

LITURGICAL GUIDELINES FOR PARISH USAGE



**DIocese OF NEW YORK AND NEW JERSEY
ORTHODOX CHURCH IN AMERICA**

Approved with the blessing of
His Eminence, the Most Reverend MICHAEL, Archbishop of New York
in consultation with
the Council of Presbyters of the Diocese of New York and New Jersey

ISSUED NOVEMBER 2015

1 CELEBRATING THE DIVINE SERVICES ON SATURDAYS AND SUNDAYS

Sunday is the focal point of the week for Orthodox Christians. It is the “day of Resurrection.” As such, the celebration of the Divine Services on Sunday is essential to the life of every parish. The Divine Liturgy is to be celebrated each and every Sunday in each and every parish and mission station of the Diocese of New York and New Jersey. On the occasions when the Rector or Acting Rector must be away from his parish’s altar on a Sunday, he must arrange for a substitute priest to serve the Divine Liturgy in his place. In cases where a substitute priest cannot be procured, the Rector must contact his Diocesan Hierarch and receive a blessing for an *obednitsa* or a reader service to be served. This is a last resort option. Closing the parish on a Sunday is not an option.

The Liturgy of St John Chrysostom is served on all Sundays of the year except for the Sundays of Great Lent (it is also served on the Sunday of the Entrance into Jerusalem/Palm Sunday, which is not part of Great Lent). On the five Sundays of Great Lent, and on those occasions when January 1 (the Feast of Circumcision/St Basil the Great) falls on a Sunday, the Divine Liturgy of St Basil the Great is served.

Matins may be served on Sunday morning prior to the Divine Liturgy. Alternatively the Third Hour (and, optionally, the Sixth Hour) should be served on Sunday morning.

On Saturday evening, either the Vigil (Great Vespers and Matins) or Great Vespers alone should be served. Daily Vespers should not be served on Saturday evening.

If the Vigil is served on Saturday evening, the Matins may not be served on Sunday morning, but the Hour(s) should be served.

If a Great Feast – or a lesser feast that a parish or mission liturgically observes – falls on a Monday, the Vigil or Great Vespers for the feast should be served on Sunday afternoon or evening. If attendance on Sunday evening is likely to be minimal, then Great Vespers for the feast falling on Monday may be served immediately following the Sunday Divine Liturgy.

Memorial Saturdays should be observed with appropriate services. Practices vary, but there should be an effort to regularly and liturgically preserve the blessed memory of those who have departed this life.

The proper day for a memorial service (*Panikhida*) to be served in the church is Saturday, the day the Church appoints for commemorating the departed. It is also proper to serve these services on any other day except for Sunday. If a parish wishes to adopt some other day as its normal practice, a blessing must be obtained from the Diocesan Hierarchy.

2 CLEAN WEEK, GREAT LENT, HOLY WEEK, PASCHA, AND BRIGHT WEEK

CLEAN WEEK

Clean Week, the first week of Great Lent, should be celebrated insofar as possible as follows:

- Forgiveness Sunday Vespers.
- Compline and Great Canon of St Andrew Monday through Thursday.
- Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts Wednesday and Friday.
- Divine Liturgy of St John Chrysostom Saturday morning for St Theodore the Greatmartyr.

GREAT LENT, SECOND THROUGH SIXTH WEEK

The remainder of Great Lent should be celebrated insofar as possible as follows.

- Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts, Wednesdays (Weeks 2–6).
- Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts, Fridays (Weeks 2–5). (*Note: Vespers with Panikhida or Vespers with Matins for Memorial Saturday is often substituted for the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts in parish practice on the Friday evenings preceding Memorial Saturdays, i.e., in weeks 2, 3, 4. The Akathist to the Most-Holy Theotokos is often substituted for the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts on Friday evening of Week 5.*)
- All Souls Saturdays: Memorial Divine Liturgy of St John Chrysostom Saturday morning (Weeks 2, 3, 4).
- Matins and Great Canon of St Andrew, with the reading of the Life of St Mary of Egypt, Thursday of Week 5.
- Akathist to the Most-Holy Theotokos Friday of Week 5.
- Matins for Lazarus Saturday, Friday of Week 6.

