

THE ORTHODOX MESSENGER

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BRIGHT SADNESS

IN THE SECOND BOOK of Chronicles we read how Hezekiah, King of Israel, following a time of sacrilege, ordered the date of the celebration of Pascha for that year to be changed! The Chronicler tells us:

“Hezekiah sent to all Israel and Judah, and also wrote letters to Ephraim and Manasseh, that they should come to the house of the Lord at Jerusalem, to keep the Passover to the Lord God of Israel. For the king and his leaders and all the assembly in Jerusalem had agreed to keep the Passover in the second month. For they could not keep it at the regular time, because a sufficient number of priests had not consecrated themselves, nor had the people gathered together at Jerusalem. And the matter pleased the king and all the assembly. So they resolved to make a proclamation throughout all Israel, from Beersheba to Dan, that they should come to keep the Passover to the Lord God of Israel at Jerusalem, since they had not done it for a long time in the prescribed manner” (2 Chron 30. 1-5).

King Hezekiah made this decision based on a provision in the Law of Moses, as recorded in the Book of Numbers, stipulating that the Passover may be kept in extraordinary circumstances on the fourteenth day of the second month instead of the first month. No one has any intention of tampering with the date of the celebration of Pascha, but we make this observation so that you know that even the Law of Moses makes provision for cases in which the celebration of Pascha is interrupted.

Brothers and sisters, for many of us this is a time of extraordinary, perhaps unprecedented, difficulty socially, economically, physically, and spiritually. Our liturgical life has been temporarily upended, not only in terms of the Lenten and Paschal services, but also with respect to the “special” services—baptisms, chrismations, weddings, etc., which are now postponed to around the time of Pentecost. This is a grief to us all. Yet the demands of the Gospel upon us have not changed. Christ calls us to watch and pray, anticipating his coming again, and, most especially, to love one another.

While we must keep at a physical distance for the time being, we must not give in to despair and abandon the struggle for the salvation of our soul. This does not mean we should not experience disappointment or sorrow at the prospect of having an experience of Holy Week and Pascha that is typically reserved for prisoners and shut ins. But we ought not to allow sadness or irritation to overwhelm us and darken the light that God has planted in us, and renewed time and again through the holy mysteries. We are not abandoned, either by God or the Church. We suffer together in common trouble and we labor in prayer together in common hope, trusting the promise of Christ that if we are faithful to the end we will be saved (Mt. 24:13). —*Archimandrite Gerasim, Administrator of the Diocese of the South Dean of St Seraphim Cathedral*



PARISH WEB PAGE

The www.saintseraphim.com webpage has been redesigned and will go live this week.

STREAMING SERVICES ~ Morning and Evening:

Morning and evening prayers are “streaming” live on Facebook per the monthly calendar. Google: <https://www.facebook.com/stseraphimofsarovsr/> There is no requirement to have a Facebook account. Please note that the Liturgy on Sundays will begin at **9:30 AM**.

DIGITAL OFFERINGS—A REMINDER:

- 1) *Text Giving* Enter 707-701-5052 in to your text message App on your cell phone, indicate an amount you want to give (for example, \$25). A prompt will open your browser.
- 2) *Phone App*. Download the “ConnectNow Giving App” on your cell phone. <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/connect-now-giving/id1244158209?mt=8> or just Google the words *ConnectNow Giving App*

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Parish Contacts

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How Can I Best Protect My Flock?

If we keep our faith pure, if we try to live by faith, God will send us peace and tranquility. However if we sink into the abyss of human passions, enmity, and confrontation, then, of course, we will stray from the Lord's way, and it will not do any good. —from the current Metropolitan Onuphrius of Kiev

Last Sunday I served the Divine Liturgy alone. I was blessed by Archbishop Benjamin to have only one singer present (my son Justin), and no Altar Server. As I was preparing for the Liturgy, and commemorating each of you at the Proskomedia, setting a particle for each on the Holy Diskos, *I thought*: it's a pandemic, and perhaps it's better to have no Liturgy at all, since if the parish members cannot be together in the church, and of course receive Communion, than *neither shall I*. Solidarity! When the Holy Liturgy concluded, I turned off the video camera (we streamed the service) and saw that over fifty comments appeared on the [Facebook page](#) telling me that my thinking couldn't have been more wrong. Our people told me how important it is that the Liturgy is served and (live-streamed), that it gave them spiritual nourishment, and brought their attention back to God and His peace and His Gospel, and that it felt as if "they



were there" with me. By the end of Sunday there had been over 1000 views of the Divine Liturgy, and more comments. I was encouraged and inspired by you. *So we shall continue as follows*:

