

SAINT DEMETRIOS

GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH OF TORONTO, ONTARIO



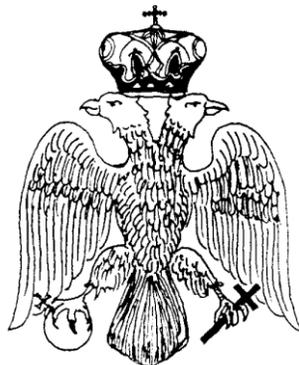
ALTAR SERVERS GUIDE

SAINT DEMETRIOS GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH OF TORONTO, ONTARIO

Altar Servers Guide

DEDICATED TO THE PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE ALTAR SERVERS OF

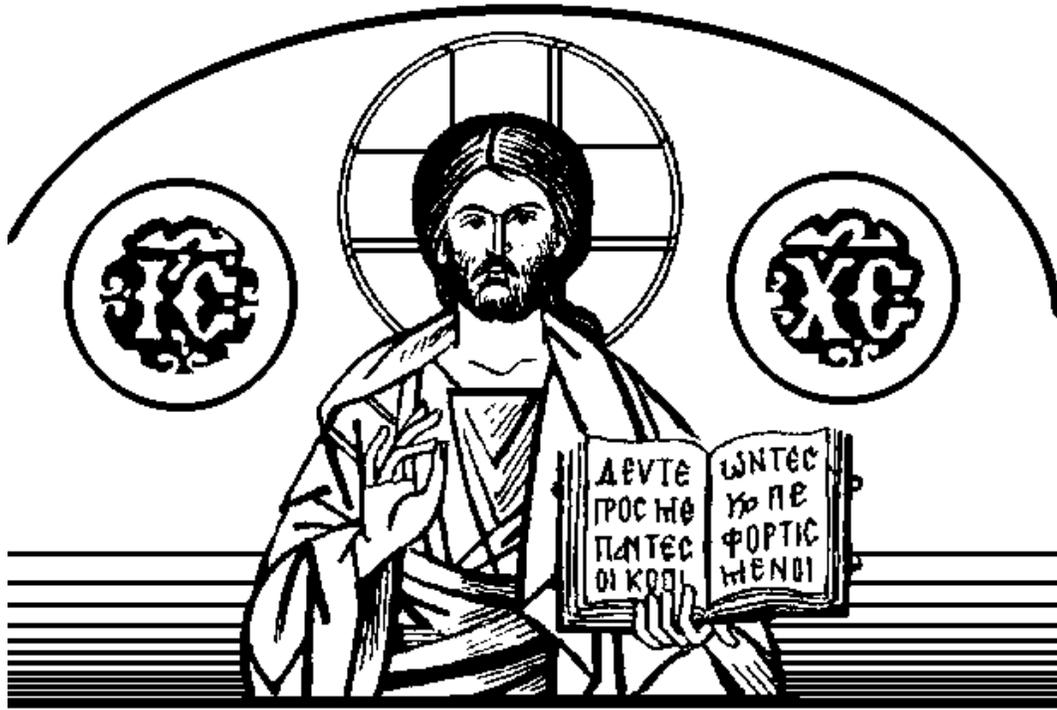
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SAINTS CONSTANTINE AND HELEN GREEK ORTHODOX COMMUNITY, SURREY, B.C. &
SAINT DEMETRIOS GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH, TORONTO, ONTARIO



© Rev. Fr. Konstantinos Tsiolas, Rev. Fr. Theodore Paraskevopoulos and Tim Prattas
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Introduction



This manual is put together to guide lay people who wish to serve in the Altar of the Lord. Altar Servers, or Altar Boys as they are often called, have a very important role in the Church. People that serve in the Altar must understand the seriousness and importance of their roles. Not everyone can be an Altar Server, just like not everyone can be a priest. Altar Servers are people who are active in the sacramental life of the Church, especially in the Mystery of Holy Communion. Everyone that serves in the Altar should receive Holy Communion whenever it is offered. This means that those that serve in the Altar must live a Christian life whether they are in church, at school, at work, or at home. To serve in the Altar is a commitment one makes to Christ as part of his spiritual life. It is not something that should be taken lightly.

This guide will explain the most important duties of the Altar Server. You should study it carefully, so that you may better serve Christ at His Altar.

Punctuality

As an Altar Server you must be in the Altar, ready to serve, before the Divine Liturgy begins. This ensures that you are ready to begin your duties right away. When you are there on time, the priest can concentrate on the service, instead of worrying whether he will have help for the Divine Liturgy. Another reason is so you are there for the beginning of the Liturgy and do not miss out on any parts. Think how rude it is to show up late for an appointment or a dinner at a friend's house. Imagine how rude it is to be late when God calls us to His Table. Punctuality is also a good character to have for the rest of your life. Being punctual shows maturity and responsibility on your part.



If you are unsure what time the Liturgy starts or what time the Priest wants you to be there, you should ask him.

