



PASCHA ÷ EASTER ÷ IN CYPRUS



PASCHA (EASTER) THE WAY TO REDEMPTION



The direct, personal encounter with the Resurrected Christ is the basic objective of the spiritual life of every human and every human has a spiritual life proportional to the extent one has met the Resurrected Christ. Therefore, since the encounter with the Resurrected Christ bears so much significance, the Church has developed and offers a way, a course that makes this encounter possible for anyone who wishes to follow it. This course develops liturgically during the Triodion and the Great Lent (Sarakosti) and guides the faithful, step by step, to this encounter. The liturgical development has been accomplished with such wisdom that induces vertigo to the one who manages to realise it. The liturgical life of the Church is neither a magical nor an illogical process, but a way by which God's Grace permeates the lowest ranks of the human everyday life and the moral turpitude of human nature, bringing it step by step to a quest for Christ, to a road of companionship through His Passions and to an encounter with the Resurrected Lord, to accede finally the throne of God, reinstated in the glory, for which He has created it.

In order to follow this path of redemption, it is necessary for man to have the correct orientation, he must follow with caution and awareness the guiding light of Orthodoxy. This course is painful and can easily tire man. The veneration of the cross intervenes to remind man that the path is one of crucifixion but what in reality is crucified is death. As death is the absence of love, and self-centertness.

Man is called to walk with Christ and partake in His Passions. It is easy for man to perceive the bringing to life of the Passions as a re-enactment, an enjoyable fair. For this purpose the reference to the welcome of Christ by the crowd with branches and leaves of palm trees and his abandonment the very next day to the solitary road to the Cross, may prevent man from allowing the degeneration to entertainment of a true opportunity for redemption. One must not allow the liturgical life to degenerate to a show and miss the crucial opportunity offered for reviving one's nature, that the malice of self-centertness leads its decay and death, instead one can bring it back to the sphere of incorruptibility and eternity, the sphere of love.

Can man walk with Christ through His Passions, to the extent that he would be delivered from material need, to acquire the spiritual awareness necessary to welcome the Bridegroom? For this he must realize the grave danger of idolizing and worshipping matter, the creation instead of the Creator. This risk will accompany him until the very last moment, until Christ calls him to the mystery of Communion with Him. Even at this moment the passion for idolized matter may lead him to betray Christ, as it happened with Judas. One, who has not acquired through struggle, the strength to resist the passious, will fail to persist in the struggle when going through difficult times. As the Disciples did, when sleep did not allow them to stand by the Master at the hour of His great agony.

When man surmounts the last obstacle and buries his old self in the same grave that Christ's dead body is laid to rest, then a new man will arise from the tomb, with a divine nature, who will be able to look to the Resurrected Christ, face to face, and be able to live the life of Christ and savour His Kingdom, that is the life of love.



Pic.1 The Resurrection at the Holy Church of Agios Demetrios Nicosia 1968

“Come ye and receive Light
from the unwaning Light,
and glorify Christ
Who has risen from the dead.”



Pic.2

Pascha, the Majestic Feast in the Heart of Spring

“and so shall bloom the spring of faith” in our hearts
“Orthros” (Matins) Thursday second week after Paschal, hymn Stichiro prosomoio



Pascha, the most luminous feast of Christianity and the greatest feast of Hellenism and the people of Cyprus, who call it, “Lambri”, “the Bright One” since it shines with the light of Resurrection that bathes life and all its facets: morals, customs and tradition. As the Services of Holy Week coincide with Spring, the divine Passions seem to relate to the passions and resurrection of Nature and man. It is, after all, the time to bid farewell to the long and absolute silence of Nature, to the agonising period of gestation in anticipation of welcoming the fruits, the flowers: of orange, pomegranate, rose, yarrow, lilly and the colours. Everything predisposes the great triumph of life, renewed life, the redemption of the living, the Resurrection of the dead as described in the triumphant Paschal hymn:

*Christ has risen from the dead,
trampling down death by death
and on those in the tombs
bestowing life.*

This is the message of the spiritual extravaganza of these days, from Lazarus’ Saturday until Pascha Sunday. A ritual that narrates the divine Passion and relates to the tribulations of the suffering man, that culminates with Resurrection, depicted in byzantine iconography as the “Descent to Hades” by Christ, where the Resurrected Christ gives His hand to Adam, to raise him up and set him free from the bondage of death.

The path to Pascha begins on **Lazarus Saturday**. On Palm Sunday in the morning Liturgy, all the faithful take to the church olive branches in remembrance of the olive branches carried by the crowd of Jerusalem during Christ’s welcome to the city.

In the evening of **Palm Sunday** the faithful come to the church to witness the Service of the Bridegroom that initiates the Holy Week. In a solemn atmosphere and after putting out all lights in the church, the icon of Christ comes out, depicting Him wearing a red tunic, a crown of thorns and holding a cane in His tied hands, a unique depiction of Utter Humiliation.

The next three days, Great and **Holy Monday**, **H. Tuesday** and **H. Wednesday** every morning and evening long Services are celebrated. On Holy Tuesday evening the Troparion written by the nun Agia Cassiane is chanted in all churches for the repented whore who washed with myrrh the feet of Christ. On Holy Wednesday the sacrament of Holy Unction is served.

“For Pascha to be joyful requires the knowledge of fast
as Golgotha precedes and Pascha comes last”.

Charalampos Demosthenous, *Poems*, page 59
Chrysopolitissa Editions, Nicosia, 1998



*God, my Master Builder
amongst the lilacs are You
God, my Master Builder
the Easter scent You bestrew.*

Pic.3

Axion Esti, Odysseas Elytis



Pic.4



On **Holy Thursday** morning, the Holy liturgy in memory of the Last Supper is celebrated. All the housewives clean their homes, prepare the stavrokouloura (cross-shaped buns) and dye their eggs red. In the evening of Holy Thursday the Service of the Passion is chanted, a lengthy Service enacting the Crucifixion of Christ and the twelve Gospels are read out.