HOLY WEEK

Great and Holy Week reveals the content for our liturgical life for every week throughout the year. The themes for each day are repeated every week of our liturgical lives whether we realize it or not. The theological wealth embedded in these services needs to be uncovered and experienced, but unfortunately, we have not made this the common experience among our Orthodox Faithful.

The Bridegroom Matins and the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts on Great and Holy Monday through Great and Holy Wednesday are not served in many parishes. The Church's teachings on the Last Judgment and the *Parousia* (Second Coming), which are the central themes of these Holy Days, are not communicated or experienced by many of our faithful. Without the preparation of these first few days of Holy Week, the full spiritual weight of what is experienced from Holy Thursday through the Three Day Pascha is not adequately prepared for.

With this in mind, then, Holy Week should be celebrated insofar as possible as follows:

- Matins of Holy Monday (*done in anticipation on Sunday*).
- Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts, Holy Monday.
- Matins of Holy Tuesday (*done in anticipation on Monday*).
- Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts, Holy Tuesday.
- Matins of Holy Wednesday (*done in anticipation on Tuesday*).
- Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts, Holy Wednesday.
- Matins of Holy Thursday (*done in anticipation on Wednesday*) and / or Unction Service (*done on Wednesday*).¹
- Vespers and Liturgy of St Basil, Holy Thursday (*with preparation of Reserve Sacrament for the communing of the sick*).
- Matins with The Twelve Passion Gospels (*done in anticipation on Thursday*).
- Royal Hours of Great and Holy Friday.
- Vespers/Burial Service (*done at approximately the ninth hour, 3pm*).
- Matins of Holy Saturday with Praises (*done in anticipation on Friday*).
- Vespers with Liturgy of St Basil, Holy Saturday.²
- Nocturns/Midnight Office, Holy Saturday evening (*done at 11:30pm*).

¹ Parish Rectors are reminded that Holy Unction is a Mystery of the Church, reserved only for Orthodox Christians who are properly prepared.

² It is pastorally suggested that young people be recruited to read the 15 Old Testament readings.

PASCHA AND BRIGHT WEEK

It is during the Feast of Pascha and Bright Week that we are invited to “drink a new drink” springing forth from the grave of Christ. It is time for all Orthodox Christians to renew their baptismal experience in the light of Christ’s Resurrection. The whole week is celebrated as one bright radiant day of the Resurrection.

With this baptismal renewal in mind, Pascha and Bright Week should be celebrated insofar as possible as follows:

- Paschal Matins (done at 12 midnight) followed by
- Paschal Hours and Divine Liturgy of St John Chrysostom.
- Vespers of Pascha Bright Monday (done Sunday).
- Bright Monday Paschal Hours and Divine Liturgy of St John Chrysostom.
- Vespers of Pascha for Bright Tuesday (done Monday).
- Bright Tuesday Paschal Hours and Divine Liturgy of St John Chrysostom.
- Vespers of Pascha for Bright Wednesday (done Tuesday).
- Bright Wednesday Paschal Hours and Divine Liturgy of St John Chrysostom.
- Vespers of Pascha for Bright Thursday (done Wednesday).
- Bright Thursday Paschal Hours and Divine Liturgy of St John Chrysostom. (Blessing of water – The Lifegiving Spring of the Most-holy Theotokos).
- Vespers of Pascha for Bright Friday (done Thursday).
- Bright Friday Paschal Hours and Divine Liturgy of St John Chrysostom.
- Vespers of Pascha for Bright Saturday (done Friday).
- Bright Saturday Paschal Hours and Divine Liturgy of St John Chrysostom (prayer and the distribution of the Artos).