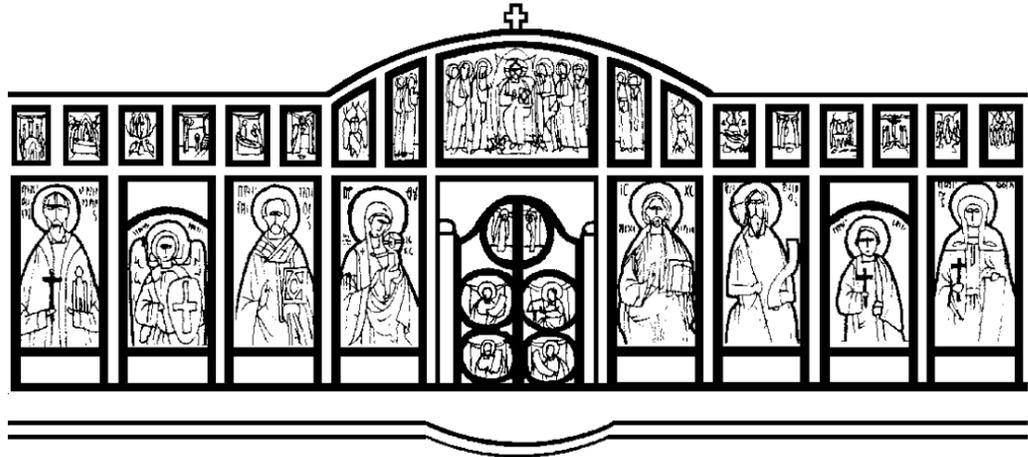
Entering the Church

When you enter a church, you not only enter a building of worship, but you enter the Kingdom of God – Heaven. Before you enter the church, you must concentrate on why you are there. Any worries and thoughts that have nothing to do with the Divine Liturgy should be left outside the church. The only thing on your mind should be Christ and your prayers. Remember people are there to pray and are concentrating on the service.

You should not make any loud noises, start conversations, or try to get someone's attention. The time to chat with others is after the end of the Divine Liturgy.

The first thing you do when you enter a church is Cross yourself. Then you light a candle and kiss the icons next to the candles. Candles symbolize our prayers. That is why when you light a candle, you should say a prayer, either for yourself or someone you know. People tend to light candles for sick people in their families. Candles can also be lit for those people that have passed away. We never forget anyone, and we always pray for everyone, whether they are in this life, or the next.

After you light your candles, you kiss the icons next to the candles. The icons are usually the icons of the saint that the church is named after, and the saint of the day. When you kiss the icons, you venerate and give honour to the saint whose image is on the icon.



Entering the Altar

As serious as it is to enter the church properly, so much more serious it is to enter the Altar properly. The Altar area is where the Altar Table is located. On that table the most important service takes place: the Divine Liturgy. As Christians, our whole lives revolve around this Mystery, the Communion of the Holy Body and Blood of Christ. During the Liturgy, the Bread and Wine change into the Body and Blood of Christ, which we all consume, so that we will be one with Him. Serving in the Altar where this Mystery takes place is a great blessing and privilege. **Before you enter the Altar, you stand at the side door and cross yourself, then kiss the icon of the Archangel in front of you.**

Preparing to Serve

After you enter the Altar, find and fold your robe, so that you may get blessed by the priest. If you are a subdeacon, find your orarion (belt) as well. You always receive your blessing from the oldest priest in the Altar. You approach the priest holding the robe with both hands. You extend your hands and say, "Father bless." The priest blesses you and you kiss his hand. You then go to the side and put on your your robe. If there is a bishop present, you get your blessing from him, even if he is outside of the

Altar, at his throne. You approach him and say, “Master bless.” You kiss his hand and come back in the Altar.

After you put on your robe, and before you do anything else in the Altar, you must go and wash your hands at the sink. This symbolizes that you wash your hands of all bad things in the world. Since you’ll also be receiving Holy Communion, you prepare yourself. Nobody goes to a feast dirty. After that, you’re ready to serve.

During the Service

The role of the Altar Server is to assist the priest and lead processions during the Divine Liturgy. It is very important that during the Liturgy, you pay attention to the priest. When you are not doing anything, you stand on the side, close to the Altar Table, and follow along the Liturgy with your book. Serving in the Altar is a serious matter, and you shouldn’t be joking around and letting your mind wander. Altar Servers are also responsible for the cleanliness and organization of the Altar. You must always ask the priest before cleaning something off the Altar Table, since there are some objects that you can only touch with the priest’s permission and blessing. Remember, if you are unsure about something, ask your priest.



At the End of the Service

For most people the service ends when the priest gives the Antithoro to the people. However, there is still some work to do for the priest and the Altar Servers. You must make sure that the priest always has enough Antithoro in front of him to hand out to the people. After, when the Antithoro is given out, you must return to the Altar and make sure everything is ready for the next service. That means cleaning any messes, including breadcrumbs. You must make sure that the Gospel book is brought back into the Altar from the back of the church, next to the candles. When you finish all your duties, you ask the priest for permission to leave. When the priest gives you his blessing, you kiss his hand and put your robe back the way you found it.

Exiting the Altar

When you exit the Altar after you've taken off your robe, you kiss the icon of the Archangel and cross yourself.

Exiting the Church

When you leave the church to go home, you kiss the icons at the back of the church by the main doors, cross yourself, and leave. This is to show respect to God and the Church. It is also a reminder that just because you are leaving the church, it does not mean that you forget about being a Christian.

Consequences

Everything you do in your whole life will have a consequence. If you do good things, you will see good results. If you do bad things, you will face bad consequences. It is the same when you serve in the Altar. Please remember that these rules are not to force you to do things, but to help you in doing these things properly.

All the items you use in the Altar have a meaning and an importance. It is very important that you treat everything in the church with care and respect.

The Altar Servers' Robes



The robe you wear symbolizes your commitment to serving the Church as Altar Server. The robe also distinguishes you from the rest of the congregation, as you have a specific role in the Church. When you wear the robe, you are not only a Christian, but specifically a servant of God at His Altar. Regular Altar Servers only wear the robes. The belts are only worn by those tonsured as sub-deacons. In Greek, the robe is called the *Sticharion*, and the belt is called the *Orarion*.

