

Pascha and the Liturgical Present

*Thou, O Lord, shall rise up and have pity upon Sion,
for it is time to have compassion on Her. Yea, the time has come. (Alleluia verse, Ps. 101, Paschal Liturgy)*

IT IS A LONG and laborious journey that leads to Pascha. Ten weeks, if the pre-Lenten period is taken into account, of fasting, of alms, of lengthened services and expanded vigils. The Psalter has been gone through fifteen times. Genesis and Proverbs have been read aloud in their fullness. The Gospels have been chanted over the grave of Christ and the Acts read in anticipation of His waking therefrom—for that waking shall be the foundation upon which the apostolic preaching will be grounded.

It has been in many ways an arduous journey. The blackness of sin and death have become ever more evident along the way, and in the latter days of Passion Week we have clad temple and priest alike in black garments symbolic of this vision. Sin and death are not avoided in the Lenten walk: they are met head-on, face to face in the overwhelming mystery of their dark reality. “O my Savior, why art Thou sleeping?” we asked as Christ was laid in the tomb. Our hope, our expectation, has been born out of the true substance of our world, torn apart by our sins, our lack of love, which cast love Himself into the grave. Where I have sinned, there has He walked.

But now, now at the end of this long anticipation, the time has come for the fulfillment of our hope. On Pascha night, after all the lights of the church have been extinguished and true darkness has overwhelmed our senses, the faithful stream out of the church into the cold of midnight. In procession behind the Gospel book they chant, “Deem us on earth worthy to glorify Thee with a pure heart,” circling the church in slow reverence. The procession at last ends before the doors of the church, firmly closed. It has all come to this.

The Fast is now complete; the *Triodion* has been closed. We stand before the doors of the temple with nothing left to offer in preparation. We have fasted—many of us poorly, but such as we were able. We have kept waking vigil. We have even, at this final moment, cast ourselves out of the house of God—a liturgical excommunication of all humankind. There is nothing left for us to do. Only the Lord can transform Lent into Pascha. It is, in the most real way, “time for the Lord to act” (Ps. 118, said by the deacon to the priest at the

beginning of the Divine Liturgy).

Thou, O Lord, shall rise up and have pity upon Sion, for it is time to have compassion on her. Yea, the time has come.

The time has come. Since first we sinned in Eden, not only *we* but the whole cosmos has groaned for salvation to arise. As we were cast from Paradise, so have we longed ever after for return. It is the event for which the whole world longs. And on this night, from the midst of our own fallen lives, we proclaim a mystery beyond comprehension: “The time has come.” Can this be so? Can I, who in the past weeks have seen so manifestly the terrible extent of my sin, be the one to proclaim in my own day that now is the time of redemption? Abraham in all his glory did not see this day; how, then, shall I! Yet the Church calls even such as us to attention: “Cast thine eyes about thee, O Sion, and behold! For lo, like divinely radiant luminaries thy children have assembled unto thee from the west, the north, the south and the east, blessing Christ unto the ages.” (*Troparion of the Paschal Matins Canon*)

If we do thus cast our eyes around us to behold, we see a sight of immense wonder. The unfathomable mystery of this day is that it is this day that salvation is come upon the world. Today is the “auspicious day of the Resurrection” (*Paschal matins canon*). Today the “dawning of the life of all” (*Irmos of the Fifth Ode*). Here, in our midst, is the glory of redemption. “Christ is risen, and life doth reign!” (*from the Paschal homily of St John Chrysostom*).

The transcendence of sacred, liturgical time is a hard reality to grasp, and it is difficult precisely because the truths it proclaims are so fearful to accept. “Today I see Thee crucified, O Christ; today I see Thee buried.” If such words are more than mere liturgical poetry, if they relate to us something fundamentally real about our worshipping, liturgical life, then they are terrifying indeed. It is here, in my presence, that the great offering of life is made by the eternal Son. It is before my face that His love is revealed. Now is the time in which these great events of God’s economy are wrought, for in the mystery of sacred time we are always in the present. Christ is in our midst, ever and always, and His life is that which is present among us. This may be the source of great awe and wonder in the terrible “today...” proclamations of the

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Parish Contacts

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Passion and Crucifixion, but more terrifying still is the proclamation that “Today is the day of Resurrection” that “the Lord’s Pascha, that all-venerable Pascha, has dawned for us.” It must be with a spirit of inexpressible awe that we say, in the words of the *megalynarion*: “Today the whole creation is glad and doth rejoice, for Christ is risen and hades hath been despoiled.”