CONCLUSION

The goal should be for each of us as Parish Rectors and Parish Faithful to be as maximalist as possible when scheduling and participating in the Services for Great Lent, Holy Week, Pascha, and Bright Week.

3 PRESCRIBED OBSERVANCE OF THE FEASTS OF THE MENAION

GREAT FEASTS

Every parish priest of the Diocese is expected to serve the twelve Great Feasts of the Church year. They are the following:

— *Fixed Great Feasts* —

Sept 8 / 21	Nativity of the Most-Holy Theotokos
Sept 14 / 27	Universal Exaltation of the Life-Creating Cross
Nov 21 / Dec 4	Entrance of the Theotokos into the Temple
Dec 25 / Jan 7	Nativity of Our Lord, God and Savior Jesus Christ
Jan 6 / 19	Theophany of Our Lord, God and Savior Jesus Christ
Feb 2 / 15	Meeting of Our Lord Jesus Christ in the Temple
Mar 25 / Apr 7	Annunciation to the Most-Holy Theotokos
Aug 6 / 19	Transfiguration of Our Lord, God and Savior Jesus Christ
Aug 15 / 28	Dormition of the Most-Holy Theotokos

— *Movable Great Feasts* —

Sunday Before Pascha	Entrance of Our Lord Into Jerusalem (<i>Sunday of Palms</i>)
Sixth Thursday After Pascha	Ascension of Our Lord, God and Savior Jesus Christ
Eighth Sunday After Pascha	Pentecost

The prescribed observance of these feasts appoints a Vigil Service comprised of Great Vespers (or Great Compline for Nativity and Theophany) with Litya and Matins on the Eve, and a morning Divine Liturgy on the feast itself. Some variations may apply for the Annunciation, depending on the date of Pascha. Consult the Rubrics book published by Saint Tikhon's Press for specific directions.

Recognizing that not all of our parishes may have adequate staff to serve the Vigil Service, Great Vespers (or Great Compline as indicated above) with Litya may be served alone on the eve, and the Divine Liturgy on the feast day morning itself.

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The observance of a Parish Patronal Feast, whether of Great or Lesser rank, should take the form of a Great Feast and be observed with a Vigil Service or Great Vespers, as outlined above on the eve and a morning Divine Liturgy on the feast day itself.

In places where attendance for a Sunday evening festal Great Vespers service is typically minimal, Great Vespers for the eve of a feast falling on a Monday may be served on Sunday after the Liturgy, in the interest of increasing participation in the feast.

Any departure from the prescribed order of festal services is discouraged, and requires in advance the knowledge of and blessing from the Diocesan Hierarchy.

— *Lesser Feasts* —

In addition to the above, it is recommended that the parish priests of the Diocese liturgically observe the following Lesser Feasts of the year:

Jan 1 / 14	Circumcision of Our Lord / St Basil the Great
Jan 7 / 20	Synaxis of St John the Baptist
Jan 30 / Feb 12	Synaxis of the Three Holy Hierarchs
Apr 23 / May 6	Holy Glorious Greatmartyr George
Jun 24 / Jul 7	Nativity of St John the Baptist
Jun 29 / Jul 12	The Leaders of the Apostles, Peter and Paul
Jul 20 / Aug 2	Holy Glorious Prophet Elijah
Aug 29 / Sep 11	Beheading of St John the Baptist
Oct 1 / 14	Protection of the Most-Holy Theotokos
Oct 26 / Nov 8	Holy and Glorious Greatmartyr Demetrius
Nov 8 / 21	Synaxis of the Archangel Michael and the Other Bodiless Powers
Dec 6 / 19	St Nicholas the Wonderworker, Archbishop of Myra in Lycia
Dec 9 / 22	Conception by Righteous Anna of the Most-Holy Theotokos
Dec 13 / 26	Repose of Venerable Herman of Alaska

Celebrating the Divine Services for other American Saints is also encouraged, whenever possible.