On **Holy Friday** in the morning the Un-nailing takes place, that service during which Joseph from Arimathea and Nicodemus, the nocturnal disciple of Christ, removed His Body from the Cross and laid It in the grave. After this Service, girls in all churches decorate with flowers the Epitaph. This is one of the most beautiful customs in all Cyprus. In the evening, lamentations are chanted (short troparia) to the dead Christ and then the Epitaph is carried in litany through the streets of cities and villages while the church bells toll in a mournful tone.

On **Holy Saturday** morning, during the matinal Holy liturgy, the so called “first Resurrection” takes place and in Cyprus it is celebrated in a special way. The black veils covering the icons during the Holy Week drop, the priests throw laurel leaves and myrtle to the floor, the faithful bang their pews, the bells toll merrily and the general mood is triumphant. In the evening of Saturday, at midnight, the Holy liturgy of Resurrection (the “Good Word”) is held in the courtyard of churches.

On **Pascha Sunday** the Vespers of Love are celebrated. All families roast on coal lamb on a spit or bake lamb in the oven, crack the red eggs and feast in large family groups.

“Paschalogiorta” (Paschal feasts) Celebration of Easter and traditional cypriot customs

“Paschalogiorta” comprises many customs that are preserved in Cyprus to this day. The main ones are the red eggs, avkotes (bagels or buns decorated with eggs) and flaounes (special cheese pies).



Avkotes. Very characteristic of Easter baking are the various types of bagels or buns decorated with one or more red eggs. On Holy Thursday buns and avkotes (bread-cup) were baked and eggs were dyed usually in **red** but sometimes in yellow. The traditional way of dyeing eggs was with onion leaves, yellow daisies, yarrow, with special seaweeds, various roots such as wild rubia also known as rizari, which were thrashed and boiled in water.

Flaounes. Holy Saturday in all of Cyprus is dedicated to kneading and baking the Easter food par excellence, the flaounes (cheese pies). Flaounes are intricately linked with Easter in Cyprus as the relevant cypriot proverb goes «no flaounes before Easter, no dowry before the wedding». The preparation for kneading the flaounes started on Holy Friday. The grated cheese was mixed with eggs, after adding proportionally the leaven, mastic, mahlep, black raisins and fresh mint. This knead is called fokos or fokos and was kneaded following a ritual. The leaven was added in a cross-like fashion to the flour at five points, as many as the nails hammered in the body of Christ.



Pic.5

From a distance the sweetest chanting is heard and it is tender as weep, as mourning. “Give me that foreigner!...” they chant as they follow the Epitaph litany.

From the novel “Arate Pylas” (Lift the Gates) by Alexander Moraitides.

Drawing by Agenor Asteriades for the New Greek Language Reader, Gymnaseum Form II Athens 1950. Source Kathimerini newspaper Athens 27 April 2003.

The veils covering the icons during Holy Week

Pic.6



THE GREAT AND HOLY WEEK

The March towards Life-giving Resurrection

The Holy Week prepares our entry to the glorious feast of Christ's Resurrection. Proceeding step by step in the Great Lent, the Orthodox Christian expects in sweet anticipation the days of the Holy Week, to participate to the Passion and Resurrection of the Lord. The pious people, arriving in throngs at the churches, especially love the devoutness of the glorious hymnology of these days.



Pic.7 Jesus, risen from the tomb, gave us eternal life and great mercy, as he foretold.

Orthros, Pascha Sunday, Sound Mode 1.

What is the reason that we call Great this Week, during which we celebrate the remembrance of the Lord's Passion? The reason is that the benefits reaped during this time are great and indescribable. During this Week, the on-going war between us and God ended, death was vanquished, the curse was lifted, the tyrannical authority of the Devil was destroyed and his belongings pillaged, and God was reconciled with humans. This is why we call this Week Great as the Lord in this time has bestowed so many graces upon us.

The hymns of the Great and Holy Week, including the bright Sunday of Pascha, are superior to all others; they are the "hymns of hymns". Before we refer to the content of each day of the Holy Week, it is necessary to remind that the Evening Services of the Holy Week, to which throngs of people flock, are celebrated in the morning and not in the evening. It is the Orthros (Matins), that is the Morning Service of the following day, and for ecclesiastical convenience, it is served on the evening of the previous day for the convenience of the faithful.

LAZARUS SATURDAY

Standing above Lazarus' tomb, oh merciful One, You called him and brought him back to life granding him Immortal Life

Saint Lazarus Canon at the Matins Ode 5 sound Plagal of the 4

Jesus was preparing to depart for Jerusalem when an emissary arrived from Bethany. He was informed that Lazarus, the brother of Martha and Maria, was seriously ill and in danger of dying. Jesus said to His Disciples: "This disease will not bring death, it will bring God's glory". When they arrived outside Bethany, Lazarus' sister Martha hasten to meet Him and said: "Lord, if you were here my brother would not die". Jesus replied: "Your brother will be resurrected. I am the Resurrection and the Life". When they arrived at the cave that served as a tomb, Jesus ordered for the stone that sealed the entrance to be removed. Martha said to Him: "Lord, he has been buried for four days". Jesus replied: "Did I not tell you that, if you believe, you will witness God's glory?" When they removed the stone Jesus moved to the opening. After praying he called in a loud voice that revealed His Authority: "Lazarus, come forth!" Immediately Lazarus rose and came out of the tomb, dressed in his burial shroud and tied with the burial bandages. Jesus ordered for the bandages to be untied and gave Lazarus to his sisters. Those who witnessed this miracle of Christ believed in Him. The resurrection of Lazarus is celebrated by our Church on Saturday, the eve of Palm Sunday.





Pic.8

The “**Song of Lazarus**” is sung by children (and adults) on Lazarus Saturday or in the evening of the eve, Friday, after the Service of the Small Apodeipnon (Small Compline) and the Saint Lazarus’ Canon at church. At the same time an event takes place with children re-enacting the Raising of Lazarus, while the participants hold flowers that symbolize Lazarus, like yellow yarrows and daisies. The song brings the joyful message of the arrival of spring that brought with it the message of Lazarus’ resurrection and foretold of our common resurrection.