The Divine Liturgy will be served per the monthly calendar—**with the doors locked and with only one singer present**. The Church will remain closed during this pandemic. This course of action has been blessed by Archbishop Benjamin, and indeed, directed to be so in his pastoral letter today, dated April 2, 2020. Sadly, this means that I cannot give you Holy Communion (we had hoped that some way of distributing Communion would be possible after Liturgies, but this is not blessed); there will be no baptisms on Lazarus Saturday (God-willing we will move them to Pentecost); we will not decorate the Church with Palms, nor bless them at a Vigil. Holy Week will be abbreviated so that I can chant some hymns and the Scripture readings in a live-stream; there will be no joyful exuberance at a Holy Saturday Liturgy (*Arise, O God and judge the earth...*), and Pascha itself will be most unusual, without the throngs of faithful responding *Indeed He is Risen*. But, the Lord is risen! Please remember, that the Holy Week prayer services and Pascha itself will be [live-streamed on Facebook](#). I urge you all to make yourself familiar with the technology NOW (check the calendar for times) in order to not be "shut out of the technical bridal chamber" later, when/if you log on at the 11th hour. For now, pray more frequently, more fervently and more broadly (use the Akathists, the Supplicatory Canons and the morning and evening prayers). The Lord will send consolation to help us be together in the Spirit, if not side-by-side. —*Fr Lawrence*

GLIMPSES OF THE RESURRECTION

THE RESURRECTION is the restoration of our human nature. Such things God gives freely, for just as He forms us without us willing it, so He forms us anew though we have contributed nothing to it. On the other hand, the Kingdom and vision of God and union with Christ are privileges which depend on willingness. They are thus possible only for those who have been willing to receive them and have loved them and longed for them. For such it is fitting that they should enjoy the presence of the things for which they longed; for the unwilling it is impossible... Like a blind man he would fall out of this life into that, bereft of every sense and faculty by which it is possible to know and love the Savior and to wish to be united to Him and to be able to achieve it. One need not therefore marvel that while all will live in immortality, it is not all who will live in blessedness. All equally enjoy God's providence for our nature, but it is only those who are devout towards God who enjoy the gifts which adorn their willingness. —*St. Nicholas Cabasilas, 14th Century, The Life in Christ*

EVENTS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

- **DIVINE LITURGY:** So that the entire parish will be prayed for and remembered before God at the Holy Liturgy, I will be serving on Sundays, Holy Thursday and Pascha, sad to say, by myself, with the doors locked, with only one singer. Sickness is not passed in the Holy Chalice, for it is the Most Precious Body and Blood of the Lord, yet we are mindful of the need for serious social distancing which cannot be achieved in normal church services. —Fr Lawrence
- **CONFESSIONS BY PHONE:** Since we are not meeting together in the Church, we have the blessing of our Archbishop to make a Confession by phone. Please take advantage of this Holy Mystery of Confession. Not having the opportunity to receive Holy Communion we need all the help we can get during these difficult days. Call, text or email to set up an appointment with me, Fr. John or Fr. Nicholas. —Fr Lawrence
- **CONTINUE** to pray for the Catechumens: David, Travis, Timothy, Anthony, Gioia and their children Phoebe and Collette. Baptisms are on hold (except for emergencies) until the quarantine is lifted.
- **CONFESSION:** During Great Lent, we intensify our spiritual work, fasting, works of mercy, prayers at home, prayers in Church, and we make an effort to keep a watch on our mind, heart and words. We want to cleanse our souls and bodies, our minds and passions. This is the work of repentance, which is renewal and knowledge of ourselves. This is how we take Lent seriously. Let us prepare ourselves for Pascha as we have never done.
- **HOLY WEEK PACKETS:** So that all of us may pray some of the Holy Week hymns, I will be sending each family via email, a packet of hymns and scripture readings for Great and Holy Week. Look for it sometime in the coming week.
- **SO THAT WE HAVE** a bit of fellowship on Palm Sunday, a “Zoom Agape Meal” meeting has been scheduled for noon, April 12. Let’s have lunch (fish, wine and oil blessed that day) and spend a little time together. The Zoom log in info was sent out on Groups.

