christ came and celebrated with the Disciples, as the Divine Chrysostom says. Then, after the Mystical Supper had taken place, the Divine Washing of the feet having been performed in the meantime, Christ reclined once again and instituted our Passover on the same table, as Saint John the



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Golden-tongued explains. The Divine John, and also Saint Mark, the Holy Evangelists, add in their accounts the type of the myrrh, calling it “spikenard, very costly.” It is customary to call spikenard that which is unadulterated and trustworthy in purity. Perhaps this was also an appellation of the best and prime kind of myrrh. Saint Mark adds that the woman broke the alabaster flask in her eagerness, since its neck was narrow. This is a glass vessel, as St. Epiphanius says, made without any handle, which is called a Bikion. Myron was compounded of many other kinds of fragrances, and from the following in particular: myrrh, cassia, iris, calamus, and oil.

**Yea, O Christ God, free us from the flood of passions and have mercy on us, for Thou alone art holy and lovest mankind.  
Amen.**

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### **Holy Thursday.**

***The traitor taketh the Bread in his hands, but stretches them out secretly to receive the price of Him who hath fashioned mankind with His own hands. For Judas, the slave and deceiver, remained unrepentant.***

**Ikos:** Let us all draw near to the mystical table in fear, and with pure souls receive the Bread, remaining with the Master, that we may see how He washed the feet of the disciples and wiped them with a towel; and let us do as we have seen, subjecting ourselves to each other, washing one another’s feet. For such is the commandment that Christ Himself gave to His disciples; but Judas, the slave and deceiver, listened not.

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**God, Whose feet trod in Eden of old, in the afternoon, washeth the feet of His disciples in the evening. (Feet Washing)**

**Twofold is the supper: for it is the Passover of the law, and it is the New Pascha, the Body and Blood of the Master. (Mystical Supper)**

**In Thy prayer O master, Thou didst show fear. And in let great drops of blood fall from Thy face. Ostensibly to avoid death, but thereby deceiving the enemy (Gethsemane prayer)**

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**What need have ye of swords and staves, O ye deceivers of the people. To put to death Him Who is zealous to redeem the world? (The betrayal)**

On this day, Holy and Great Thursday, according to the order which our Holy Fathers inherited from the Holy Apostles, and the Holy Gospels, we celebrate four events: the Holy Washing of the Disciples' feet, the Mystical Supper (the institution of the Holy Mystery of the Eucharist, which we celebrate to this day), the Lord's Agony in the Garden, and His Betrayal. On the morrow, Friday, the Passover sacrifice of the Hebrews was intended to take place, namely the slaughter of the lamb reared for this purpose. On that same Friday, the Truth was intended to follow the old type. For it was intended that the true Passover would be sacrificed, the Lamb of God the Father, who takes away the sin of the world - our Lord Jesus Christ, who was prefigured by the paschal lamb which was sacrificed each year by the Hebrews. On the evening of this day - which was the day of unleavened bread, the eve of the Passover of the Old Law, March 22, the fifth day of the week - Jesus observed the Passover and dined in the city with the Twelve Disciples. The Lord did this on the evening of the fifth day (Thursday), since among the Hebrews the "night-day" reckoning begins with the evening of the present day and is called the evening of the following day. In other words, according to Jewish tradition "Friday evening" was that time period that began after sundown on Thursday. (For example: as in the Orthodox Church today, the "liturgical evening" of a feast day would be that time after Vespers.) Zebedee (the father of the Holy Apostles James and John) prepared the Passover, since he was the one who carried the earthenware jar of water, as St. Athanasius the Great says and others also say exceptional things about Zebedee. Afterwards, Jesus revealed more perfect and sublime teaching to His Disciples, and when night fully came, in the Upper Room He handed over the Mystery of our Passover. Thus, it is said that He reclined at supper with the Twelve. Notice that this was not the Passover of the Old Law, because He both reclined and gave a supper of bread and drink. Under the Old Law, the Jews stood, with girded loins and walking staffs in hand during the meal. There all things crumbled away through Fire, including the use of unleavened bread. Before He began to eat (thus says the divine Chrysostom), He rose from supper, laid aside His garments, and poured water into a basin in preparation for the Washing of the feet. He did these things both to shame Judas and to remind the other Disciples that it is not right to seek the first place. Similarly, after the washing, He exhorted them by saying that he who wishes to be