Pic.9 Yellow Yarrow (*simillouthkia*)

Representation of the Resurrection of Lazarus in Larnaka:
 “The Child of Lazarus” Ch. Hotzakoglou
 “The church of Saint Lazarus in Larnaca”
 Nicosia 2010.

At the re-enacting of the Raising of Lazarus at Larnaka the faithful, after paying honor to the icon of the saint on the shrine, descended into the crypt and placed their alight candles on the marble sarcophagus. Next they all clergy and people, headed to the large hall opposite the south entrance of the church, where the procurators had dressed “the most handsome and clever boy of the area, the Child of Lazarus, with a costume made of yellow lazari, “the flowers of Lazarus”, plait from the best women in town, especially for the feast”. Afterwards, accompanied by funeral hymns and music they lay Lazarus in the middle of the room, on a layer of multicolored flowers, leafs, aromatic flowers and flowers from pomegranate trees, orange trees, palm-trees, basil and light candles flickered. The metropolitan bishop read the evangelic passage and when he read “Lazarus come forth” he raised his voice. After three priests approached and touched the forehead of the young “Lazarus” with the cross, censing and sprinkling him with holy water, the young man stood up rapidly. The gathered crowd called “Lazarus has risen” and a music feast with violins, flutes, lutes and songs followed. The procurators offered fruits, sweets and Lazarus’ boiled wheat (used for memorials), as well as baked human-like breads. Later, the group of children accompanied by a priest, went from door to door and sang the song of Lazarus and the landladies offered those eggs and money.

*Spring appeared to us
 spreading the message to everyone
 of the Raising of Lazarus
 a strange and terrible sign.
 Sweet-smelling flowers and roses
 with devoutness of the soul
 I call upon you, listeners,
 be part of the joy....*

A special reference is made to Cyprus to where the Saint found refuge and was ordained Bishop by the Apostles in Kition.

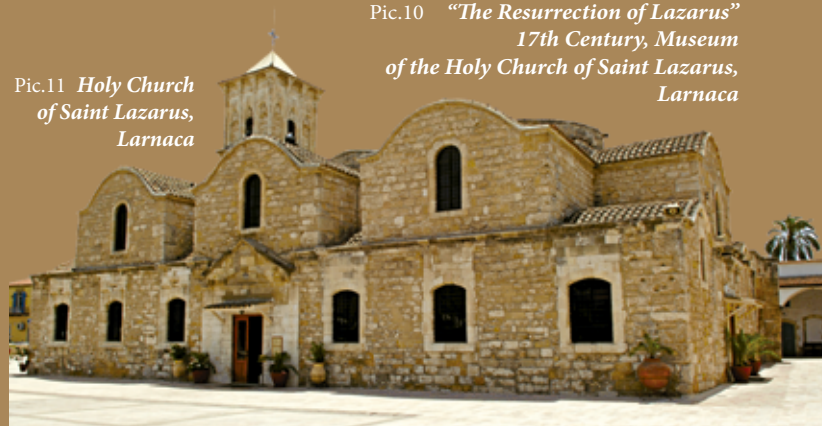
There one finds his second tomb in the beautiful byzantine church dedicated to him.



“Lazarus, come forth”

Pic.10 “The Resurrection of Lazarus”
 17th Century, Museum
 of the Holy Church of Saint Lazarus,
 Larnaca

Pic.11 Holy Church
 of Saint Lazarus,
 Larnaca



PALM SUNDAY

*“As you entered, Lord, the holy City
On the back of a donkey, you were hastening to approach
Your Passion...”*

Palm Sunday, Litany, Sound Mode 2

Jesus set out from Bethany for Jerusalem. When he drew near, he said to two of His Disciples: “Go to the town opposite us and you will find a donkey with her foal. Take the foal and if anyone asks, say the Master needs him”. The two Disciples went and brought the foal. They placed some clothes on its back on which Jesus sat and began to proceed to Jerusalem. In this way the prophecy of Zachariah was fulfilled, who foretold: “Tell to the daughter Sion: Behold, Your King comes to you on the back of a donkey”. Many citizens of Jerusalem and worshippers

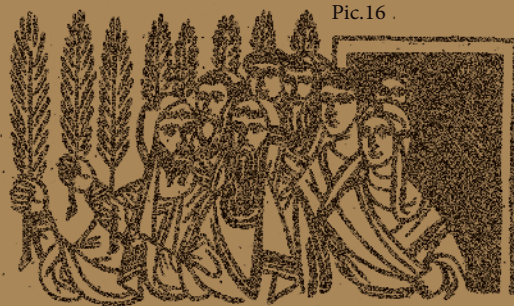
on hearing that Jesus is arriving, came out to greet Him. Others held palm leaves; others laid down on the street clothes and branches and cried: “Hosanna, blessed be the one who comes in the name of the Lord”. Thus, amidst the enthusiastic crowd, Jesus entered triumphantly into Jerusalem. This entry is celebrated by our Church on Palm Sunday, one Sunday before Pascha, when palm leaves (or branches of other plants) are distributed to the Christians.



Pic.14 *The faithful prepare the palms for the decoration of the Holy Church of Panagia Chrysaliniotissa in Old Nicosia.*



Pic.15 *The Gate of the Holy Monastery of Agios Georgios of Mavrovounio (Montenegro) in Troulloi, decorated with palms.*



Pic.16 .



Pic.12 *“Here comes the Groom in the middle of the night”.*



Pic.13
*The Palm bearer
41,5 x 34 cm
Church
of Agios
Sozomenos,
Galata*

On the way to His voluntary passion, the Lord told the Apostles on the road: Behold we ascend to Jerusalem and the Son of Man will be delivered as it was written about this....