There can be no greater blessing in the life of any member of Adam’s race, than to be able to say in truth that today “the time has come.” Our salvation appears before us. That paschal procession by which we departed the church does not end there before the closed doors. The time has come, but those locked doors and that darkness are not the end of the Lenten story. In the culminating moment of all our preparation and anticipation, the doors of the church are re-opened and we return therein to find the house filled with light. What was, moments ago, a dark grave is now the shimmering image of Paradise. Or even more, as we say in the *Paschal Hours: How life-giving, how much more beautiful than Paradise and truly more resplendent than any royal palace proved Thy grave, the source of our resurrection, O Christ.*

Even beyond the glories of Edenic Paradise is the reality of God’s Kingdom which on this day has triumphed over death—the final, great foe. The time for God’s compassion is at hand, is now, and in our midst and lives the hope of Adam and all our race is accomplished. Nothing greater could ever be longed for or received. So do we all cry out with St John in his homily: “Christ is risen, and thou, O death, art overthrown! Christ is risen, and the demons are

fallen! Christ is risen, and the angels rejoice! Christ is risen, and life reigns! Christ is risen, and not one dead remains in the grave. For Christ, being risen from the dead, is become the first-fruits of those who have fallen asleep. To Him be glory and dominion, unto the ages of ages.” —*Archimandrite Irenei (Steenberg), 2004*

PIROSHKI — Orders Due Sunday, May 8

Please tell your friends and neighbors that we will be making Piroshki in early May. Order forms have been posted on SSPF and are available in the Church Narthex and the Parish Hall. Orders must be turned in by May 8. Preparation will start on Wednesday, May 11, with chopping herbs, mushrooms and the eggs. Mushroom and meat fillings will be prepared on Thursday, May 9, starting at 9 AM. Cabbage will be shredded then, too, and that filling will be made on Friday led by Elena Alexei. On Friday afternoon, dough will be made and the hall and kitchen set up for Saturday.

We will need everyone’s help on Saturday, May 14, to form, fry and package our three types of piroshki. We’ll start at 8:30 AM, but if you can come earlier, please do as there will be last minute set up work. Please let Bobbi Griovski know that YOU will be there to help. Her cell phone is 707-477-8418, email: bgriovski@sbcglobal.net. This is a Sisterhood fund raising activity at which everyone has a good time.

FACTS FROM SCRIPTURE

The advantage that camels have in the desert is not that they need less water, but that they can drink a lot at one time. As I understand, up to 20 gallons. This puts an interesting light on the story of Rebekah volunteering to water the ten camels of Abraham’s servant (Genesis 24:19–20).

Oceans contain springs (Job 38:16). The ocean is very deep. Almost all the ocean floor is in total darkness and the pressure there is enormous. It would have been impossible for Job to have explored the “springs of the sea.” Until recently, it was thought that oceans were fed only by rivers and rain. Yet in the 1970s, with the help of deep diving research submarines that were constructed to withstand 6,000 pounds-per-square-inch pressure, oceanographers discovered springs on the ocean floors!

EVENTS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

- **PASCHA:** Following the Paschal Matins and Divine Liturgy (around 2:30 AM Sunday morning) we gather in the Hall to celebrate. Bring a basket of your favorite Paschal foods. Later in the day on Pascha we will celebrate Agape Vespers at 1 PM, followed by our traditional POTLUCK BBQ. Bring something to grill (our guys will take care of the grilling on our big boat BBQ), a beverage and a side dish (salad, dessert, casserole, etc.) to share with 5-10 others.
- **BRIGHT MONDAY:** Matins and Liturgy at 9 AM. Vladyka Benjamin will be with us (anniversary of his consecration to the Episcopacy is May 1).
- **DURING BRIGHT WEEK** Vespers will be served at 6 PM on Tuesday, Thursday and Friday. The final Paschal Liturgy of Bright Week will be on Saturday, at 9 AM. Pascha is not just a single day.
- **THE YOUNG ADULT GROUP** meets again on Saturday, May 7, following Great Vespers.
- **THE REDWOOD EMPIRE FOOD BANK** distribution will take place on Wednesday, May 11. Volunteers: please arrive by at 5 PM.
- **PIROSHKI PRODUCTION:** May 11-14. See Bobbi Griovski for details.
- **MASTER PLANNING:** Meeting scheduled for Thursday, May 12 at 7 PM.
- **CARMINA CHROMATICA:** Nicolas Custer's renaissance choral ensemble will present a free concert for the Parish on Sunday, May 15 at 1:30 PM, in St. Seraphim. The group will sing eight motets on lenten themes, six from the Renaissance, one by C. Saint-Saëns, and one piece, which is a premier performance by a member of the group.
- **CHURCH SCHOOL TEACHER MEETING:** Sunday, May 15 at 2 PM in the Parish Library.
- **FATHER NEBOJSA PENTIC**, from Sts. Constantine and Helen Greek Orthodox Church in Vallejo, invites our faithful to join him and the Parish for their feast day on May 21. Vespers the evening before will be served at 6:30 PM, and the Divine Liturgy on Saturday, May 21 at 9 AM. Those who would like to join me will be most welcome. —Fr. Lawrence
- **PARISH NEEDS:** The Ride Ministry needs volunteers (see Deanna Panages)
After the Sunday Lunch—clean up playground and porch of all garbage, dump garbage cans, pick up plates and cups
Gardening help is always needed—see Matushka Ann
~~Basketballs needed for the court~~
~~Maintain playground equipment (scrub stains off plastic slide, tighten bolts, fill in gravel, etc.)~~