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first must be last of all, showing Himself as an example. It seems that Christ first of all washed Judas, who most presumptuously sat first in line, and last He came to Peter. Since Peter was more high-spirited than the others, he prevented the Teacher, but when at the same time he heard from the Lord that if Christ did not wash his feet he would have no part with the Lord, he yielded quite readily. So our Lord Jesus Christ washed the feet of the Disciples and showed a paradoxical exaltation through humility. He took His garments again and leaned back and exhorted and entreated them that they love one another and not seek the first place. While they were eating, He brought up the main point concerning His Betrayal. Since the Disciples were confused about His saying, Jesus said quietly to John alone, "It is he to whom I shall give a piece of bread when I have dipped it" (John 13:26). He spoke in this way because if Peter, being more high-spirited than the others, had known the truth, he would have taken it upon himself to strike a blow against Judas. Jesus said again, "He who dipped his hand with Me in the dish will betray Me" (Matt. 26:23). When both these events had occurred, after a little silence He took the bread and said, "Take, eat; this is My Body" (Matt. 26:26; Mark 14:22), and likewise the Cup, "Drink from it, all of you. For this is My Blood of the New Covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins" (Matt. 26:27-28; Mark 14:24). "Do this in memory of Me" (Luke 22:19). He performed these deeds and ate and drank with them. Notice that He calls His Body bread - not unleavened bread. So let those who offer the unleavened sacrifice be ashamed. After Judas tasted the bread, Satan entered into him, because when he first tempted him he already ruled over him completely. Then he withdrew and proceeded to the High Priests, in order that he might hand Christ over to them for thirty pieces of silver. After the Supper, the Lord went out with the Disciples to the Mount of Olives, to a certain place called Gethsemane. Then Jesus said to them, "All of you will be made to stumble because of Me this night, for it is written, I will strike the Shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered. But after I have been raised, I will go before you to Galilee" (Matt. 26:31-32; Mark 14:27). Peter said to Him, "Even if all are made to stumble, yet I will not be." Jesus said to him, "Assuredly, I say to you that today, even this night, before the cock crows twice, you will deny Me three times" (Mark 14:28-30). He said "before the cock crows twice," because customarily the cock crows not once but even two or three times, and accordingly it so happened. Immeasurable grief, signifying the weakness of human nature, overtook Peter because of this saying of the Lord. The Lord withdrew in order that this might take place - after He handed over the whole world to Himself - so that of Himself

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He might make known the fickleness of human nature and grant pardon to sinners. Nevertheless, on a higher level, the threefold denial of Peter depicted the sins of all men against God. These are the following: first is the transgression of the commandment which God gave to Adam, second is the transgression of the written Law, and third is the rejection of the Gospel proclamation. But when Peter repented, the Lord healed his denial and said three times, "Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?" (John 21:17). Thereafter, Jesus wished to show to the Disciples how fearful death is for all men, and He said, "My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death. Stay here and watch with Me." He went a little farther and fell on His face and prayed, saying, "O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will but as You will" (Matt. 26:38-39). He said these things as a man in order to cleverly deceive the devil, so that he might think that Christ, although appearing as a man, feared death. He did this, while knowing the truth, so He might not forsake the Mystery of the Cross. After this first prayer, the Lord returned to the Disciples and found them deep in sleep. Then the Lord addressed Peter and said, "What? Could you not watch with Me one hour? Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak" (Matt. 26:40-41). He said these things to Peter so that he would clearly understand that He meant, "You say that you wish to struggle until death, so you doze in this manner with the rest?" Again, a second time, He went away and prayed, saying, "O My Father, if this cup cannot pass away from Me unless I drink it, Your will be done." And He came and found them asleep again, for their eyes were heavy. So He left them, went away again, and prayed the third time, saying the same words (Matt. 26:42-44). Then an angel appeared to Him from Heaven, strengthening Him. And being in agony, He prayed more earnestly. His sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground (Luke 22:43-44). Then He came to His Disciples and said to them, "Are you still sleeping and resting? Behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us be going. See, My betrayer is at hand" (Matt. 26:45-46). Then He went beyond the brook of Kidron, where there was a garden that He entered with His Disciples. The Lord regularly frequented the garden, and so Judas was well acquainted with the place. Judas then took some of the band of soldiers, with a crowd following, and came upon Jesus, giving them the signal of the false kiss. He arranged it in this way because many times when the Lord was seized He passed out of their midst unseen. Yet the Lord came forward and said to them, "Whom are you seeking?" (John 18:4,7). Since it was still night, they did not recognize Him.