EVENING OF PALM SUNDAY
Stichira Idiomela Sound Mode 1



Pic.17

HOLY MONDAY

“Behold the Groom comes in the middle of the night...”

Holy Monday Matins Sound Plagal of the 4th

During Holy Monday we **remember the virtuous Joseph** (son of the patriarch Jacob and great-great grandson of Abraham) who is foreshadowing Our Lord Jesus Christ. Joseph was considered as an early image of Christ as, He too was a beloved Son of the Father and was hated by His fellow countrymen, the Jews. He was sold by His Disciple, was tortured and cast dead in a dark tomb. He then rose in glory and feeds us the Bread of Life, that is through His Holy Body. On the same Holy Monday we remember the fruitless fig tree that the Lord cursed and the tree dried up. The fig tree always symbolizes a man deprived of spiritual fruits that is the virtues. The Church with the example of the fig tree wants to urge us to spiritual struggle to acquire virtues.

The Hymnography of the day is dedicated to the above two topics as well as to the coming of the Lord towards the Passion. **“Behold comes the Groom...”** is inspired by the Lord’s parable of the ten virgins. The following two days, the Services of Holy Monday and Holy Tuesday are called the “Services of the Groom”, because of this troparion.

HOLY TUESDAY

“Let us love the Groom, brothers and let’s decorate our proper candles...”

Holy Tuesday, Kathisma, Matins, sound Mode 4

During Holy Tuesday we **remember the Lord’s parable of the ten virgins**. The Church calls us to be prepared to welcome the Heavenly Groom, holding the lamps of our virtues, our Lord Jesus, Who will come suddenly, either at the time of our death or generally in His Second Coming. Through the parable of the talents, we are also called by the Church, to cultivate and develop the gifts bestowed upon us by God.

HOLY WEDNESDAY

“Give me the myrrh so that I can anoint the One, who abolished all my sins”

Holy Wednesday Matins, “Aenoi” (hymn)



On Holy Wednesday we **remember the whore who anointed the Lord with myrrh**. In addition the Church brings to our memory **the calling of the Convention of the Council of the Jews**, which is their Supreme Court, to take the decision of sentencing the Lord, as well as **the plans of Judas to betray his Master**. We chant “Behold comes the Groom”, “I see your wedding chamber...” and the troparion of the pious and learned Byzantine poetess Cassiane, that has as the heroine of the poem, the whore who anointed the Lord with myrrh. In the morning hours on all three days, Holy Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday the Holy Mass of the Presanctified Gifts is held.

Pic.19 *Holy Unction*



Pic.18

“I see your wedding chamber decorated, My Saviour, and I have no dress so that I may enter. Brighten the garment of my soul, light-giver and save me”.

EVENING OF PALM SUNDAY,
Exapostilarion Sound Mode 1



HOLY THURSDAY

“When the glorious Disciples were illuminated by a bath of light during the Last Supper, then the disrespectful Judas, diseased by avarice lost his mind...”

Holy Thursday Orthros (Matins), Sound Mode 4

On Holy Thursday we remember four events: a) The washing of the feet of the apostles by the Lord, b) The Last Supper, that is the passing of the Holy Sacrament of Eucharist on to us by the Lord, c) The remarkable prayer of the Lord to His Father and d) Judas’s betrayal of the Lord.

Holy Thursday is the day of the establishment of the Holy Sacrament of Eucharist and for this the Evening Vespers are interlaced with the Holy Liturgy (by St. Basil). This Mass is held in the morning.



Pic.20 *The washing of the feet, fresco, the Recluse, Holy Monastery of Agios Neophytos, Tala.*



Pic.23 *Reenactment of the Washing of the feet at the Holy Church of Agios Arsenios Kappadokis, Kyperounda.*



Pic.21 *The Last Supper, Holy Church of Agios Demetrios, Nicosia.*



Pic.22 *The Betrayal, fresco, Holy Church of Agia Paraskevi, Geroskipou.*



Pic.24 *The Agony or the prayer of Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane*



HOLY FRIDAY

“Today was hung on the Cross, He who hung the earth upon the waters...”

Matins Holy Friday, Antiphonon XV, Sound Plagal of the 2nd

On Holy Friday we celebrate **the Passions of the Lord**, that is we remember the spitting, the blows, the insults etc. and mainly the crucifixion and the dreadful death of the Lord. Our Church on this day reminds us also of the confession of the thief on the cross that the Lord is a heavenly King and of his request to be remembered in His Kingdom.

The troparion “When the glorious disciples...” is chanted and the twelve Gospels are read. In-between the first Gospels, up to the sixth, antiphona and kathismata are interjected, that make reference to Judas’s betrayal, Peter’s denial, the ingratitude of the Hebrews to the Lord, the confession of the thief etc. When the antiphonon “Today was hung on the Cross...” is sang, the Crucified Lord is carried in a procession by Priests in the middle of the Church.

In the morning the “**Megalae Orae**” (Great Hours) are chanted and they are so called as they refer to great events. In the Evening Vespers of Holy Friday, which is sang in the morning immediately after the Orae, the **Un-nailing of the Crucified** takes place and then an embroidered or painted cloth depicting the dead Lord is placed in the holy cubicle (a kind of cenotaph). This cloth is called the “**Epitaph**”.



Pic.25

“Today was hung on wood, He who hung the earth upon the waters. A wreath of thorns is put on the head of the King of angels. A fake red tunic wraps Him who wraps the sky with clouds. A blow is received by the one who liberated Adam in the Jordan River. The groom of the Church has been nailed with a hammer. A lance pierced the Son of the Virgin. We worship your passions, Christ. Show us your glorious resurrection too”.

