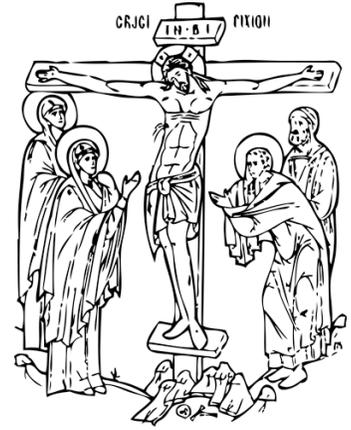




St. Cyril of Jerusalem Orthodox Church

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**+ April 21, 2019 +
PALM SUNDAY**
The Triumphal Entrance
of our Lord into Jerusalem



HOLY SATURDAY OLD TESTAMENT READINGS – There are fifteen Old Testament readings at the Liturgy on Holy Saturday morning, taking us through the Passover and the Crossing of the Red Sea by the Hebrews, and various prophecies of Christ's resurrection. **If you would like to volunteer to read one of these Old Testament readings, there is a sign up list in the hall.**

AGAPE VESPERS ON SUNDAY AFTERNOON features the reading of the Gospel of the appearance of our Risen Lord to His holy Apostles (John 20:19-25). This Gospel is read in various languages. Please let Fr. Benedict know if you would like to read this Gospel in a particular language.

Holy Week 2019

- + TODAY – First Bridegroom Matins, 5:00 p.m.**
- + April 22 & 23 – Holy Monday & Tuesday – Bridegroom Matins, 6:30 p.m.**
- + April 24 - Holy Wednesday – Sacrament of Holy Unction, 6:30 p.m.**
- + April 25 - Holy Thursday – Mystical Supper Liturgy, 10:00 a.m.**
 - 12 Passion Gospels, Carrying of the Cross, 6:30 p.m.**
- + April 26 – Holy Friday – Royal Hours before the Cross, 10:00 a.m.**
 - Vespers, Taking Shroud to the Tomb, 4:00 p.m.**
 - Lamentations before the Lord's Tomb, 7:00 p.m.**
- + All Night Psalm Vigil at the Tomb +**
- + April 27, Holy Saturday – Blessed Sabbath Liturgy, 10:00 a.m.**
- + HOLY PASCHA – begins Saturday at 11:30 p.m.**
- + April 28 – Pascha Sunday - Agape Vespers, 1:00 p.m., followed by meal**

+ At the Cross, evil appeared to triumph. Christ's refusal to defend Himself must have completely bewildered His disciples. But only in that seeming defeat is revealed the final truth of who God is. You cannot know the crucified Christ if you refuse to be crucified with Him. If you are afraid to lose, then you will never win – at least not the only victory that matters. - Fr. Stephen Freeman

On the Sabbath and the Lord's Day

A member of our community asked a question about the **Sabbath**. Two of his colleagues at work, one a Baptist and the other a Seventh Day Adventist, were debating as to which is the correct Sabbath day, Saturday or Sunday. The Adventist said the Christian day of worship should be Saturday, since that is the seventh day of the week, which God declared to be a day of rest. The Baptist said that Sunday should be the day of worship, because the Sabbath has moved to Sunday. In fact, the Orthodox Church would say that neither of these views is quite right.

Seventh Day Adventists are focused on Saturday being the Sabbath and therefore the proper day to worship instead of Sunday. From the Orthodox perspective, saying that the primary day of worship for Christians should still be Saturday is *Judaizing* – going back to aspects of Judaism, an early heresy rejected by the Church from Apostolic times.

The Orthodox Church does still recognize **Saturday** as the **Sabbath**, as the day of rest. It is the day on which we remember that God rested from creation on the seventh day, and it is also the day on which the Lord Jesus rested in the tomb – the “**Blessed Sabbath**” that we will celebrate this week. Likewise in the Church we also remember the departed on Saturday, since the departed are those who are “resting,” having fallen asleep in Christ. Thus for Orthodox Christians the Sabbath – Saturday – has its own particular character.

But **Sunday** is the new **Lord's Day** (in Greek, *Kyriaki*, the day of the Lord). It is first day of creation, but in the Christian tradition Sunday is also the **Eighth Day** – the day beyond time – the **Day of Resurrection**. For Christians, this is the day that Christ rose from the dead. Therefore, beginning from the first years of Christianity, Sunday surpassed the Sabbath, and became the main day for Christians to assemble together and “break bread” - to celebrate the Eucharist, the Divine Liturgy.

So for Orthodox Christians, and in the traditional Christian understanding, the Sabbath didn't move to Sunday. The Sabbath is still Saturday. But the Sabbath was *surpassed, transcended, and supplanted* by Christ's victory over death on the Eighth Day – Sunday – the Day of Christ's holy Resurrection!

Thus every Sunday is a small celebration of Pascha!