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Therefore they looked upon Him with lighted lanterns and torches, and with fear they slowly withdrew. When they returned, He made all things known. When Judas gave the signal, Christ said, "Friend, why have you come?" (Matt.26:50). That is to say, "It is well timed, Judas, that you came." And again He said, "Have you come out, as against a robber, with swords and clubs to take Me? I sat daily with you, teaching in the Temple, and you did not seize Me" (Matt. 26:55). They came at night so that some kind of riot might not be provoked by the crowd. Then the very high-spirited Peter drew back a sword and rushed at Malchus, the servant of the High Priest, cutting off his right ear - the implication being that the High Priest neither heard nor taught the Law correctly. Then Christ reproved Peter, saying that it is not good that a spiritual man is known to make use of a sword, and He healed the ear of Malchus. They arrested Jesus and brought Him bound to the courtyard of the former High Priest, who was the father-in-law of Caiaphas. There all the Pharisees and Scribes who held sentiments against Christ had been assembled. Also, as the night passed on, there occurred the conversation between Peter and the servant girl during which he denied the Lord three times as the cock crowed twice. When Peter remembered the Lord's prophecy, he wept bitterly (see Mark 14:66-72). When day arrived, they brought Christ from Annas to the High Priest Caiaphas, where He accepted both the mockers and the false witnesses who were summoned. When the day was already advanced, Caiaphas sent Him to Pilate. Those who brought Him did not enter into the Praetorium, so that they might not be defiled and might eat the Passover. For it appears that it was fitting that they eat the Passover then, especially from the many things Christ said before the Supper on Thursday evening when He ate it and afterwards handed over the more superb and exalted teachings. For, as we have said before, it was fitting that the Truth was to follow what was typified in the Law. As St. John the Theologian says, all these events came together before the feast of the Passover during the night of Thursday and on into Friday. For this reason we keep the feast, properly remembering these awesome and ineffable works and deeds.

**Through Thine ineffable compassion, O Christ our God, have mercy on us and save us. Amen.**

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### **Holy (Good) Friday.**

***Come, and let us all sing the praises of Him who was crucified for us. For when Mary beheld Him on the Tree she said: "Though Thou dost endure the Cross, yet Thou art my Son and God."***

**Ikos:** Seeing her own Lamb led to the slaughter, Mary His Mother followed Him with the other women, and in her grief cried aloud: "Where dost Thou go, O my Child? Why dost Thou run so swiftly? Is there another wedding in Cana, to which Thou dost hasten to turn the water into wine? Shall I go with Thee, my Child, or shall I wait for Thee? Speak Thou a word to me, O Word; do not pass me by in silence, O Thou Who hast preserved me in virginity, for Thou art my Son and God."