Matins, Holy Friday,
Antiphonon XV Sound Plagal of the 2nd

Pic.26
*Fresco, the Mockery,
Holy Church of the Holy Cross
of Agiasmati, Platanistasa.*



Pic.27
*Fresco, Jesus
before the High Priests,
Holy Church of Agios Ioannis
Lampadistis, Kalopanagiotis.*



Pic.28
*Fresco,
Jesus being pulled,
Holy Church
of Agia Paraskevi,
Geroskipou.*





Pic.29 *The Vespers of Un-nailing, leading the ceremony Bishop Nikiphoros of Kykkos and Tylliria, at the Holy Church of Agios Prokopios Metochion Kykkou, Nicosia.*

Pic.30 *The Un-nailing, 119 x 84 cm Holy Church of Agia Marina, Kalopanagiotis.*



Pic.31 *The Crucifixion. Holy Church of Agios Demetrios Acropoleos, Nicosia.*



Pic.32 *Fresco, Holy Church of Agia Paraskevi, Geroskipou.*

The Mourning Of Panagia (Holy Virgin)

Upon the crucifixion of the maker of the universe the sun grew dark making all light disperse and the moon in the sky was tainted with blood. When our Lady heard of this she fell and fainted.

Five jars of rosewater brought here to her senses and when she came around she uttered these verses:

“Where is my dear Son, the light of my eyes?”

They said: “Look up and see him crucified, mercilessly nailed to the wood he lies”.

Demotic Song “Laographics of Cyprus” by Kyriakos Hadjioannou, Epiphaniou Publishers, Nicosia 1997. Page 18, verses 88-90, 96-101.





Pic.33 OUR HEART OF STONE, THE GRAVE OF CHRIST

“My sweet spring, my sweetest child, where has your beauty vanished?”



HOLY SATURDAY

“We glorify you, Jesus King, and honour Your Burial and Passions...”

Lamentation of the Epitaph, Stasis A, Sound Plagal of the 1st

On Holy Saturday we celebrate **the burial of the Lord** by Joseph and Nicodemus, as well as **His descent to the dark kingdoms of hades**. We celebrate the burial of the Body of the Lord and the descent of His Soul, united with Divinity, to the kingdoms of hades, to announce the salvation of the souls held there.

The Lamentations (short troparia) are chanted in three parts and are loved by the people. Afterwards the “evlogitaria” and “stichira of the aenoi” are chanted as well as the Doxology. The Dismissal follows and then the procession in litany of **the flower-bedecked sepulchre carrying the “Epitaph”** takes place.

On this day of Holy Saturday morning, **the Evening Vespers of Pascha** are celebrated, interweaved with the Holy liturgy of Agios Vasilios (St. Basil). This Service has both an Paschal and a festive character, as previously stated, the Vespers of the great and world-saving feast of Pascha constituting an introduction to the feast. The people call it the **“first Resurrection”**. The beautiful troparion “Let all mortal flesh keep silent...” is chanted.

Pic.34 *The Epitaph of the Holy Monastery of Agios Georgios Mavrovouniou, Troulloi.*

Pic.35 *The Bishop Gregorios of Mesaoria showers the Epitaph with rose petals.*

Pic.36 *Procession of the Epitaph and the placement on the Holy Altar of Agios Ioannis Theologian Cathedral, Nicosia.*

“The sun hid its own rays...”

Matins Holy Saturday, Sound Plagal of the 1st



Pic.37 *The Epitaph
of the Holy Monastery of Agios Georgios
Mavrovouniou, Troulloi.*

“Oh light of my eyes,
my sweetest Child,
how can the tomb cover you?”

Holy Friday Evening
Lamentations Part B, Sound Mode 3



Pic.38 *The Bishop Porfyrios of Neapolis
leads the Service of the Epitaph
at the Holy Church of Agios Demetrios,
Nicosia.*



Pic.39 *Venerating the Epitaph.*



The custom of decorating
the Epitaph
by pious women
who use flowers
from backyards, gardens,
fields of their village
such as wavyleaf
sea-lavender, lilies,
roses and a special flower called
the “tear of the Holy Virgin”.



Pic.40



Pic.41 *Altar boys at the Epitaph of the Holy Church of Agios Demetrios, Nicosia.*



Pic.42 *Procession of the Epitaph at Makarion Hospital in Nicosia, where nurses and patients venerate and pass under the icon depicting the dead body of the God-Man for blessing and healing.*



Eik.43 *Bishop Gregorios of Mesaoria with the "Myrophorae" (myrrh-bearers) sprinkle with rosewater and rose petals the Epitaph. Agios Ioannis Theologian Cathedral, Nicosia.*



“With myrrh they sprinkled the grave the myrrh-bearers as they came early in the morning”.

Holy Friday Evening
Lamentations Part C sound Mode 3



EASTER SUNDAY

“This is the chosen and holy day. It is the feast of feasts and fair of fairs...”

Resurrection Canon Sound A

The “feast of feasts and the fair of fairs” has already dawned the great and glorious day of Pascha. The word **Pascha** is Hebrew and **means Passover**. It is the remembrance of the miraculous crossing of the Red Sea and the salvation of the Jews from slavery to the Pharaohs. The same events are simultaneously a format of other higher meanings. Egypt corresponds to sin and the tyrant Pharaoh is the Devil. Our Lord, the Lamb of God, descended from heaven to earth and was crucified, buried and resurrected, saved us from the land of bitter slavery and took us to the “flower-producing fields”, to the flowery valleys of spiritual life, and crushed our enemy the Devil. This crossing, this passover we celebrate today. The passing from the guilt of sin to justification, from the deeds of darkness to virtue, from curse to blessing, from decay to immortality, from death to life, from earth to heaven, let us then “hymn to the Lord, in great glory He is glorified”!

The Service of Paschal Sunday, the Matins and the Holy Liturgy by Ioannis Chrysostomos is usually held at midnight of Saturday to Sunday. The “**Come and receive the Light...**” and “**Your Resurrection...**” are chanted. After reading the Gospel, “Christos Anesti” (Christ has Risen) is sang ten times followed by the Canon of Pascha, a poem by Agios Ioannis Damaskinos, a true masterpiece. Towards the end of the liturgy, the exquisite “Catechic Speech” by Agios Ioannis Chrysostomos is read.