You must treat your robe with care and respect so it will last and will look presentable when you serve. After you leave the Altar, you should make sure your robe is neatly folded or hanging, so it will not wrinkle. If you feel your robe needs repair or cleaning, you should speak with your priest or the head of the Altar Servers.

The Candles

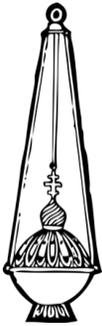


The candles are what you use most of the time during processions, readings and special services. As we said, candles represent our prayers to God. The candles you carry also symbolize the light of Christ shining for those who believe in Him. When you carry a candle at the front of a procession, you also announce the beginning of the procession to the people, so they may stand still and pay attention. You should not play with your candles or swing them from side to side. When you are walking, you should not drag the bottom of the candle pole. When you are standing still, most of the time it is okay to rest the pole of the candle on the floor.

When you stand in front of the Altar with the candles, you face the Altar Server across from you. The same goes if you stand in front or on the sides of a table. Remember, you must never turn your back to the Altar or the priest. It is considered disrespectful.

In a procession, the candles always lead.

The Censer (Thymiato)



The censer is what we burn incense in. It hangs from chains, and on the chains are attached bells. Incense is a gift to God. That tradition was used by the Jews when they would burn incense at the Altar as a gift to God. We continue that tradition. Incense also symbolizes our prayers to God. The lower part of the censer symbolizes the earth. The top part of the censer symbolizes Heaven, where the smoke rises, like our prayers. Normally, there are twelve bells on the chains, and they symbolize the Twelve Apostles of Christ. The sound of the bells symbolizes the Apostles glorifying God. Although it is fun to use the censer, you must make sure that it is properly lit and cleaned at all times. A dirty censer starts to smell bad after a while. Make sure the charcoal is lit and there is plenty left. There shouldn't be more than one charcoal in the censer at one time. You must also be careful about how much incense you use each time. Usually, three pieces of incense is more than enough. Any more than that, and too much smoke will be created, choking you and the priest. Every time the priest uses the censer and gives it back to you, you should clean out the remaining burning incense and put it in the small container next to the censer stand. You should also clean out any ash left over from the burning charcoal.

When you give the censer to the priest, you hold the ring on the top of the chains with your right hand and the chains with your left hand. Make sure there is enough space on the chains between your hands, because that is where the priest will grab the censer. Make sure you lift your left hand a bit, so the part between your hands doesn't drop straight down, but is on an angle. That makes it easier for the priest to take the censer from you.

When the priest gives back the censer to you, you grab it from the chains or from the top loop, if the priest is not holding it from there. If the priest censes you, when he gives you the censer, you cense him twice. If it is a bishop that gives it back to you, you cense the bishop three times. When the priest censes you, you don't cross yourself. You simply bow towards the priest.

In a procession, the censer always goes ahead of the lead priest.

The Processional Cross and Fans



The Processional Cross and Fans are usually located behind the Altar Table. These are used during the Great Entrance and on special services and occasions. The Cross has two sides to it. One side shows an icon of Christ on crucified on the Cross. This side faces forward when the Cross is taken in a procession on weekdays. The other side of the Cross has an icon of Christ resurrecting. That is the side that must always face forward on Sundays. That is because on Sundays, we celebrate the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

When you hold the Cross and Fans, you stand the same way you would stand if you were holding a candle.

In a procession, the Cross goes ahead of the censer, and the Fans go ahead of the Cross and behind the candles.



The Banners (Lavara)

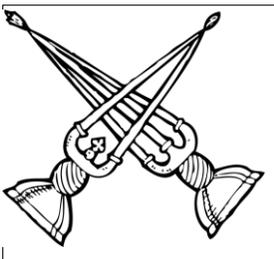
The Banners are usually located on the solea, outside the altar and are only used for special feast days and occasions. Your priest will let you know when they are to be used.

The Andidoro (Blessed Bread)



The Andidoro is the blessed bread that is given out at the end of Divine Liturgy. Historically, this bread was given to those who had not taken Communion, as a substitute. However, today it is given to all at the end of Divine Liturgy. The Andidoro is cut up during the service from the prosfora that people bring to the church. It is important that the Andidoro is cut and ready to be blest very early in the Liturgy, as it is given to the priest to be blessed about half way through the service.

The Thikero-Trikera (Bishop's Candles)

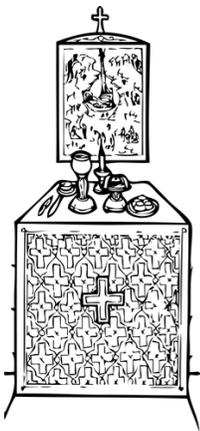


When a bishop is visiting the church, the Thikero-Trikera are used. These are two candle stands, one with three candles and one with two candles. The one with the three symbolizes the Holy Trinity. The one with the two symbolizes the two natures of Christ (Divine and Human). When the

bishop visits, these candles are held by either deacons, subdeacons or altar boys. The three candles are always to the right of the bishop. For further instruction on how to carry the Thikero-Trikera please ask your parish priest.

The Zeon (Hot Water)

The Zeon is heated during the Divine Liturgy and is brought to the priest right before he gives Holy Communion. The Zeon is always brought to the priest on his right side. The priest will take the Zeon and pour it into the chalice with the wine and return it back to the altar boy.



The Prothesis (Preparation Table)

The Prothesis is located off to the left side of the altar. This is the table where the priest prepares the gifts before Orthros starts. The altar boys are not responsible for this in any way as this service is done before they arrive at the church. However, it is important to be aware of this table's importance. This is where the priest will go to get the gifts before the Great Entrance.