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**Thou art a living God, even though Thou was lifeless on the wood. O naked corpse, Thou art the Word of the living God.**

**The thief opened the locked gates of Eden with the words "Remember me."**

On this day, Holy and Great Friday, we celebrate the awesome, holy, and saving Passion of our Lord and God and Saviour Jesus Christ—the spitting, the blows with the palm of the hand, the buffeting, the mockery, the reviling, the wearing of the purple robe, the reed, the sponge, the vinegar, the nailing, the lance, and above all, the Crucifixion and Death which He condescended to endure willingly for our sakes and also the saving confession of the grateful thief upon the cross. After our Lord Jesus Christ was sold for thirty pieces of silver and was betrayed by a friend and disciple, He was led to Annas the High Priest. Annas again sent the Lord to Caiaphas, where He was spat upon and at the same time mocked and laughed at. He heard them saying to Him, "Prophecy to us, Christ! Who is the one that struck you?" (Matt. 26:68). Then many false witnesses and accusers arrived, perhaps because He said, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up" (John 2:19) and because He said about Himself, "I am the Son of God" (Matt. 27:43), or because He said, "Nevertheless, I say to you, hereafter you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power and coming on the clouds of heaven" (Matt. 26:64). At that point, the High Priest tore his own garment, saying, "He has spoken

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blasphemy! What further need do we have of witnesses? Look, now you have heard His blasphemy!" (Matt. 26:65). And when morning came, Jesus was led into the Praetorium to Pilate, and "they did not enter," as they said, "lest they should be defiled, but that they might eat the Passover" (John 18:28). Then when Pilate came, he asked them about Jesus, saying, "What accusation do you bring against this Man?" (John 18:29). Since he did not find any reasonable cause for the accusation, he sent Him to Caiaphas, since he was the one who was seeking His execution, and Caiaphas sent Him back again to Pilate. Then Pilate said to them, "You take Him and judge Him according your Law." Therefore the Jewish leaders said to him, "It is not lawful for us to put anyone to death" (John 18:31). They said this so Pilate would pronounce the judgment of death on the cross. Pilate asked Jesus whether He was the King of the Jews, and Jesus acknowledged this and said that His Kingdom is eternal and not of this world (John 18:36). Pilate wished to release Jesus and first told the crowd that he did not find any serious accusation against Him. Then he reminded the Jews of their custom of releasing a prisoner of their choice on the feast of Passover. The crowd named Barabbas the robber as acceptable choice but not Christ. Pilate then sought to placate the crowd, but with no success. Leading Him out through the soldiers, he first had Jesus scourged. Then clothing Him with a purple cloak, the soldiers forced a crown of thorns upon His most pure head and placed a reed in His right hand as though it were a royal sceptre. All this time, the soldiers were mockingly sneering and shouting a parody of their salute to Caesar, "Hail, King of the Jews" (Matt. 27:29; Mark 15:18; John 19:3). Clearly, this public humiliation and torment was for the gratification of the mob, for Pilate showed that he was acting against his conscience by saying again, "I find no fault in this Man" (John 18:38; John 19:6; Luke 23:4). The Jewish leaders answered him, "We have a law, and according to our law He ought to die, because He made Himself the Son of God" (John 19:7). While these things were being said, Jesus was silent. But the crowd cried out to Pilate, "Crucify Him, crucify Him" (John 19:6). Thus they wished to destroy Him through an inglorious and shameful death, so that they might destroy the noble fame that Jesus possessed. Pilate incited their ethnic pride and said, "shall I crucify your King?" The chief priests answered, "We have no king but Caesar!" (John 19:15). Since they could not get their way by any other means, they uttered this blasphemy because Jesus clearly called Himself the Son of God, and they wanted Caesar to stand in His place so that their madness would be satisfied. Therefore they said, "Whoever makes himself a king speaks against Caesar" (John 19:12).