**“Shine, shine forth
O new Jerusalem
as the glory of the Lord
has risen upon you...”**

Pascha Canon Sound Mode 1



Pic.44 The Exarch of the Holy Sepulchre in Cyprus, Bishop Timotheos of Vostron transmits the Holy Light to the Head of the Church of Cyprus, Archbishop Chrysostomos B. The Holy Light will travel to every church in Cyprus to “shed light on the souls” of the faithful during “Kalos Logos” (the Good Word).





**“Pascha the joyful, Pascha, the Lord’s Pascha.
The most reverend to us Pascha has dawned.
Oh Pascha, redeemer of sorrow”!**

PASCHA SUNDAY Aenoi sound Plagal of the 1st

RESURRECTION

Pic.45 For Cypriots “Kalos Logos” (the Good Word) is the troparion
“Your Resurrection, Christ Saviour...”



“The Descent to Hades”

**“Having slept in flesh
as a mortal,
as a King and Lord
in three days You rose,
You raised Adam
from decay
and abolished death.
Pascha of incorruptibility
Saviour of the world.”**

PASCHA SUNDAY
MATINS AND HOLY LITURGY,
Exapostiliarion avtomelon
Sound Plagal of the 2nd

Pic.46 Fresco, Holy Church
of the Virgin, Asinou, Nikitari.



Pic.47 Resurrection, detail from
a Cross carved on wood.





Εικ.48 **The Service of Resurrection (Kalos Logos) in the yard of the Agios Ioannis Theologian Cathedral, Nicosia.**



Pic.49 *The Service of Resurrection at the Holy Monastery of Macheras, Lazanias.*



Pic.50 *His Beatitude Archbishop of Cyprus Chrysostomos B celebrating Paschal Holy Liturgy after the Resurrection Service, the Agios Ioannis Theologian Cathedral, Nicosia.*

“The holy Pascha is revealed to us today, Pascha the new and divine. Mystical Pascha. All venerable Pascha. Pascha Christ the Redeemer. Blameless Pascha. Great Pascha. Pascha of the faithful. Pascha that opens the gates of Paradise for us. Pascha that sanctifies all the faithful”.

PASCHA SUNDAY
Aenoi Plagal of the 1st



THE VESPERS OF LOVE

*“The Day of Pascha!
Let all peoples be brightened.
Pascha, Pascha of the Lord...”*

Pascha Canon Sound Mode 1

Pic.52 Litany and reading of the Paschal Gospel on the Holy Altar by His Beatitude Archbishop Chrysostomos B of Cyprus at Agios Ioannis Theologian Cathedral.



Pic.51

Bookbinding of the Holy Gospel

*1775 and 19th Century 35.5 x 24.5 x 5.5 cm silver
Holy Monastery of Agios Ioannis Lampadistis, Kalopanagiotis.*

On the morning of Pascha Sunday (about 11 a.m.) the **Vespers of Love** are celebrated. It is so called because in older times, Christians exchanged love kisses. It is also called “**Second Resurrection**”, as the Vespers of Holy Saturday are called “**First Resurrection**”. During the Vespers of Love the Gospel is read in many languages as an old custom dictates. This underscores the ecumenical character of the event of the Lord’s Resurrection. “**The Day of Pascha! Let all peoples be brightened. Pascha, Pascha of the Lord...**” “From death to life and from earth to heaven, Christ our Lord has taken us, singing a victorious hymn.”

The Byzantine custom of cracking red eggs

The egg is the most important symbol of rebirth. It is the tomb from which springs new life. After the ritual dyeing in the colour of blood, the red eggs (symbols of perpetual life) will be cracked at Pascha. This is a symbolic move to facilitate the exit to the new life. It is a Paschal and prosperous symbolism act of Greek Pascha.



Pic.55 The Dismissal of the Vespers of Love at the Great Synodikon. His Beatitude blesses the faithful with the Paschal Greeting and cracks the traditional red egg.



Pic.53 Litany on Pascha Sunday at the Holy Monastery of Kykkos.

Pic.54 Cracking red eggs with the Paschal greeting: “Christ has Risen!” “The Lord has Truly Risen!”





Pic.56

The "Myrophorae" came very early to the tomb of the life-giver and found an angel sitting on the stone. He said unto them these words:

Why are you looking for the living one among the dead?
 Why do you mourn the imperishable as if he perished?
 Go forth and announce this to his disciples.

"Aenoi", Pascha Sunday Sound Plagal of the 1st

"Now all is filled with light"

The time from Pascha to Pentecost is the most luminous period in Church life. Christ is among us, resurrected. The Church is filled with the light of Pascha and with heavenly life. This period begins with the Bright Week during which the Paschal Mass is daily celebrated as the whole week is the eighth day and is completed on All Saints' Day.

The first Sunday after Easter is **St. Thomas Sunday**. It is the presence of Christ among us, gathered in Church "behind closed doors" and it shows us how to respond to His presence and how to meet Christ.

The Sunday of the "Myrophorae" (Myrrh bearers) describes the divine love that must enflame the heart of man to succeed in this meeting.

The Sunday of the Paralytic tells us that Christ has healed us with the Holy Water of Baptism by dying and rising with Him in a newness of life; with the psychosomatic therapy of the paralytic it shows the cleansing power of the divine energy on man.

The celebration of Mid-Pentecost is the offer of the water of true worship, of the new life in the Kingdom of God that floods us with the spirit of Christ Risen from the dead.

The Sunday of the Samaritan Woman announces the salvation of the whole mankind, by Christ's Resurrection revitalising the spiritually dead man.

The Sunday of the Blind Man is the gift of enlightenment to men, to see and to know the meaning of life through the victory of Christ and by the light of Resurrection.

The Ascension completes the work of redemption by restoring human nature in its normal state and the entry to the innermost of divine essence by the incarnated Jesus Christ who carries it to His seat at the right hand of His Father.

Finally, the great day of Pentecost is the coming of the Holy Spirit to us, the seal, the promise and the divine guarantee of the presence of God's Kingdom among us, taking shape with the existence of the Church.