Small Entrance (Entrance of the Gospel)



The first procession of the Divine Liturgy is the Small Entrance where the priest goes around the church with the Holy Gospel. In this situation, the altar boys are to line up at the north door, and proceed down the right aisle of the church towards the back, turn left at the back and then left again to come down the centre aisle. The priest will follow the candles. There are only candles in this procession (no Cross or Fans). When the altar boys reach the Solea (platform in front of altar) they are to split and line up in two lines, each on either side of the Royal Doors (centre doors of the altar). When the priest passes and goes into the altar, altar boys immediately turn to face the altar, bow and then enter through the doors on their own side.

Gospel Reading



When the priest is ready to read the Gospel, the altar boys will split into two groups, each exiting from each side door of the altar. They are to come out and line up on each side of the Royal Doors facing each other. They are to wait there until the Gospel is read and then turn, bow, and enter through their respective side doors (just like in the small entrance). Only candles are taken out for the Gospel reading.

Great Entrance (Entrance of the Gifts)



The Great Entrance is when the priest comes out with the Holy Gifts that are to become the Body and Blood of Christ. The procession is exactly the same as in the Small Entrance, however this procession utilizes the candles, the Cross, the Fans and the Censer. The order of the processions should be: candles, fans, cross, censer, priest. Whoever is holding the Censer is to cense the priest as he walks around the whole church and all the way up to the Royal Doors, standing off to the left side allowing the priest to pass and enter the Altar. NOTE: The censer bows and enters first before anyone else as it has to go in and help the priest immediately. After the censer bows, the Cross must bow and enter alone, then the Fans, and finally the Candles bow and enter.



Holy Communion

During Holy Communion one altar boy needs to help the priest with the Maktro (red cloth used to wipe people's mouth). It is VERY important that the person doing this is very careful that all children are wiped well and that no Holy Communion falls from the spoon onto the floor. This MUST NEVER HAPPEN as this is the BODY AND BLOOD OF CHRIST. There must also be another altar boy making sure that there is enough Andidoro for the people.



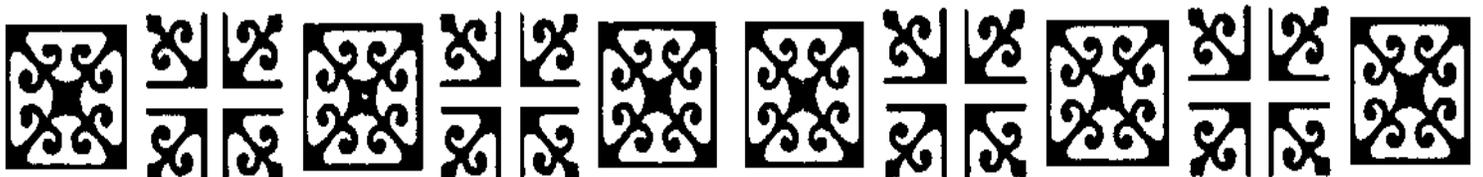
Artoclasia (Blessing of the Five Loaves)

Sometimes at the end of Liturgy there will be an Artoclasia service. If this is the case then only two altar boys should come out with candles and stand on each side of the table with the loaves. One more altar boy should come out with the censer and stand to the right of the Priest, wherever he may be standing. When the priest is done the Artoclasia, the altar boys are to re-enter the Altar by the closest side door unless there is a memorial service, in which case they would walk over to that table and stand on each side as was done with the Artoclasia.



Mnimosino (Memorial Service)

Sometimes at the end of Liturgy there will be a Mnimosino. If this is the case then the same actions for Artoclasia are repeated exactly at the table the Mnimosino is at on the Solea. When finished, altar boys can enter the Altar by the nearest side door. Bowing is not necessary.



Special Divine Services



Great Lent I – Great Compline

Compline service is a service which is held at the end of the day. It takes place after dinner (hence the Greek name of the service, *Απόδειπνος*). The Service of Great Compline is a service that has many beloved hymns and prayers of Great Lent. This service is called Great Compline because it is much longer (where Small Compline is about 15-20 minutes, this service is approximately 1 hour). The theology in the prayers and hymns, however, is fantastic. The contents of this service are about the same as Small Compline, with a stress on the theme of repentance (*μετάνοια*, “changing one’s mind”) and salvation. This is definitely shown in the main hymn of the evening: **Lord of the Powers, be with us! For in times of distress, we have no other help but You! Lord of the Powers, have mercy on us!**

It is a great way to keep our fast in perspective, and to ask for God’s great mercy in this time of spiritual struggle.

Note: This service is usually chanted in monasteries every evening. In the parishes, it is usually chanted on the first day of Great Lent, Clean Monday; other than that, every parish usually has set days of the week that it is celebrated on.

Altar Servers need to be aware of the following times they will be needed during this Liturgy:

- a. During the hymn “**Lord of the Powers**”, the Priest will need the censer to cense around the entire Church.
- b. During the First Week of Great Lent, Altar Servers should be ready to go out with their candles for **the reading of the Gospel**.



Great Lent II – Liturgy of the Pre-Sanctified Gifts

During Great Lent, it is a rule of the Church that Divine Liturgies cannot be held during the week. The only time when the Church would celebrate Divine Liturgies during Great Lent are on Sundays (the Liturgy of St. Basil the Great), on Saturday (the Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom), and on the feastday of the Annunciation (March 25th).