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The sign of purity is: to rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep; to be in pain with the sick and in anguish with the sinners; to rejoice with the repentant and to participate in the agony of those who suffer; to criticize no man and, in the purity of one's own mind, to see all men as good and holy.

- *St. Justin Popovich (+1979)*

The Meaning of Christ's Suffering

Taken from an article by Frederica Matthewes-Green

A hero comes to the rescue . . .

. . . Graphic meditation on Christ's suffering doesn't appear before the medieval era, approximately the 14th century. Before that the presentation is more in accord with the way Christ appears in the Gospel of John. In iconography, He reigns serene from the Cross, a victorious conqueror who has rescued us from Death.

In fact, the concept of "rescue" is the key. The wounds that Christ sustained are like those of a hero. **Imagine that a young policeman has rescued some hostages at great**

physical cost, including his own capture and torture. It would be unseemly, even insulting, to continually ask him, "How did it feel when they tortured you? What did it look like? Where did you bleed?" The officer would understandably wish you'd focus not on his humiliation but on his victory.



That's the attitude we see in these ancient hymns from Holy Week: "The sun was darkened, for it could not bear to see such outrage done to God, before whom all things tremble... When Thou was crucified, O Christ, all the creation saw and trembled. The foundations of the earth quaked in fear of thy power. The lights of heaven hid themselves... The hosts of angels were amazed." A hymn from the 4th century Liturgy of St. Basil is familiar even to some Protestants: "Let all earthly flesh keep silent, and with fear and trembling stand."

Devotion didn't simply change with the times; the same awe-filled reticence continues unchanged in Eastern Orthodox devotion today. Something else happened to cause this change in European Christianity, and move the focus from Christ's **victory** to his **sufferings** as the means of salvation.

The traditional Christian view of what Christ accomplished on the Cross

Western theologians usually say that the greatest event in the development of salvation theology was the publication of the treatise "*Why did God become Man?*" by Anselm, the 11th century Archbishop of Canterbury. Picture the landscape when Anselm tackled his work. Scriptures talk about Christ' death being a **ransom** or **redemption**, and up till then this had been chiefly understood as a ransom **from the Devil**. "The wages of sin is Death," and due to

our sins **we were enslaved by death**, poisoned and helpless to resist sin. **Christ comes on a rescue mission**, and in the process he suffers very like that policeman rescuing the hostages. **As a human, he dies and gains entrance to Hades; once there he blasts it open, as God, and sets the captives free.**

But when we speak of Christ paying with his blood, we don't necessarily have to imagine a two-sided transaction. The brave policeman, above, "**paid with his blood**" to free the hostages, but that doesn't mean the kidnappers were left gloating over a vial of blood. When the Lord ransomed his people out of Egypt, Pharaoh did not accept a fat bag of gold in exchange. "Redeem" can just mean "**doing what is necessary to set free.**"

Further, the young officer might have said "I offer this mission to the honor of my chief, who has always been like a dad to me. I love him and want to do his will, and I am making this sacrifice in his name." The chief didn't receive the young man's blood either - a bizarre thought - nor did he require that blood before the hostages were freed; he was not their captor, but an ally in the rescue. So take a grammatically giant step back and see these terms in a looser sense. Sometimes we use images like "paid" to mean a simple act of giving, without envisioning a two-sided transaction that includes a receiving on the other end.

St. Gregory the Theologian (4th century) protested that the question of "**Who received the payment?**" should not be pressed hard. **No matter what debt the Devil was owed it could not possibly have included God himself. On the other hand, the Father could not have been the recipient of the ransom, since he was not the one holding us captive.** And if the blood of Isaac had not pleased him, why would he desire the blood of his beloved Son?

St. Gregory sums up: **the Father accepts Christ's sacrifice without having demanded it; the Son offers it to honor him; and the result is the defeat of the Evil One.** "This is as much as we shall say of Christ; the greater portion shall be revered with silence."

The radical new theory of Anselm in the 11th century

Anselm took aim at the exaggerated versions of the ransom theory, but didn't agree to leave the greater portion to silence. He theorized that the payment ***was*** made to God the Father. In Anselm's formulation, our sins were like **an offense against the honor of a mighty ruler**. The ruler is not free to simply forgive the transgression; **restitution** must be made. (This is a crucial new element in the story; earlier Christians believed that God the Father did, in fact, freely forgive us, like the father of the Prodigal Son.) In Anselm's view, **no human would be adequate to pay this debt, so God the Son volunteers to do so.** "If the Son chose to make over the claim He had on God to man, could the Father justly forbid Him doing so, or refuse to man what the Son willed to give him?" Christ satisfies our debt in this, the "**Satisfaction Theory**" of Atonement.

"And that has made all the difference," as a tousled Yankee poet liked to say. **Western Christian theology marched on from that point, encountering controversies and developments and revisions, but locked on the idea that Christ's death was directed toward the Father.** When Western theologians look back at the centuries before Anselm they can't find his theory anywhere (well, there are some premonitions in Tertullian and Cyprian,

but it wasn't the mainstream.). You can read St. Paul to support the "satisfaction" view, so Anselm is hailed as the first theologian to understand St. Paul.