Every Sunday of this period is a deep spiritual experience of the mystery of Christ's victory and power. Every Sunday has its own Paschal theme. All the readings from the Gospel on these Sundays speak of water: the Sheep's Pool of the paralytic, the well of the Samaritan woman, the anointing and washing of the eyes of the blind. In the form of water the energies and not the nature of the Holy Spirit are represented that like the water is living, quick, cleansing, refreshing, fertile, and through it the old man is put to death and the new man rises.

This period is a special opportunity given by the Church to meet the risen Christ, to love Him and comprehend His infinite power both on the material and the spiritual world. Orthodox spiritual tradition does not ask man to accept anything he cannot ascertain but rather asks him to come and see with his own eyes.

"Come and see"



Pic.57 The touching of Christ.



Pic.58 The Ascension.



Pic.59 The Pentecost.





Pic.60

“See ‘Lambri’ (Pascha), most brilliant...”



Pic.61
Cross Bun

Wheat (in the form of bread) and egg (symbol of perpetuity and rebirth of life) complete the Paschal and prosperous symbolism of Greek Pascha. Milky cookies and bagels with sesame (symbolizing the passions of Christ such as: cross-buns, crown of Christ, the flagellated hands of the Groom, Pascha cross with red egg) Christ bagels, tsoureki, avkotes in the shape of small baskets in which red eggs are placed) Pascha poules (cross bagel) milky bread (daktylies) and cakes as well as other baked delicacies with cheese such as flaounes, that make Greek Pascha very tasty! Among these are various “cheese round pies” that filled Pascha tables throughout the Greek Isles and Cyprus. They come in various shapes and patterns and look like a pie, Pascha pie similar to flaounes. Flaounes are the most characteristic Pascha food of Cyprus. Their filling (of grated cheese, the best of which come from Pafos, kneaded with eggs (and to make them more red, partridge eggs are used) lots of spices such as mahlep, mastic, fresh mint, cinnamon, black raisins) is called *foukos*. The pastry for the wrapping of the flaounes is made fluffy by using the best ingredients such as milk, eggs, butter, and oil. To make the flaounes, the pastry was flattened into small pies in a square, triangular or round shape that were filled with *foukos*. The name flaounes comes from an ancient greek word “flao” which means to crush or from the word «*palathe*» a pie with dried fruits. In Pafos, «*paskies*» (from Pascha = Easter) a type of flaounes containing meat, were consumed all during the week of Bright Week.



Pic.65 *Baking bread in a traditional wood oven*



*“...I have seen the Orthodox man's balcony and gate
At its front takes place the Pascha feast so great
At the church stairs a swarm buzzing I heard
they give me the tone, I thought in my head
and I set out to chant “Pascha Day” let's take delight
with the litany over let's swing ever so light.
All that you've drawn will come true
And donkey races will happen again too
Ziziros (slapping game) and triple jump,
dance, joy and laughter
So we believe Hambis
that year will arrive hereafter,
That Pascha will come, an
Pascha without barbed wire”.*

Hambis's bonfire
by Charalambos Demosthenous –Poems,
Chrysopolitissa Publications,1998.
(Hambis is a well-known Cypriot engraver).



Pic.69

Pic.62 *Poulla of Easter*
Pic.63 *The hands of the Groom*
Pic.64 *Flaounes*



Pic.66,67,68 *Traditional Paschal Games outdoors*

EASTER TRADITIONS, MORALS, CUSTOMS AND VENERATIONS

The Easter period coincides with the beginning of the spring period and a number of ancient customs of the persecution of winter, resurrection of nature from hibernation and welcoming spring were adjusted and connected to the Christian worship and the customary cycle of Pascha from the Raising of Lazarus until the Pascha Sunday. In this context of the resurrection of nature the churches are decorated with palms on Palm Sunday and the epitaph (is decorated) with various multicolored flowers, while theatre acts are performed, focused on Saint Lazarus and everything he symbolizes with his Raising from the dead and his return to life. The spring processions, the customary visit of a group of people to the houses of the community during particular feasts in order to sing, wish health and happiness and the reciprocation of the landlady with food, sweets, fruits and money was closely connected to Saint Lazarus. Groups of children, usually girls, the “Lazarines” visit houses and sing “the carols or the song of Lazarus”.

April or May: Litany of the icon of Agios Lazarus in the Church of Agios Lazarus in Larnaka.

Timetable of Holy Masses during Holy Week

During Holy Week:

- The Service of the Groom starts at 7.00 p.m
- The Holy Mass of Presanctified Gifts on Holy Monday, Holy Tuesday Holy Wednesday and Holy Thursday starts at 7.00 p.m.
- The Holy Passion on Holy Thursday start at 6.30 p.m.
- The Hours on the morning of Holy Friday start at 7.00 a.m.
- The Epitaph on the evening of Holy Friday starts at 7.00 p.m.
- Holy Liturgy on Holy Saturday starts at 7.30 a.m.
- The Paschal Service starts at 11.00 p.m. on Holy Saturday and the Kalos Logos (Good Word) is chanted at 12.00 midnight
- The Vespers of Love start at 11.00 a.m.

PASCHAL SUNDAYS

2015 – 12 April	2019 – 28 April
2016 – 01 May	2020 – 19 April
2017 – 16 April	2021 – 02 May
2018 – 08 April	2022 – 24 April

Reenactment of the Rise of Lazarus “The Child of Lazarus”.

“Byzantins Days” - (Byzantine ecclesiastical music and choirs) Larnaka Municipal Theatre and Church of Agios Lazarus. Organised by Larnaka Municipality and Church of Agios Lazarus, Larnaka tel. 24657745 or 24 629333.

Palm Sunday: decoration of the doors of churches with palm and olive branches.

Holy Thursday: Decoration of the Epitaph with spring flowers by groups of women in all churches 10.30 p.m.

Holy Friday: Litany of the decorated Epitaph in all parishes at about 9.30 p.m.