However, since the Church sees it important for its faithful to participate in the Sacrament of Holy Communion as often as possible, it created a "Liturgy" with consecrated Bread and Wine (i.e. it's all ready the Body and Blood of Christ, taken from the past Sunday's Liturgy), to be given to the people during a night service. This service, called the "Liturgy of the Pre-Sanctified Gifts" is done during the time of Vespers. Firstly, it is a Vespers service until the two readings finish; after that, we read Communion prayers and the faithful receive Christ at the appropriate time (just like at Liturgy).

This Liturgy is usually celebrated on Wednesdays in our Churches (and, in some Churches, also on Fridays). The last Pre-Sanctified Liturgy of the year is celebrated on Holy Wednesday.

Altar Servers need to be aware of the following times they will be needed during this Liturgy:

- a. During the **Reading of the Kathismata** (three sets of 3 Psalms), the Priest will need the censer. As the Priest is ready to take the Holy Gifts to the *Prothesis*, one Altar Server will need to cense the Gifts, walking backwards to the Prothesis. He will then give the censer to the Priest as he censes the Gifts.
- b. During the Psalm "**Lord, I have cried**", the Altar Server will give the censer to the Priest, so he can cense the Church.
- c. At the **Doxastikon** of the Liturgy, the Altar Servers will take part in the Small Entrance – using the Candles, Processional Fans and the Cross (if need be).
- d. The Priest will need the censer and a hand-held candle after **the first Prophecy**. The Priest will keep them until after the hymn "**Let my prayer arise as incense before You...**", at which time you will take them back.
- e. **If there is a Gospel reading**, Altar Servers will go out in front of the Royal Doors, opposite one another for the Gospel.
- f. The Altar Servers will take place in the **Great Entrance**, using the Candles, Processional Fans and the Cross (if need be).
- g. The Priest will need assistance with **Holy Communion**, just as in the Divine Liturgy. After Holy Communion, the censer should be given to the Priest to cense the Gifts.
- h. The **Antidoron** is given out to the faithful at the end of the service.

Make sure to have cut enough.

Great Lent III – The Akathist Hymn

The first 5 Fridays of Great Lent are marked with a very beloved service of the Orthodox faithful, dedicated to the Theotokos. The *Salutations of the Theotokos*, together with a supplicatory canon (a group of like-sounding hymns), are incorporated to the Small Compline service (*this is the only time of the week the Small Compline is officiated*). If we wanted to get to know the Mother of God a little better, all we have to do is listen to the hymns of this service—it's like her biography, "in poem form".



Altar Servers need to be aware of the following times they will be needed during this service:

- a. At the main hymn «Τῆ Ὑπερμάχῳ», Altar Servers should stand on the Soleas on either side of the icon of the Virgin Mary with candles, processional fans, the Cross and the censer (held by the senior Altar Server).
- b. During the First Week of Great Lent, Altar Servers should be ready to go out with their candles for **the reading of the Gospel**.

HOLY WEEK

Holy Week I – Palm Sunday Morning

Six days before the Passover, Jesus entered Jerusalem. People were awaiting a Messiah (which literally means, "the Anointed One") to free them from the Romans and all their oppressors. Someone with power usually enters triumphantly into a city he has captured; yet, Jesus entered Jerusalem humbly, riding a donkey. This fulfilled an Old Testament prophecy which said, "Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion! Shout, Daughter of Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey." (Zechariah 9:9)

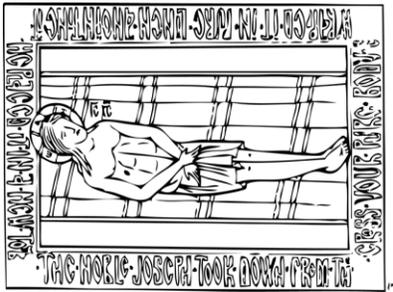
People waved palm branches on that day, to symbolize that their Messiah had come. For this reason, we also bless palm branches at our Churches on this day. The Bishop or Priest distributes them to all the faithful after the Divine Liturgy, to remember this very important feastday in the Church.



Altar Servers need to be aware that *either at the end of Matins or the end of the Divine Liturgy*, there will be a procession with the Palms and the appropriate prayer to be read by the Priest or Bishop. Altar Servers should be ready to assist the Priest or Bishop in giving out the palms to the faithful.

Holy Week II – Palm Sunday Evening, Holy Monday Evening, Holy Tuesday Evening

From Palm Sunday evening, the Church begins to hold the “Bridegroom Services”. They are called the “Bridegroom Services” because the Church offers the icon of the Bridegroom Christ for people to venerate, remembering that Jesus is the Bridegroom of the Church. Jesus sacrifices His life for His Bride, and His Bride promises to be faithful to Him.



Altar Servers need to be aware of the following times they will be needed during these services:

- a. **Immediately after the “Enarxis”** (or, beginning of the service), the Priest needs the *katzion* (a smaller, hand-held censer) to cense the Church during the first 2 Psalms.
- b. **At the hymn, «Ἰδοῦ, ὁ Νυμφίος ἐρχεται» (“Behold, the Bridegroom comes”)**, Altar Servers will proceed as during the Little Entrance of Divine Liturgy around the Church. The Senior Altar Server(s) will cense the icon of the Bridegroom Christ, going three times around the icon stand. Every Altar Server will kiss the icon of the Bridegroom Christ.
- c. **At the Gospel Reading**, the Altar Servers will come out in front of the Royal Gates for the reading.
- d. **At the Magnificat** («Τὴν Θεοτόκον καὶ Μητέρα του Φωτός»), the Altar Server should have the censer ready for the Priest to cense the Church.



