

Paschal Week

Since Apostolic times the solemn commemoration of Christian Pascha, similar to the Old Covenant, lasts for the whole week. According to the 66th canon of the Sixth Ecumenical Council, "from the holy day of the Resurrection of Christ our God until New Sunday (i.e. Thomas Sunday) for a whole week the faithful in the holy churches should continually be repeating psalms, hymns and spiritual songs, rejoicing and celebrating Christ, and attending to the reading of the Divine Scriptures and delighting in the Holy Mysteries. For in this way shall we be exalted with Christ; raised up together with Him. For this reason on the aforesaid days that by no means there be any horse races or any other public spectacle". Remembering the great deeds of charity rendered to the human race by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, most ancient Christians on the great feast of Pascha extended their hands in help and charity to the lesser brethren of Christ, in some way to debtors, orphans, the needy and the poor. As evidence of ancient Christian philanthropy during the days of Holy Pascha blessed food of the usual food products and money allowances were distributed to the poor so that they may participate in the joy of this bright feast, which is always the fruit of mercy and benefactions¹.

In respect to the divine services all Paschal week is as if it were one festal day: on all days of this week Divine Services are the same as on the first day with few changes and adjustments. The ancient holy tradition, kept even now by devout laymen, is that during all Bright Week not a single church Divine Service is dropped².

During all Paschal week the beginning and ending of church services is the same as on the first day³.

In Matins the Canon has two Irmosi, ten Troparia and at the end of each ode after the "glory, both now and ever" there are two Theotokia; (for them refer to the Office of Matins during the week of the Myrrh-bearers) "for the assembly", the Irmos is sung once and "Christ is Risen!" three times (Refer to page 570). During the singing of the Canon there is no Litany or censing after each Ode. The Litanies come only after the third, sixth and ninth Odes. The sermon of St. Chrysostom and the paschal kissing is not done. Beginning with Monday, daily, during all of Bright Week, after Matins [in parish churches, usually after the Liturgy) there is a **cross procession** around the temple with banners, the icon of the Resurrection of Christ, the icon of the Theotokos and as said above, with the Artos. "One must understand, it says in the Ustav [Typikon], that today as we make the departure outside the monastery, the banners are carried first. Hand holding the Holy Gospel, the precious cross, and the icons of the Resurrection of Christ, and the Immaculate Theotokos, we sing the Canon of Pascha with the Theotokia, by 8; Both the Katabasia and the Irmos. After the sixth Ode, after the Gospel we sing "Having beheld the Resurrection of Christ", three times. Also the stikhera: Jesus having risen from the tomb, three times; also the seventh, eighth and ninth Odes and the rest of the Molieben", appointed for Holy Pascha.

In the Liturgy the Deacon reads the Gospel as usual.

In Vespers there is no Gospel reading. The other offices of the church services remain the same as on the first day. (About the opening the Royal Doors and the ringing of the bells see above on page 568).

As to the confusion of some priests, what "canon" and what "Entrance Prayers" to read during Pascha Week one must observe that according to the Office of Paschal Divine Weekday Services, the special saints and sacred remembrances that are devoted to each day of the week are not prescribed. Therefore even for the priest there is no prompting to read the Canons of the Bodiless Powers, John the Forerunner and other canons appointed by the Church for the daily worship service.

For the priest preparing to serve during the days of Holy Pascha, it is sufficient to read through the Paschal Canon in the evening, instead of the Canon to the Sweetest Jesus, the Canon in Preparation for Holy Communion and the Vesper Prayers, and the Canon and Prayers before Holy Communion in the morning. It would be quite improper to read the usual "Entrance Prayers" before the Liturgy during the days of Holy Pascha. Among the usual entrance prayers the first are repentance troparia: "Have mercy on us, O Lord" and so forth. Naturally, these repentance troparia are replaced with the Paschal Troparia used in the Paschal Hours, i.e. after the beginning exclamation and the threefold "Christ is Risen from the dead" read "Before the dawn, Mary and the women came", "Thou didst descend into the tomb, O Immortal" and so forth, and then from the usual "entrance prayers" urgently read: "Thine immaculate image", "A fountain of tenderness art Thou" and "O Lord, stretch forth Thy hand" (Rukovodstvo dlia Selskikh Pastyrei [Manual for Village Pastors] 1885, 3; 1888, 8; Tserkovnyi Vestnik [Church Messenger] 1896, 30).

Concerning the confusion about **censing** at the beginning of services during paschal week one should notice the following: in Chapter 50 of the Ustav [Typikon] it is apparent that Matins and Vespers on Monday and the other days of Bright Week should begin the same way as on the first day of Holy Pascha. And in the note for the Office of Vespers on the first day of Pascha it says the following about censing: "that after the priest begins (i.e. after the beginning exclamation and threefold singing "Christ is Risen!" and after the priest sings the paschal verses "Let God arise" and so forth), he censes the Holy Altar Table and the whole Sanctuary as usual. At Vespers, on "Lord, I Call", and in Matins, at the beginning of the Canon, he goes out and censes the temple, the Choirs and the brethren according to the usual order". From here it is apparent that in Matins and also at Vespers during all the days of Bright Week the priest, after the beginning exclamation and threefold singing of "Christ is Risen", should cense the Holy Altar Table and the whole sanctuary. Ordinarily we do it in this way: after the initial exclamation and threefold singing of "Christ is Risen" in Matins and in Vespers during all of the paschal week the priest censes the holy altar table, the whole sanctuary and the iconostas, as the external part of the Sanctuary.