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While these events were taking place, Pilate's wife - Procula Claudia (comm. Oct. 27), sent a message to him that she was troubled by a fearful dream, and she said, "Have nothing to do with that just Man, for I have suffered many things today in a dream because of Him" (Matt. 27:19). Then Pilate washed his hands and clearly rejected the responsibility for the blood of the Righteous One. But the people cried out, "His blood be upon us and upon our children" (Matt. 27:25). If you let this Man go, you are not Caesar's friend" (John 19:12). Even though Pilate surely knew that Jesus was not guilty, he feared Caesar and thus confirmed the Lord's condemnation to death on the Cross, and he released Barabbas. When Judas beheld this, he threw away the silver coins and went out and hanged himself from a tree. The soldiers mocked Jesus, hitting His head with a reed, and they placed the Cross on Him to bear. Then they coerced Simon of Cyrene, obliging him to carry the Cross. About the third hour, they reached the Place of the Skull, and they crucified Him there. On the right and on the left they suspended two thieves so that Jesus would appear to be an evildoer. In a spirit of greed, the soldiers divided His garments, but they cast lots for His seamless tunic. They performed each deed with excessive animosity, as if they were drunk. They not only did these things, but they also feigned ignorance, saying ironically to Jesus on the Cross, "Aha! You who destroy the temple and build it in three days, save Thyself, and come down from the Cross!" (Mark 15:29-30). And they continued, "Let the Christ, the King of Israel, descend now from the Cross, that we may see and believe" (Mark 15:32). However, if they had reflected and understood correctly, they would have wished to have recourse to Him without hesitation, because He proved Himself to be not only King of Israel, but even of all the world. For what other meaning was there when the sun was darken during the Crucifixion of Christ at the third hour, in the middle of the day, but that the Lord's Passion would be revealed to all men? Likewise, when the earth shook and the rocks were rent asunder, did this not reprove the stony-heartedness of the chief priests? And when many bodies arose for the acknowledgment of the common resurrection, did it not provide the evidence that the power of the Suffering One might appear? Moreover, when the curtain of the temple was split in twain, did it not mean that the temple was certainly angered, because the One who was glorified in it was suffering, thereby revealing these things which were not apparent to the multitudes? Therefore, at the third hour, Christ was crucified, as says the divine Mark; from the sixth hour until the ninth there was darkness over the whole land (Mark 15:33). The Centurion Longinus (comm. Oct. 16), seeing these marvellous



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events and especially the darkening of the sun, cried out with a mighty voice, "Truly this Man was the Son of God" (Matt. 27:54; Mark 15:39). Of the two thieves, one reviled Jesus, but the other reproached him, most profoundly reproving him, and confessed Christ to be the Son of God. Because of his confession, the Saviour rewarded his faith and promised that he would be with Him in Paradise that very day. The "good thief" is commemorated on October 12. When every sort of abuse had been hurled at the Lord Jesus, Pilate wrote out His title, which read, "JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS", and placed it on the Cross. (See John 19:19.) Therefore, the chief priests said to Pilate, "Do not write, The King of the Jews, but He said, "I am the King of the Jews". Pilate answered, "What I have written, I have written" (John 19:21-22). And when the Saviour said, "I thirst" (John 19:28), they put vinegar on hyssop and brought it to Him. After saying, "It is finished" (John 19:30), He inclined His head and gave up the spirit. He was crucified on the day when the moon was full and at the hour when, according to the old Law, the Passover lamb was to be slain (See Exod. 12). When all had fled away, His Mother alone kept vigil at the Holy Cross with her sister Mary, the wife of Cleopas (the one, some say, Joachim begot in accordance with the Mosaic Law since his brother Cleopas died childless, but this assertion is false), Mary Magdalene, and John, the Disciple beloved by Him. (See John 19:25.) Then the ungrateful people, not being able to tolerate seeing the bodies on the crosses, since it was the great day of the Passover, asked Pilate that the legs of the condemned might be broken so that death might come more quickly. They broke the legs of the thieves, since they were still alive and, coming upon Jesus, as soon as they saw that He was already dead, they refrained from breaking His legs. One of the soldiers, doing a favour for the ungrateful ones, took his spear and pierced the right side of Christ, and immediately there flowed forth blood and water. On the one hand, the outpouring was as from a man, and on the other hand on behalf of mankind; that is, the blood, for the sake of the Holy Communion of the divine sanctified elements, and the water, for the sake of Holy Baptism. In fact, this two-fold fountain constitutes the foundation of the Holy Mysteries for us. Also, St. John the Theologian saw and bore witness to these events, and his witness is true, because he was present at all these happenings, and after he saw them he recorded them. For if they were false, clearly he would not have written them, for such things would have appeared as a dishonour to the Teacher. It is said that when he was present at that time, he collected in some kind of vessel the Divine and Most holy Blood from the Life-giving side.