Holy Week III – Holy Wednesday Afternoon/Night

Every Sacrament has its roots in the Word of God, the Bible. We find the roots of the Sacrament of Holy Unction in the Epistle of James: “Is

anyone among you sick? Let him call for the Presbyters of the Church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the Name of the Lord.” (James 5:14)

In the past, this Sacrament was done in the context of the Divine Liturgy; today, however, it is done as a separate service. This Sacrament can be conducted on any day of the year. However, the Church has ordained for this Sacrament to be done every Holy Wednesday. At the service’s completion, all the faithful come and receive the blessing of the Holy Oil, being anointed by the Priest or Bishop, “for healing of soul and body.”

This Sacrament does not replace Holy Confession, but it is a great way for all to get prepared for Holy Communion on Easter Sunday.

Altar Servers need to be aware of the following times they will be needed during this service:

- a. **At the Magnificat**, the Altar Server should have the censer ready for the Priest to cense the Church.
- b. **At every Gospel reading**, the Altar Servers should come to the Royal Gates for the reading.
- c. **At the Prayer of Forgiveness**, the Altar Servers should come in front of the Priest and kneel. The Priest will put on their heads the Book of the Gospels. The Altar Servers act on behalf of the entire congregation.
- d. **At the end of the service**, all Altar Servers should assist the Priest with preparing Holy Oil for people to take home with them, along with any other tasks.



Holy Week IV – Holy Thursday Night

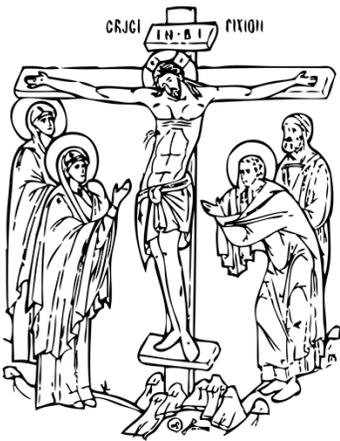
The service on Holy Thursday night is one of the longest services of the year. **The Holy Service of the Passion** (Η Ακολουθία των Παθών) is a service filled with beautiful hymnography and 12 Gospels that depict the various events of the Passion of Jesus Christ. The first Gospel is called **The Gospel of the Covenant**, in which Jesus shares with us what we must do as Christians. He also prays to the Father during the so-called “Hierarchical Prayer” (Η Αρχιερατική Προσευχή). The Gospel finishes with Jesus and His disciples in the valley of Kidron, right before

Judas comes to betray Him. Throughout the night, various hymns are chanted by the people, and Gospels are read that describe Jesus' betrayal, His trial by the Chief Priests and Pilate, and then His Crucifixion.

After the Fifth Gospel, the Priest carries out a large Crucifix to the following Hymn (*the 15th Antiphon*):

Today he who hung the earth upon the waters is hung upon a Tree. He who is King of the Angels is arrayed in a crown of thorns. He who wraps the heaven in clouds is wrapped in mocking purple. He who freed Adam in the Jordan receives a blow on the face. The Bridegroom of the Church is transfixed with nails. The Son of the Virgin is pierced by a lance. We worship your Sufferings, O Christ. Show us also your glorious Resurrection.

Following the Procession, people come up and venerate the Crucified Christ.



Altar Servers need to be aware of the following times they will be needed during these services:

- a. **Immediately after the “Enarxis”** (or, beginning of the service), the Priest needs the *katzion* (a smaller, hand-held censer) to cense the Church during the first 2 Psalms.
- b. **At every Gospel Reading before the Procession with the Crucifix**, the Altar Servers will come out in front of the Royal Gates for the reading. Make sure the older Altar Servers stand for the first Gospel reading, as it is quite long compared to the others.
- c. **During the Procession with the Crucifix**, make sure every Altar Server takes part. All candles, Processional Fans, Crosses and Censers should be used. The Senior Altar Servers should take the censers, censing the Crucifix. The procession will take place around the entire Church, ending at the Soleas. The Altar Servers with censers will go around the base where the Cross will be placed three times before standing on either side. When all Altar Servers reach the Soleas, everyone should kneel with their candle/processional fan/cross (with the Altar Servers with censers kneeling afterwards). Every Altar Server will kiss the Crucifix at the appropriate time.
- d. **From the Sixth Gospel onwards**, four Altar Servers with candles

will remain on the Soleas until the Dismissal.

- e. **At the Magnificat** («Την Θεοτόκον και Μητέρα του Φωτος»), the Altar Server should have the censer ready for the Priest to cense the Church.



Holy Week V – Good Friday Afternoon

On Holy Friday afternoon, we gather in Church for the Vespers called *The Descent from the Cross Service* (Η Αποκαθήλωσις). During this service, various hymns are chanted about Jesus' death on the Cross and burial. Various Bible readings are read after the "Thanksgiving of the Lighting of the Lamps" (also known as Φώς Ιλαρόν), which include Exodus 33:11-23, Job 42:12-17, Isaiah 52:13-53:12, 1 Corinthians 1:18-2:2, and the Gospel reading (which is a collection of readings on the crucifixion and death of Jesus – it includes Matthew 27:1-38, Luke 23:39-43, Matthew 27:39-54, John 19:31-37, and Matthew 27:55-61).

Towards the conclusion of the Gospel reading, the Bishop or Priest, acting as Joseph of Arimathea, will take the Body of Christ off the Cross. After this, the Bishop or Priest will take out the Επιτάφιο (an icon depicting Jesus being taken down off the Cross) and put it into the grave of Christ (called a κουβούκλιο, which will be decorated with various flowers the night before). After the service is over, the people will come and venerate the Επιτάφιο with respect, keeping in mind that this is our Lord's tomb.

