



ΜΕΓΑΛΗ ΕΒΔΟΜΑΣ ΠΑΣΧΑ

HOLY WEEK - EASTER

Digital Byzantine Notation Edition in English

**Greek Orthodox Holy Week & Easter Services
Palm Sunday Evening through
Easter Sunday (Pascha) Afternoon**

New English Translation

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**Compiled & Translated by
+ Father George L. Papadeas, Protopresbyter**

Digitized and Edited by Stanley Takis

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FOREWORD TO THE DIGITAL SERVICE BOOK AND HYMNAL EDITION

DEDICATION

The hymnal section is dedicated to the memory of Fr. George Papadeas, a faithful Orthodox Christian servant and exemplary priest, in the hope that his Holy Week-Easter pew book will continue to be a great asset to English-speaking parishes in America and around the world.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The authors of the hymnal wish to thank all of the people who assisted in its production, most importantly Elias Papadeas, the son of Fr. George, for supporting this project and agreeing to publish it. Much appreciation goes to the fellow Church musicians who agreed to proofread and offer corrections and suggestions. We wish to thank Fr. Seraphim Dedes for his support and permission to use his Holy Thursday musical setting of the Papadeas text and also for his inspiration to provide easy access to the music of the Church in both notations.

Stanley and Nancy Takis, 2024

PREFACE

The observation of Holy Week in the Orthodox Christian Church is a yearly worship experience that surpasses all other worship opportunities during the year in depth and meaning for people of faith. It is the culmination of the ten-week Triodion period in preparation for not only the celebration of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ and the victory over death, but also the contemplation of human existence that includes the ever continuing struggle of good versus evil, personal responsibility, and repentance of one's sins.

The narrative of the life of Christ and His teachings to His disciples builds to a climax during Holy Week. The anticipation of these seven days begins with four weeks of pre-Lenten themes including faith, family, judgment, and forgiveness that prepare the faithful for the Great Lent, a six-week period of fasting and repentance. The number of services per week increases, bringing the people to Church more frequently in order to remove them from the world for brief moments and for them to contemplate the path to Heaven and eternal life. Lent ends with two days that foreshadow the events of Holy Week—the raising of Lazarus from the dead and Christ's entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday.

Holy Week begins in the evening of Palm Sunday and continues daily through Great and Holy Pascha, or Easter, as it is known in Western Christendom. There are fourteen separate services. On the days of Holy Week there are Orthros (or Morning Matins) services that are given the evening before in anticipation, instead of in the morning of each day. The first four are known as "Bridegroom" services in reference to Christ as the bridegroom of the Church—the one humanity waits for to love them, care for them, and lead them to salvation. It's a direct comparison to the parable of the wise and foolish virgins who await the bridegroom. As the troparion from these services expresses, the bridegroom comes in the middle of the night, and those who light their lamps and await him will be rewarded, but those who fall asleep will miss him and be left behind.

On Holy Wednesday there is also the giving of the Sacrament of Holy Unction for the healing of our faults. On Holy Thursday, there is a morning Vespers Divine Liturgy (combining the previous evening's Vespers with the Liturgy of St. Basil) that is an observation of the repentant thief who was crucified with and forgiven by Christ, as the worshipers strive to be like the thief and ask for forgiveness. On Thursday evening at the Orthros service of Great Friday, there are twelve Gospel readings that trace the Holy Passion of Christ—the betrayal, trial, crucifixion, and entombment of the Savior. On the day of Great Friday, there is a re-enactment of the Crucifixion during the Imperial Hours, and at Vespers, the taking down of His body from the Cross. In the evening, the Orthros of Holy Saturday focuses on the Lamentations for the crucified Savior. On Holy Saturday morning, a Vespers Divine Liturgy is given to celebrate Christ's descent to, and destruction of Hades. This is followed by a long day of silence and strict fasting.