KNOWN BY GOD

Don’t seek fame...seek God. St. Zosima sees St. Mary a total of three times, and the third time, he sees her just in order to bury her. And it’s only then that he realizes that he never asked her her name (so maybe he’s not so astute after all!). But the words are scratched into the earth next to her, “*Abba Zosima, bury on this spot the body of humble Mary.*” Up until that moment, no one would have known who she was. Apart from Zosima’s three visitations, she would have died in total obscurity, and all of her story and her 47 years of desert exile would—it seems—have been for nothing. ...And now—15 centuries or so later—the story is still known by Christians around the world and recalled by Orthodox on the fifth Sunday of Lent every year. Could anyone have ever expected to gain such recognition? ...Unfortunately, we sometimes think that we can accomplish lasting recognition by showing off some talent, making a splash with our fellow man. But how long does that last? What’s it really worth? More importantly, where would we be now if there weren’t men and women like St. Zosima and St. Mary who had rejected all the world’s possibilities and given their whole heart to God? —[Grace Brooks](#)

CHRIST IS RISEN IN VARIOUS LANGUAGES

Arabic:	Al-Masi-H Qam	Hakan Qam
Slavonic:	Christos Voskrese	Voistinu Voskrese
Ethiopian:	Christos T’ensah Em’ Muhtan!	
Georgian:	Khriste aghsdga	Jeshmaritad aghsdga
Greek:	Christos Anesti	Alithos Anesti
Romanian:	Hristos A Inviat	Adevarat A Inviat
Spanish:	Christos Ha Resucitado	En Verdad Ha Resucitado
German:	Christus ist auferstanden!	Er ist wahrhaft auferstanden!
Norwegian:	Kristus er oppstaden!	Han er sanneleg oppstaden!

PROTECTION OF THE HOLY VIRGIN MARY ORTHODOX CHURCH

APRIL 2020

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
March 29–St. John Climacus • 9:30 AM, Divine Liturgy (Priest and one singer only)	March 30	March 31 • 8 AM, Morning Prayer • 6 PM, Chanting of the Canon of St. Andrew of Crete, <i>pt. 1</i>	April 1 • 8 AM, Morning Prayer • 6 PM, Chanting of the Canon of St. Andrew of Crete, <i>pt. 2</i>	2 • 8 AM, Morning Prayer • 6 PM, Chanting of the Canon of St. Andrew of Crete, <i>pt. 3</i>	3 • 8 AM, Morning Prayer • 6 PM, Akathist to the Theotokos	4 – Theotokos Saturday • 8 AM, Morning Prayer • 3:30 PM, Catechism <i>On Death and the Funeral</i> , via Zoom, online • 5 PM, Vespers and Sermon
5 – St. Mary of Egypt • 9:30 AM, Divine Liturgy (Priest and one singer only) • 8 PM, Small Compline	6	7 • 8 AM, Morning Prayer • 6 PM, Small Compline	8 • 8 AM, Morning Prayer • 6 PM, Small Compline	9 • 8 AM, Morning Prayer • 6 PM, Small Compline	10 – End of Lent • 8 AM, Morning Prayer • 6 PM, Matins of Lazarus Saturday	11 – Lazarus Saturday • 8 AM, Morning Prayer • 5 PM, Vespers of Palm Sunday
12 – Palm Sunday • 9:30 AM, Divine Liturgy (Priest and one singer only) • 8 PM, Small Compline	13 – Holy Monday • 8 AM, Hymns from Bridegroom Matins • 6 PM, Hymns and Scripture Readings	14 – Holy Tuesday • 8 AM, Hymns from Bridegroom Matins • 6 PM, Hymns and Scripture Readings	15 – Holy Wednesday • 8 AM, Hymns from Bridegroom Matins • 6 PM, Hymns and Scripture Readings	16 – Holy Thursday • 11:30 AM, Vespers Liturgy (Priest and one singer only) • 6 PM, Passion Gospels and Hymns	17 – Holy Friday • 3 PM, Vespers for Holy Friday • 6 PM, Hymns of Holy Saturday	18 – Holy Saturday • 1 PM, Vespers with Old Testament Readings • 10 PM, Paschal Matins and Liturgy (Priest and one singer only)
19 – Great and Holy Pascha • 1 PM, Paschal Hours and Gospel	20 – Bright Monday • 5 PM, Paschal Hours	21 – Bright Tuesday • 8 AM, Paschal Hours • 5 PM, Paschal Hours	22 – Bright Wednesday • 8 AM, Paschal Hours • 5 PM, Paschal Hours	23 – St. George Day • 8 AM, Paschal Hours • 5 PM, Paschal Hours	24 – Bright Friday • 8 AM, Paschal Hours • 5 PM, Paschal Hours	25 – Bright Saturday • 8 AM, Paschal Hours • 5 PM, Evening Prayer
26 – St. Thomas Sunday • 9:30 AM, Divine Liturgy (Priest and one singer only)	27	28 – Day of Rejoicing • 8 AM, Morning Prayer • 6 PM, Small Compline	29 • 8 AM, Morning Prayer • 6 PM, Small Compline	30 • 8 AM, Morning Prayer • 6 PM, Small Compline	May 1 • 8 AM, Morning Prayer • 6 PM, Small Compline	May 2 • 5 PM, Great Vespers

• The Church will remain closed during this pandemic. Services and Prayers will be streamed on the [St. Seraphim Orthodox Church Facebook](#) page