Altar Servers need to be aware of the following times they will be needed during these services:

- a. **After the "Litany of Peace"** (Τα Ειρηνικά), the Priest will need the censer to cense the Church.
- b. **At the hymn preceded by "Both Now and Forever"** («Και νύν και αεί»), all Altar Servers will take part in the Small Entrance. Altar Servers should use candles, processional fans and the Cross. They will enter the Altar again at the chanting of the *Prokeimenon*.
- c. **At the reading of the Gospel**, Altar Servers will stand on the Soleas on either side of the Royal Doors.
 - **Note:** Two to three Senior Altar Servers will assist the Priest at the "Descent of the Cross" portion of the Gospel. They will hold the white sheet, folding it as the Priest puts in the "body of Christ"



from the Crucifix. One other Altar Server will be there with a censer for the Priest.

- d. **After the “Offering of the Peace”** («Ειρήνη πάσῃ»), the Altar Servers will take part in a similar procession to that of the Small Entrance. This one is different in that the Altar Servers will also carry the censers, censuring the Επιτάφιο icon carried by the Priest.

Holy Week VI – Good Friday Night

The Matins of Holy Saturday is the first significant change to the mood of the week. Until now, we have seen the overall mood being that of “sorrow”; with tonight’s service, however, we start to see the mood change to that of “**joyful anticipation.**” This Saturday is called the “most-blessed Sabbath,” because “He will rise again on the third day!” (Kontakion of Holy Saturday)



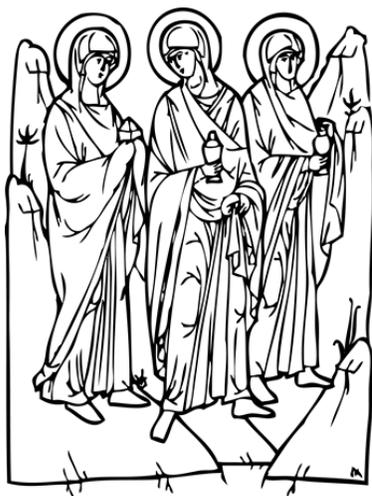
Our anticipation of Jesus’ Resurrection is also coupled together with “The Hymns of Praise” (called the Εγκώμια), with the procession of the Επιτάφιος taking place after the Great Doxology.

After the procession, the Priest takes the Επιτάφιος inside the Altar. Biblical readings preparing us for the Resurrection of Christ are read, and the service concludes with the Priest giving the flowers of the κουβούκλιο of the Επιτάφιο as a blessing to the people.

Altar Servers need to be aware of the following times they will be needed during this service:

- a. **At the Magnificat** («Την Θεοτόκον και Μητέρα του Φωτος»), the Altar Server should have the censer ready for the Priest to cense the Church.
- b. At the end of the 9th Ode, **before the “Hymns of Praise”**, the Altar Servers should all stand outside until the end of the 3rd Set of the Hymns. Altar Servers should stand as they do at the Gospel reading, with candles, processional fans and the Cross.
- c. **Towards the end of the “Hymns of Praise”**, at «Ερρῶσαν τον τάφον», make sure the Priest has the vessel which he will sprinkle the Επιτάφιος and the congregation with sweet fragrances.
- d. **At the beginning of the Doxology**, the Altar Servers will all line up

·:THE MYRRHBEARERS·:



to exit the Church for the Procession of the Επιτάφιος. Candles, Processional Fans, the Cross, censers and the Banners should be taken during this procession. The conclusion of the Procession will be in front of the doors of the Church, where the Priest will offer a short *Ektenis*. Upon its conclusion, the Επιτάφιος and Κουβούκλιον will be lifted and all Altar Servers will pass under the Επιτάφιος as a blessing. Altar Servers will then proceed to the Soleas, lining up as they do usually (i.e. a set of Altar Servers on either side), and entering the Altar at the conclusion of the Gospel Reading.

- e. **At the end of the service**, Altar Servers will be helping the *Myrofores* and others in giving the Priest flowers from the Επιτάφιος.

Holy Week VII – Holy Saturday Morning

Holy Saturday morning is the last day of the fast for Holy Week. It is a day of joyous anticipation, but also one of reflection, prayer and preparation for the great feast of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We commemorate our Lord's descent into Hades and prepare to celebrate His Resurrection; we can see this in the hymns that are chanted, expressing the "groaning of Hades" and rejoicing of the Heavens.

The service that is done this morning is the Vespertal Divine Liturgy of St. Basil the Great. After the Epistle, the Priest and the people chant the hymn, "Arise O God, judge the earth! For You shall have an inheritance among the nations!" At this hymn, the priest goes around the Church and throws flowers as a joyful reminder that the Resurrection of our Lord is about to take place. The Gospel recalls the events of the Resurrection of our Lord, and the Liturgy takes place.

Altar Servers need to be aware of the following times they will be needed during this service:

- a. **During the Psalm "Lord, I have cried"**, the Priest will need the censer to cense the Church.
- b. **At the hymn preceded by "Both Now and Forever"** («Και νύν και αεί»), all Altar Servers will take part in the Small Entrance. Altar Servers should use candles, processional fans and the Cross. They will enter the Altar again at the beginning of the First Prophecy Reading.
- c. **At the conclusion of the Epistle**, two Altar Servers will hold a

basket filled with palm leaves, accompanying the Priest around the Church (it is a tradition to throw palm leaves at the end of this Epistle). The remaining Altar Servers will be ready for the Gospel reading.