The prescribed observance of the feasts appoints a Vigil Service comprised of Great Vespers with Litya and Matins on the eve, and a morning Divine Liturgy on the feast day itself. Pastors may use their discretion and may choose to serve Great Vespers on the eve either with or without Litya, or simply to serve only the Divine Liturgy on the morning of the feast day itself. Consult the OCA Rubrics book published by Saint Tikhon's Press for specific directions.

As with Great Feasts outlined previously, in places where attendance for a Sunday evening festal Great Vespers service is typically minimal, Great Vespers for the eve of a feast falling on a Monday may be served on Sunday after the Liturgy, in the interest of increasing participation in the feast.

Anyone wishing to serve an evening Vespersal Divine Liturgy must seek the express blessing of the Bishop. Any further departure is discouraged, and requires in advance the knowledge of and blessing from the Diocesan Hierarchy.

4 KEEPING THE DOORS OF THE CHURCH OPEN

The healthy parish is gathered often in prayer and worship. The Guidelines for Clergy,³ as published by the Orthodox Church in America, prescribe that “in addition to the Vigil, or Vespers and Matins, and the Divine Liturgy celebrated on Sundays and on the prescribed Great Feasts, the priest must strive to enhance the daily liturgical life of his parish by celebrating these services and other devotional services at appropriate times.” Here are some options for creating daily opportunities for our parishioners to come to our Heavenly Father's House.

— Daily Order of Services —

It is quite often possible for a parish to celebrate some of the daily order of services throughout the course of a normal week.

DAILY VESPERS can be served nightly or at some other interval.

MATINS, likewise, can be served daily or on any desired days.

³ <http://oca.org/PDF/official/clergyguidelines.pdf>

SMALL COMPLINE is another possibility for engaging the faithful in their daily lives.

NOCTURNS may be a feasible option if it is a more accessible time for the local community.

THE HOURS are another way in which a shorter service can be offered, while having the troparia and the kontakia of the day being sung in the church.

— *Other Services* —

Morning and Evening Prayers: Many service books offer Morning and Evening Prayer services. This can be a way to minister to a community of working parishioners: they are usually shorter than the liturgical services and can be profound in ordering the daily life for the faithful.

Akathists: With several service books of akathists available,⁴ and many more found online, akathists to particular saints or in commemoration of Christ and the Theotokos can be served regardless of the size of the congregation or the time of day when they are celebrated.

Healing Services: “Basically there are two categories of Christians: ‘those who are well,’ and ‘those who are sick.’ Those who are well are the saints. Among the sick there are those who are cognizant of their sickness and undergo therapy, and those who are unaware of their sickness or choose not to undergo therapy. So the Church’s work is therapeutic in nature.”⁵ We can frequently offer healing services, such as a service of Anointing with Holy Oil or a simpler prayer service, as found in the third and fourth volumes of the Great Book of Needs.

Moliebens: These supplicatory services are another valuable way to incorporate prayers to Our Lord, His Mother or the saints, and can be a consistent element in the weekly cycle of services. Many of these are found in the fourth volume of the Great Book of Needs, as well as online.

⁴ *Book of Akathists*, Holy Trinity Monastery Press (2 volumes).

⁵ “*The Church is a Therapeutic Center*,” Fr Emmanuel Hatzidakis, accessed September 10, 2014. www.orthodoxwitness.org/over-the-rooftops/the-church-is-a-therapeutic-center/

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All of this can be quite valuable in addition to the other prescriptions in these guidelines. Frequent celebrations of the feasts and fasts and the saints who have graced our land are further opportunities for us and our entrusted flocks to come closer to our Lord. It is important to remember that the entire parish will most likely not be present for every daily service: it may take years to build up any sort of regular community attendance. But in time, if the Lord blesses, daily services can be a source of blessings to the entire parish community.