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Moreover, while these extraordinary events were being accomplished, when night approached, Joseph of Arimathea arrived (he was a disciple from the beginning, as the others, but secretly). He then went to Pilate with boldness since he was clearly known by him, asked for the Body of Jesus, and was given permission to take It. Then he immediately took the divine Body down from the Holy Cross with all reverence. And when night came, Nicodemus arrived, bearing a certain mixture of myrrh and aloes, which had been prepared for the special purpose of anointing, and he wrapped the Holy Body in a winding cloth, as was the regular custom of the Jews. They then entombed the Body of the Lord nearby in the garden tomb of Joseph of Arimathea, which had been cut into a rock, rolling a great stone over the entrance. In this tomb, no one had been buried before, so that when Christ arose the chief priests might not attribute the Resurrection to another person. The mixture of aloes and myrrh strongly cemented the winding cloth to the Body of Christ, so that when the winding cloth and the face cloth would be seen folded up in the Tomb, no one would suppose that His Body had been stolen away. How would it have been possible that anyone could have detached the linen so firmly glued to the flesh? However, those foolish men who shaped this falsehood did not know that in accordance with the economy of God, all these proofs remained inside the Tomb for the censuring of their slander. All these events marvellously happened on Friday. Accordingly, the God-bearing Fathers decreed that we should commemorate all these events with a compunctious and contrite heart. Furthermore, the Church, as received from the time of the Holy Apostles, has given the commandment that every Friday is to be observed as a fast day in remembrance of Christ's Holy Passion and Life-giving Death. It is fitting to understand that on the sixth day of the week, Friday, the Lord was crucified because on the sixth day of the week during Creation, Adam, the first man, was formed. Furthermore, at the sixth hour of the day, He was suspended on the Holy Cross because at the sixth hour, tradition tells us, Adam stretched out his hands toward the forbidden tree to eat the fruit and inherited death. Therefore it was fitting that at the same shattering hour the Old Adam would be created anew. The Lord's Crucifixion was in a garden because Adam was deceived in a garden in Paradise. The bitter drink which the Lord tasted on the Cross healed the tasting of Adam. The Holy Cross replaced the tree in Paradise. The slap on the Face signified our awakening from the stupor of sin. The spitting and the dishonourable behaviour toward the Lord makes manifest the value He places on us. The crown of thorns relieved us from the curse surrounding the head of Adam and Eve.

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The purple cloak replaced the garment of skin and symbolized the royal garment with which He covers us. The nails indicated our total immobility in our sins. The pierced Side of the Lord, from which our salvation came forth, represented the side of Adam, from which Eve came forth and out of whom the transgression occurred. The spear removed the fiery sword which guarded Paradise after the disobedience. The water from the Side was an image of Holy Baptism. The blood and the reed were the means through which the Saviour, as though writing in imperial red ink, decreed, as a King from on high, the restoration of the ancient homeland. It is said that the skull of Adam lay where Christ, as the Head of all, was Crucified, and Adam was “baptized” through the Blood of Christ, which flowed from Him and down onto Adam’s skull. It is called the Place of the Skull because during the Flood the earth expelled the skull of Adam, which rolled around by itself in a circle, and this was viewed as a fearsome sign. The Holy Prophet and King Solomon, out of respect toward the Forefather, covered it up with many stones. Moreover, the eminent saints say, as is the tradition, that Adam was buried there by an angel. Therefore, where Adam’s corpse lay, there Christ stood as the everlasting King, the New Adam, healing by the wood of the Holy Cross the Old Adam who had fallen by the wood of the tree.