That's a stretch, though. Would Christians really have misunderstood their salvation for a thousand years? Did the people Paul wrote his letters to have no idea what he was talking about? Did the early martyrs die without understanding the Cross that saved them? Why would the Holy Spirit permit such a thing, if He was sent to lead them into all truth? Is the "plain meaning of Scripture" is so obscure that it couldn't be discerned for a thousand years, and then only by someone from a culture utterly different from its authors?

Western theologians search the pre-Anselmian millennium and can't find the theory they're after, but fail to see the theory that permeates there. Before Anselm, the problem salvation addresses is seen as located within us. **We are infected by Death as a result of Adam's fall. This infection will cause us to be spiritually sick and to commit sin, both voluntarily and as a result of the Devil's deceptions. Christ offers to rescue us in accord with the Father's will, like the young police officer above. In this action, God the Father and the Son are united: "God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself."**

That's the "before" snapshot. With Anselm, the problem salvation addresses is between us and God (we have a debt we can't pay). After Anselm it is even sometimes formulated as a problem *within* God (**His wrath** that won't be quenched until the debt is paid). This theory loses the unity of will between the Father and Son; it can appear that the Son has to overcome the Father's resistance. It loses the idea that the sickness is within us, and we need to be healed; it can appear that a legal acquittal is sufficient and a transformed life a nice afterthought at most.

Some rebelled against this formulation and claimed that it was too legalistic, too ethically superficial, too "Old Testament." They proposed instead that Christ's sufferings are just meant to move us by example, so that we will turn and be reconciled with God. (In response to a similar proposition many centuries earlier Augustine had harrumphed that, if an example is all we needed, we didn't need Christ; the human condition would have been cleared up with Abel.)

In all these varied "after" snapshots, however, the wounds and suffering are the major point. It is the pain of the Passion that saves us, whether objectively (by paying a debt) or subjectively (by moving our hearts). From Julian of Norwich's meditations on the Crown of Thorns, to "O Sacred Head Sore Wounded," to Mel Gibson's "The Passion of the Christ" is a single devotional thread.

This is a strand that has produced powerfully affecting works of art, and moved and inspired Christians for centuries. The Crucifixion was, in fact, bloody and brutal - Gibson is on good historical ground in wishing to depict them this way - and when he prayerfully reads the Gospels, no doubt these are the pictures that appear in his mind.

But they are not, actually, there. The writers of the Gospels chose to describe Jesus' Passion a different way. Instead of evoking empathy they invite us to grateful, respectful awe, because they had a different understanding of the meaning of his suffering. + + +

"The Lord wants us to love our fellow man; and if you reflect that the Lord loves him, you have a sign of the Lord's love for you. And if you consider how greatly the Lord loves His creatures, and you yourself have compassion on all creation, and love your enemies, counting yourself as the vilest of all, it is a sign of abundant grace of the Holy Spirit in you. He who has the Holy Spirit in him, to however slight a degree, sorrows day and night for all mankind. His heart is filled with pity for all God's creatures, more especially for those who do not know God, or who resist Him and are therefore bound for torment. Christ prayed for those who crucified Him . . . St. Stephen the First Martyr prayed for those who stoned him . . . and we, if we wish to preserve grace, must pray for our enemies."

- *St. Silouan the Athonite (+1938)*

"The world leads you to depravity and corruption. Christ says: I promise you joy, health, happiness. But these things which the world promises comprise very simply a bait to pull you near it. It doesn't have anything though to offer you. The world wants to prevent you from living a paradisaical life beginning in this life and prepares you for hell from now, because the paradise of the world is a real hell."

- *from the spiritual counsels of Elder Simon Arvanitis (+1988)*

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The great cause of his spiritual benefit . . .

"It often happens that someone sees himself sitting peacefully and quietly, but when his brother says a word that upsets him, he is troubled. Thus, he thinks that he is justly upset with him, saying, 'If he hadn't come and spoken to me and troubled me, I wouldn't have sinned.' But this is folly and absurdity. Did the person that spoke to him give him that passion? He simply showed him the passion that existed within him, so that, if he wanted to, he could repent of it. He is like fine bread that shines on the outside, but when one breaks it, he sees its moldiness. In just the same way, he was sitting, as he thought, in peace, but he had this passion inside him he was unaware of. His brother said one word and revealed the filth hidden inside him. Therefore if he wants to receive mercy, he must repent, purify himself, progress and he must understand that he ought to thank his brother for being the great cause of his spiritual benefit."

- *St. Abba Dorotheos of Gaza (5th cent.)*

"First of all it must be understood that it is the duty of all Christians to strive always and in every way to be united with God, their Creator, Lover, Benefactor and their supreme Good, by Whom and for Whom they were created."

- *St. Theophan the Recluse (+1894)*