Shortly before midnight, the Orthros service for Pascha begins. At midnight the Great Resurrection service begins. The Holy Light from Jerusalem is distributed to the worshipers, and the great hymn, “Christ is risen!” is chanted over and over. The Orthros continues to the Resurrectional Divine Liturgy, where many special anthems are sung. Exhausted from the intense fasting and prayer, the faithful worshipers are joyful, anticipating the Great Feast that will be celebrated during the day. But before that feast begins, there is one more service, the Agape (Love) Vespers. It is a short service that proclaims the Resurrection, and the Gospel is read in many languages.

The services of Holy Week contain many great and meaningful readings from Scripture and attendant prayers. The hymns of Holy Week are full of beautiful and powerful poetry. The texts are an inestimable and precious treasury of literature that has nourished and sustained Christian belief during the centuries. In many modern Christian churches, this invaluable resource of the Faith has been completely lost. Only in the Orthodox Church has this flame been kept flickering for the enlightenment and edification of the people. But as church attendance wanes, especially at Holy Week, and as the ancient language in which the services were written diminishes in use, the future of these services reaching wide and understanding congregations is in peril.

In the mid-Twentieth Century, Father George Papadeas of Hempstead, New York, perceived that his parishioners were having difficulty following and understanding the services of Holy Week. There was no written text, either in Greek or English that they could follow. Father Papadeas saw the need for a pew book that encompassed all of the Holy Week texts, and that such a book would need to be presented in side-by-side Greek and English that is perfectly aligned, so that the worshipers would not lose their places while following the services. In those days, the services were performed almost entirely in Greek, and the congregations that did not comprehend Greek—especially Ancient Greek—were increasing to the point that for many, Orthodox services, apart from the visual and aural aspects, were diminished.

Father Papadeas went to work and produced such a pew book, and over four decades improved it to the point that they were demanded in almost every parish of the English-speaking world. Even in non-English-speaking countries—even in Greece—the books were valued for the Greek texts, which were hitherto unavailable to the general public. This work was greatly appreciated and is still in use in most Greek Orthodox parishes of the United States. However, there is the fact that his translations of the hymns were not metered precisely to the same melodies as the Greek texts, and thus were difficult to chant by looking at only the texts. As more and more churches turned to services that are either predominately in English or entirely so, this was indeed a problem that needed a solution.

There are two considerations that stand out to us. One is that these translations of Fr. Papadeas, which he himself described as “painstaking,” are excellent. They depict the stories, prayers, and images of Holy Week in an elegant and poetic way. Well-written translations are valuable, and it so often happens that new translators come along claiming to be making improvements, yet they are lacking in rhetorical and literary quality. What good is a translation, even a metered one, if it does not elevate the language and bring power and memorability to the believers? It is this poetic power that has sustained the Church through the centuries. The second important consideration is that Fr. Papadeas’ book remains in wide distribution. It has become a fixture in most parishes. For most people, it is a necessity for attending the services. With so many thousands of people in possession of this book—and it is an excellent book, despite its minor flaws and omissions—it would be a shame not to be able to render worshipful and meaningful services in this English translation.

There was a need for a complete hymnal based upon Fr. Papadeas’ book, so that the hymns can be easily chanted and understood. It was important to adapt the melodies to the English words, and not vice-versa, so that the cadences still aligned and made the music still familiar, containing the emotional content of each Byzantine mode, while preserving the translation. And there was also a need to make this hymnal available for both print and digital devices, along with a digital text for those in the pews who follow on tablets and cell phones. The original version was in staff notation and included music for both the Greek and English languages. In this Byzantine notation edition, it was noted that there are many Greek versions of this music available, and the immediate need was for an English rendition of the Papadeas translation. It should be noted that the music here was adapted mostly from that of John Sakellarides. Access to his Greek Byzantine scores is available online at the Digital Chant Stand of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America at: <https://dcs.goarch.org/goa/dcs/booksindex.html>