**Wherefore, O Christ our God, through Thy boundless  
compassion for our sakes, have mercy on us and save us.  
Amen.**

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## Synaxaria + Holy Week

### **Holy Saturday.**

***He Who closed the abyss is beheld as dead, and as a corpse the Immortal One hath been wrapped in linen with sweet spices and laid in a tomb. The women come to anoint Him with myrrh, weeping bitterly and crying: "This is the most blessed Sabbath on which Christ sleeps, but on the third day He shall rise again.***

**Ikos:** He Who sustaineth all things was lifted up upon the Cross, and all creation wept, seeing Him hanging naked on the Tree. The sun hid its rays, and the stars cast aside their light; the earth shook in great fear, and the sea fled, the rocks were rent asunder, and the graves of many were opened, and the bodies of the saints arose. Hades groaned below, and the Jews conspired to spread slander against Christ's Resurrection. But the women cried aloud: "This is the most blessed Sabbath on which Christ sleepeth, but on the third day He shall rise again."

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Of all the days the Holy and Great Forty Day Fast is the most distinguished, but more than the Holy Forty Day Fast the Holy and Great Passion Week is exalted, and more than the days of Holy Week Great and Holy Saturday is the most exalted. This week is called great not because these days or hours are more exalted but because the great, portentous and extraordinary deeds of our Saviour were accomplished during this week, but especially on this day.

Yet, as during the first creation of the world God created all creation in six days and on the sixth day he created the final and entirely perfect creature, Man, and then on the seventh he rested from all His work, thus sanctifying this day, calling it the Sabbath Day, which means rest. Thus He sanctified the workmanship of the intelligible world, all wonderfully done (the action of redemption), and on the sixth day (Friday) "refashioning" the corrupted man and renewing him through His life-bearing Cross and death. The Lord really rested again on the seventh day with the complete rest from His works, having reposed in a way that is life-producing and saving for our nature. Therefore God the Word descended into the tomb in the flesh and descended into Hades with His immortal and divine soul, which was separated from the body after death.

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He delivered His soul into the hands of the Father. He freely offered His own blood in order to bring about our deliverance.

But the soul of the Lord was not held captive in Hades as were the souls of the other holy ones. Why? Because He never participated in the curse of the Forefather as those did. Our enemy the devil did not even touch the blood by which we are redeemed even though he owned us as much as he could, and did not the devil like a predator seize the One sent from God, but God Himself? However, our Lord Jesus Christ was bodily placed in the tomb with His Divinity which was completely united with the flesh, but He was also in paradise with the thief and, as it is told, in Hades with His deifying soul, supernaturally co-presiding with the Father and the Holy Spirit, He was everywhere as the uncircumscribed God, and the Divinity did not suffer at all neither in the tomb nor on the cross. The Lord's body was tested and the corruption, i.e. the separation of the soul from the body, did not destroy the flesh and corrode its members.

**In Thy ineffable condescension, O Christ our God, have mercy on us. Amen.**

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### **GREAT & HOLY PASCHA.**

***Thou didst descend into the tomb, O Immortal, Thou didst destroy the power of Hades. In victory didst Thou arise, O Christ God, proclaiming "Rejoice!" to the myrrh-bearing women; granting peace to Thine apostles, and bestowing resurrection on the fallen.***

**Ikos:** The myrrh-bearing women forestalled the dawn, seeking, as it were day, the Sun that was before the sun and Who had once set in the tomb, and they cried out one to another: O friends! come, let us anoint with spices the life-bringing and buried Body, the Flesh that raised up fallen Adam, that now lies in the tomb. Let us go, let us hasten, like the Magi, and let us worship and offer myrrh as a gift to Him Who is wrapped now not in swaddling clothes but in a shroud. And let us weep and cry aloud: O Master, arise, Thou Who dost grant resurrection to the fallen.

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**Christ descended to do battle with Hades alone; He ascended after taking many spoils of victory.**

On the Holy and Great Sunday of Pascha, we celebrate the life-bearing Resurrection of our Lord, God, and Saviour Jesus Christ.