Holy Saturday: Traditional Pascha baking, baking of cross buns and flaounes in traditional wood ovens in traditional villages of Cyprus.

At midnight of Holy Saturday the Paschal Service is celebrated in the yard of churches.

PASCHAL SUNDAY: The Vespers of Love at 11.00 a.m.

On Sunday, Monday and Tuesday following Pascha traditional games are organised in all cities and many villages.



Illustrations:

Archives, Office of Pilgrimage Tours of the Church of Cyprus: Back cover, Pics 6, 10, 17, 18, 23, 29, 35, 36, 43, 44, 45, 48, 52, 54, 55.

Archives, Cyprus Tourism Organization: Pics 2, 3, 9, 11, 14, 19, 60, 65, 66, 67, 68, 70, 71, 73.

Archives, Cyprus Antiquities Department: Front cover: *Resurrection*, fresco Holy Church of Agios Ioannis Lampadistis, Kalopanagiotis, Pics 20, 22, 26, 27, 28, 32, 46.

Archives, Press and information Office: Pics 1, 40

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“Images of Cyprus” by Athanasios Papageorgiou: Pics. 13, 30

Archives, Post Service Cyprus: Pic 69

From the publication «Traditional Baking» by KEEK Pics. 61,62,63

From the publication “Holy History of the New Testament” by B.Petrounia, School Books Publication Organisation, Athens 1968: Pics. 16, 24, 33

Woodcarving Workshop TAMA: Pic 47

Carvings by Photios Kontoglou: Pic. 7, 25, 56, 57, 58, 59.

This publication is offered free-of-charge.



Pic.71

Synodic Office of Pilgrimage Tours of the Church of Cyprus

Holy Archishopric of Cyprus, Old Nicosia
Tel. +357 22554600 και 22554611
Fax +357 22346254 και 22431796
email: office@churchofcyprus.org.cy
www.churchofcyprus.org.cy

Cyprus Tourism Organisation

Limassol Avenue 19,
P.O. Box 24535, 1390 Nicosia Cyprus
Tel. +357 22691100, Fax. +357 22691270
email:cytour@visitcyprus.com / www.visitcyprus.com

Cyprus Travel Agents Association

House of Tourism
Association of Cyprus Travel Agents Ledra Street
2, Klokkaris Arcade 1011 Lefkosia
P.O Box 22369, 1521 Lefkosia
Tel. +357 22666435, Fax. +357 22660330
email:acta@acta.org.cy / www.acta.org.

Cyprus Hotel Association

12, A. Araouzos street, Hesperides Building
P.O. Box 24772, 1303 Nicosia
Tel. +357 22452820, Fax. +357 22375460
email: cha@cyprushotelassociation.org
www.cyprushotelassociation.org

Association of Cyprus Tourist Enterprises

Dositheou 1 (5th floor), 1071 Nicosia
P.O. Box. 20958, 1665 Nicosia
Tel. +357 22 374433, Fax. +357 22374466
email: info@acte.com.cy / www.acte.com.cy

Cyprus Tourist Guides Association

Spyrou Kyprianou Avenue 14
1st floor 1640 Nicosia Cyprus
Tel.+ 357 22 765755, Fax. +357 22 766872
email: cytouristguides@cytanet.com.cy
www.cytouristguides.com

Nicosia Tourism Board

38, Griva Digeni Ave. and 3 Deligiorgi,
CCCI Building, 2nd floor
P.O Box 21455, 1590 Nicosia, Cyprus
Tel. +357 22889710, Fax. +357 22667433
email: nicosia@ccci.org.cy / www.visitnicosia.com.cy

Limassol Tourism Board

170, Franklin Roosevelt, Limassol Chamber House,
2nd Floor, 3045 Limassol Cyprus
P.O.Box 55699, 3781 Limassol, Cyprus
Tel. +357 25877350, +357 25877226
Fax. +357 25661655
email: m.stylianou@limassolchamber.eu
www.limassoltourism.com

Larnaka Tourism Board

12 Gr. Afxentiou ave., Skouros Court, 4th Floor
P.O. Box. 40287, 6302 Larnaka, Cyprus
Tel. +35724657070
Fax. +357 24628281
email: info@larnakaregion.com
www.larnakaregion.com

Ammochostos Tourism Board

P.O. Box. 30818, 5346 Agia Napa, Cyprus
Tel. +357 23816305
Fax. +357 23725880
email. info@agianapaprotarashotels.org.cy

The Tourist Commercial and Industrial Famagusta Company

9 Antonis Papadopoulos str , 5282 Paralimni
Tel. +357 23812412, 23812414
Fax. +357 23814814
email: info@tebea.com.cy / www.tebea.com.cy

Troodos Tourism Board

4B, Olympus str. 4820 Platres
P O Box 59006, Lemesos Cyprus
Tel. +357 25421020, +357 99352547
Fax. +357 25813080
email: info@mytroodos.com / www.mytroodos.com

Pafos Regional Board of Tourism

7, Athinou and Alexandrou Papagou Ave.,
Tolmi Court 101
P.O. Box. 60082, 8100 Pafos
Tel. +357 26818173
Fax. +357 26 944602
email: info@visitpafos.org.cy
www.visitpafos.org.cy

The Cyprus Sustainable Tourism Initiative

206 Stavrou ave., Block A2, Office 206
2035 Strovolos, Nicosia
Tel. +357 22 311 623
email: info@csti-cyprus.org

Cyprus Cultural and Special Interest Tourism Association

P.O.Box. 21455, 1509 Nicosia, Cyprus
Tel. 357 22889890, Fax. 357 22667593
email: cultural@ccci.org.cy / www.specialcyprus.org

Cyprus Agrotourism Company

www.agrotourism.com.cy
helpdesk@agrotourism.com .cy
Tel:+357 22340071, Fax:+357 22334764

Texts:

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«See Lambri (Pascha), Brilliant...»

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Pic.72

Pic.73

Easter in Cyprus, «and Nature found its nice and sweet time...»





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