PASCHAL VISITORS AND HOSPITALITY

IF THE LORD BLESSES, our church will have many visitors at the Paschal midnight Matins and Liturgy. Some of the visitors will be familiar with Pascha, the procession, and so forth; others will be completely baffled. Naturally, being Christians, all of us will make every effort to offer Christian hospitality, kindness and a welcome to the stranger, the visitor and the pilgrim. Our parish is known as a welcoming church. No doubt, however, all of us will be quite tired. No matter, let us crucify impatience, exhaustion, irritation and inflexibility within ourselves and not inflict them on the other person. Allow me to be so bold as to suggest a few things: • Car pool. There may be too many cars in the parking lot to accommodate the crowd.

- Is someone sitting in your normal spot? Bless the person, and God will strengthen you to stand.
- Is there is a large contingent of Eastern European types milling in the Narthex, perhaps talking? Say “Christ is risen” to them. Our Ushers will do their best to assist the visitors into the Nave. On this occasion a chair or two might be brought from the Hall for the guests (other than Pascha, let's not make that a habit).
- If someone is dripping candle wax all on the carpets, maybe they need a little kindly help—expressing irritation will not help the carpet, and will certainly negatively impress the guest.
- Has someone, or a group, wandered in to your space? Greet them with “Christ is risen” and a holy kiss. Be creative, and be prepared to help them find a better spot (especially if they wander into the choir area, which we call the *Cleros*).

We want our visitors to return, and they will, when they see that we are not just Orthodox, but **Christians** in word and deed. With God's help we absolutely must show hospitality and Christian love even when we aren't “feeling” it. Our faith inspires us to do more than we can or want. May the Lord strengthen each one of us. —Fr. Lawrence

PROTECTION OF THE HOLY VIRGIN MARY ORTHODOX CHURCH

MAY 2016

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 - PASCHA <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 12 AM, Matins/Liturgy and Post-Liturgy celebration • 11 AM, Clean up • 1 PM, Agape Vespers and Potluck BBQ 	2 - Bright Monday <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9 AM, Paschal Matins and Liturgy. Archb. Benjamin to preside 	3 - Bright Tuesday <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9 AM, Paschal Hours and Liturgy • 6 PM, Paschal Vespers 	4 - Bright Wednesday	5 - Bright Thursday <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 PM, Paschal Vespers 	6 - Bright Friday <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 PM, Paschal Vespers 	7 - Bright Saturday <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9 AM, Paschal Liturgy • 5 PM, Great Vespers • 6 PM, Young Adult Group
8 - Thomas Sunday <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 AM, Divine Liturgy • 11:45 AM, Church School • Noon, Agape Meal • 2 PM, <i>McCleester Wedding</i> 	9	10 - Radonitsa <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Blessing of graves: 10 AM, Sebastopol 10:45 AM, Forestville Noon, Healdsburg 2 PM, Santa Rosa</i> 	11 - Sts. Cyril & Methodius <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 7 AM, Divine Liturgy • Piroshki prep • 5 PM, <i>Redwood Empire Food Bank</i> • 6 PM, Vespers 	12 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Piroshki prep • 7 PM, Master Planning Meeting 	13 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Piroshki prep 	14 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Piroshki Production • 1 PM, Baptism • 5 PM, Vespers/Matins
15 - Holy Myrrhbearers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 AM, Divine Liturgy • 11:45 AM, Church School • Noon, Agape Meal • 1:30 PM, CONCERT: <i>Carmina Chromatica</i> • 2 PM, Church School Mtg 	16	17	18 <i>[Fr. Lawrence in SF all day for the Diocesan Council]</i> NO VESPERS	19 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 7 PM, Parish Council Meeting 	20	21 <i>(Liturgy for Sts Constantine and Helen in Vallejo/ Parish Feast)</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 PM, Vespers/Matins
22 - Paralytic <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 AM, Divine Liturgy • 11:45 AM, Church School • Noon, Agape Meal 	23	24	25 - Mid-Pentecost <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9 AM, Divine Liturgy and Blessing of Water • 6 PM, Vespers 	26 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 PM, Vespers for St. John the Russian 	27	28 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 11 AM, Baptism • 5 PM, Vespers/Matins
29 - Samaritan Woman <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 AM, Divine Liturgy • 11:45 AM, Church School • Noon, Agape Meal 	30	31	JUNE 1 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 7 AM, Divine Liturgy • 6 PM, Vespers 	2	3	4 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 PM, Vespers/Matins