We call the present Feast “Pascha,” which means “Passover” in the Hebrew language; for this is the day on which God originally brought the world into existence from non-being. It was on this day that He conveyed the people of Israel across the Red Sea and snatched them out of the hands of Pharaoh; on this day also, descending from Heaven, He came to dwell in the Virgin’s womb. And now, after snatching the whole of mankind from the depths of Hades, He has raised it up to Heaven and restored to it the ancient dignity of incorruption. But when He descended to Hades, He did not resurrect all, but only those who chose to believe in Him. He freed the souls of the Saints from all the ages who were being forcibly held by Hades, and allowed all of them to ascend to Heaven. For this reason, rejoicing exceedingly, we celebrate the Resurrection with splendour, offering an image of the joy in which our nature abounds through the tender mercy of God. Likewise, demonstrating the destruction of enmity and our unity with God and the Angels themselves, we give each other the customary kiss of peace. The Resurrection of the Lord took place in this manner. While the soldiers were guarding the tomb, around the middle of the night an earthquake occurred; for an Angel came down and removed the stone from the door of the sepulchre. On beholding this, the guards fled, and thus the women were 2 afforded their opportunity at the end of the Sabbath, that is, around the middle of Saturday night. The Resurrection was made known first to the Mother of God, who sat opposite the tomb with Mary Magdalene, as St. Matthew says. But in order that the Resurrection should not be a matter of doubt, on account of the familiarity of the Lord’s Mother, the Evangelists say: He appeared first to Mary Magdalene. It was she who saw the Angel on the stone and, stooping down to look, saw the Angels inside the tomb; these Angels announced the Resurrection of the Lord. For “He is risen,” they said, “He is not here; behold the place where they laid Him.” Therefore, on hearing these words, she ran to the most ardent among the Disciples, Peter and John, and told them the glad tidings of the Resurrection. As she was returning with Mary, Christ encountered them, saying: “Rejoice!” For it was fitting that the sex which first heard the words, “in pain thou shalt bring forth children,” should be the first to hear this joy. Overcome with love, they approached and touched His immaculate feet, wishing to recognize Him more precisely. The Apostles came to

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the tomb; and Peter stooped down to look inside the tomb and departed, while John went inside and looked more searchingly, and touched the linen clothes and the napkin. Mary Magdalene returned with other women at dawn so as to confirm with greater certainty what had been seen. Standing outside, she lamented, but when she stooped to look inside the tomb, she saw two Angels shining with radiance, reproving her, as it were, and saying: “Lady, why weepst thou, whom seekest thou? Seek ye Jesus of Nazareth, Who was crucified? He is risen; He is not here.” And at once they arose in fear, seeing the Lord. Turning round, she saw Christ standing; thinking Him to be the gardener (for the tomb was in a garden), she said: “Sir, if thou hast borne Him hence, tell me where thou hast laid Him, and I will take Him away.” When she beckoned again to the Angels, the Saviour said to Magdalene: “Mary.” And she, perceiving the sweet and familiar voice of Christ, wanted to touch Him. But He said: “Touch Me not; for I am not yet ascended to My Father, as thou thyself dost reason, still supposing Me to be a man; but go to My brethren, and tell them all that thou hast seen and heard.” Magdalene did this. As day dawned again, she came to the tomb with the other women. Those who were with John and Salome arrived at sunrise; and, to put it simply, the women came to the tomb in different groups, among them being the Theotokos; for she is the one whom the Gospel calls Mary, the mother of Joses; this Joses was a son of Joseph. It is, however, unclear at what hour the Lord arose: some say that it was at the first cockcrow, others that it was when the earthquake occurred, and others suggest different times. After these events, some of the guards went and reported to the high priests what had happened; the latter, putting money in their hands, persuaded them to say that Christ’s Disciples had come by night and stolen Him. In the evening of the same day, when the Disciples had gathered together through fear of the Jews and the doors were securely shut, Christ came to them—for His body was incorrupt—and greeted them with the customary greeting, “Peace.” On seeing Him, they rejoiced exceedingly, and when Christ breathed on them they received the energy of the All-holy Spirit more perfectly. This is how the Lord’s Resurrection took place on the third day. The evening of Thursday and the day of Friday (for this is how the Hebrews measure the period of twenty-four hours) are one day. The night of Friday and the whole of Saturday are another period of twenty-four hours; this is the second day. The night of Saturday and the day of Sunday are another period of twenty-four hours; this is the third day.

**To Him be glory and dominion unto the ages of ages. Amen.**