- d. **At the reading of the Gospel**, Altar Servers will stand on the Soleas on either side of the Royal Doors.

Note: The rest of the service is the Liturgy of St. Basil the Great. All Altar Server procedures will remain the same (e.g. the Great Entrance, blessing of the bread, Holy Communion, etc.).

Holy Week VIII – Holy Saturday Night

This Feastday is the most important in the entire Church calendar. We remember that it is this day that our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ brought us “from death to life and from the earth to Heaven”. His conquering death and the Devil gives all of humanity the chance to become citizens of His eternal Kingdom. We rejoice in the Resurrection, and always remember the love of God present in our lives on this feastday.

The service of the Holy Feast of Pascha begins at around 11:00 p.m. with the chanting of the *Canon*. At about 11:40 p.m., the lights are all shut off in the Church and the Priest comes out with one lit candle. He joyously proclaims: **“Come receive the light, from the Light that can never be overtaken by night, and glorify Christ who is risen from the dead!”** The Church becomes illuminated and all proceed outside (led by the Altar Servers, Myrofores, the Chanters and the Priest) for the Gospel reading to proclaim the Resurrection of Christ (*Mark 16:1-8*). After this Gospel, all chant **“Christ is risen from the dead, trampling down death by His death, and bestowing life to those in the tombs!”** After this, the Festal Orthros and Divine Liturgy are chanted, all hymns so joyful of the Resurrection of Christ. At the end of the Resurrectional Liturgy, the blessing of the Easter eggs is done by the Priest.

Altar Servers need to be aware of the following times they will be needed during this service:

- a. Altar Servers must be ready with candles, processional fans, Cross, banners and censer(s) at the hymn **“Come, receive the light”**. They will proceed outside for the Resurrectional Service Gospel and **“Christ is Risen”**. They will re-enter the Church at the beginning of



the Canon, "It's the day of Resurrection!" («Αναστάσεως ημέρα, λαμπρυνθώμεν λαοί!»).

- b. **At the Magnificat** («Την Θεοτόκον και Μητέρα του Φωτος»), the Altar Server should have the Priest's Paschal Candle ready, together with the censer ready for the Priest to cense the Church.
- c. **At the final hymn of Matins, "It's the day of Resurrection"** («Αναστάσεως ημέρα και λαμπρυνθώμεν τη πανηγύρει»), the Altar Server should have the Priest's Paschal Candle ready, together with the censer ready for the Priest to cense the Church.
- d. **At the end of the Divine Liturgy**, the Altar Boys will help the Priest give out the blessed Easter Eggs.

Note: The Divine Liturgy celebrated is that of St. John Chrysostom. Therefore, all Altar Server procedures will remain the same (e.g. the Great Entrance, blessing of the bread, Holy Communion, etc.).

Holy Week IX – Holy Pascha Morning

With the celebration of the Resurrection finishing into the early hours of the morning, the Church finishes Holy Week with a Vespers service. This Vespers is called "The Vespers of Agape" (Ο Εσπερινός της Αγάπης). In this Vespers, we also read the Gospel reading (which is John 20:19-25) in various languages, which is done by the Priest and the people. At the end of the service, all are given red Easter eggs (of the same that were blessed the previous night) as a blessing.



- a. **At the beginning of the Service (the "Enarxis")**, the Altar Server should have the Priest's Paschal Candle ready, together with the censer ready for the Priest.
- b. **During the Psalm "Lord, I have cried"**, the Priest will need the censer to cense the Church.
- c. **At the hymn preceded by "Both Now and Forever"** («Και νύν και αεί»), all Altar Servers will take part in the Small Entrance. Altar Servers should use candles, processional fans and the Cross. They will enter the Altar again at the end of the Gospel Reading.
- d. **If any Altar Server knows another language (besides Greek and English)**, they should inform the Priest in order to say the *Agape Gospel*. Your Priest will give you appropriate directions.

- e. At the final hymn of Matins, “It’s the day of Resurrection” («Αναστάσεως ημέρα και λαμπρυνθώμεν τη πανηγύρει»), the Altar Server should have the Priest’s Paschal Candle ready, together with the censer ready for the Priest to cense the icons and conclude the service.
- f. At the end of the Agape Vespers, the Altar Boys will help the Priest give out the blessed Easter Eggs.



Feasts of the Holy Cross

“Lord, save Your people and bless Your inheritance”: With these words, the Church honours the feast of the Holy Cross twice a year – September 14th (“Exaltation of the Holy Cross”) and the Third Sunday of Great Lent (“Cross-Adoring Sunday”). Both days remind us of the sacrifice of Christ on the Life-Giving Cross, which is why we fast on these days. On both these days, we have similar services for the faithful to honour the Holy Cross. Although a bit different, the Altar Server’s role is the same.

At the end of the Doxology (in Matins) *or* **at the end of the Divine Liturgy** (depending on when your Priest tells you), the Altar Servers will begin a Procession with Candles, Processional Fans and the Censer(s) (but **without** the Processional Cross) around the Church (just like the Small Entrance). All Altar Servers will line up opposite one another on the Soleas except those with the censer(s) – those Altar Servers will go around the Church, censuring the Holy Cross on the tray of flowers, being held by the Priest. Upon reaching the Soleas, they will go three (3) times around the table set up in the centre, at which time they will stand on either side of the Priest. The Altar Servers will re-enter the Altar and begin the Divine Liturgy (or, prepare to give out the blessed bread, depending which time the service takes place).