Also the Liturgy during all paschal week has the same beginning as Matins and Vespers and that the Liturgy of all paschal week agrees with the above-stated

note of the Ustav [Typikon], the priest "after he begins" (after the initial exclamation and threefold singing: "Christ is Risen!"), chants the verses: "Let God arise", and censes the holy altar table, the sanctuary and the iconostas (Rukovodstvo dlia Selskikh Pastyrei [Manual for Village Pastors] 1889, 9).

During the days of Holy Pascha one may receive Proskhophora and **take out particles for the departed** in the Proskomedie, but the Nomocanon in the Great Book of Needs (canon 169) has the words: "in Bright Week there are no commemorations". By this it is understood that the Great Panakhida (Parastasis), the All-night Vigil and Liturgy for the Departed are not served, but in the Proskomedie one may mention the departed daily (Tserkovnyi Vestnik [Church Messenger] 1895, 47). Concerning the serving of Panakhidas during Bright Week the Ustav [Typikon] says, that during this week one may not serve them "in the Narthex of the temple" but does not prohibit their service (outside of the temple) at all (Tserkovnyi Vestnik [Church Messenger] 1891, 27).

Monday. Epistle: Acts 1:12-17, 21-26; sel. 2. **Gospel:** Jn. 1:18-28; sel. 2.

Tuesday. Epistle: Acts 2:14-21; sel. 4. **Gospel:** Lk. 24:12-35; sel. 113.

Wednesday. Epistle: Acts 2:22-36; sel. 5. **Gospel:** Jn. 1: 35-51; sel. 4-5.

Thursday. Epistle: Acts 2:38-43; sel. 6. **Gospel:** Jn. 3:3-15; sel. 8-9.

Friday. On this day in Matins the stikhera of the full canon in honor the Mother of God composed by Nicephorus Callistus (14 century) in memory of the rededication of the Temple of the Theotokos, named the Life-bearing Spring, are joined to the festal stikhera and troparia of the canon.

According to the Synaxarion, the Life-bearing Spring (in the vicinity of Constantinople) was revealed to the Greek Emperor Leo the First when he was yet a simple warrior (in 450). Once as he was walking about the grove surrounding this spring, Leo met a blind man, exhausted from thirst and weariness, wandering about. Wishing to help the blind man, Leo went to find water and after a long vain search he heard a voice which pointed out the spring to him. With the water of this spring, Leo quenched the thirst and opened the sight to the blind man. Leo, after rising to the Greek throne, constructed a temple on this place in the name of All Holy Theotokos, calling his temple the Life-bearing or Life-receiving Spring. Many of the infirm received wonderful healing from this Life-giving Spring, which the Synaxarion commemorates on the present day⁴.

In the hymns for this day the Life-bearing Spring is glorified as an ever flowing source of grace diversely manifested to the believer after powerful petition to All Holy Theotokos. Remembering in its hymns the wonderful signs of the grace of God revealed during the passage of time at the Life-bearing Spring, the Holy Church at the same time calls for its children to worthily magnify and glorify the Virgin Theotokos.

Kontakion, tone 8

**From the ever-flowing spring, O Divinely-graced Spring,
Reward me with the flowing water of Your grace,
That ever flows more than words:
For you incomprehensibly bore the Word,**

**I entreat You to refresh me by your grace,
That I may cry to You: rejoice, O Saving Water.**

Friday. Epistle: Acts 3:1-8; sel.7. and Phil. 2:5-11; sel. 240. **Gospel:** Jn. 2:12-22; sel. 7. and Lk. 10:38-42, 11:27-28; sel. 54.

Saturday. Epistle: Acts 3:11-16; sel. 8. **Gospel:** Jn. 3:22-23; sel. 11.

On Bright Saturday the fracturing and distribution of the Artos is done after the Liturgy. In monasteries this fracturing and distribution of the Artos is done in the Refectory.

According to the Supplemental Book of Needs, the fracturing of the Artos is done in this way: "After the Divine Liturgy, the Artos is carried, as is customary, to the Refectory and "Christ is risen" is sung three times, with reverences, and after "Our Father" has been said, and having blessed the food as usual, the Deacon says: "Let us pray to the Lord", and the Brethren respond "Lord, have mercy", - the Priest says the following prayer over the Artos: "O Lord Jesus Christ our God, the angelic Bread, the Bread of life eternal, Who came down from heaven and nourished us on these brightest days with the spiritual food of Thy divine benefactions for the sake of Thy three-day saving Resurrection, also now look down, we humbly pray Thee, upon our prayers and thanksgivings, and as Thou didst bless the five loaves in the wilderness, do now bless this bread, that all who eat of it may be granted corporal and spiritual blessings and health, through the grace and compassion of Thy love for mankind. For Thou art our sanctification, and unto Thee do we send up glory, together with Thine Unoriginate Father, and Thine All-holy, Good and Life-creating Spirit, now and ever, and unto ages of ages. The Brethren: Amen. Having fractured the Artos as is customary, he distributes it to everyone before the meal". The priest may also fracture the Artos "in the Liturgy after the Prayer before the Ambo, and to distribute it to the faithful in place of the Antidoron". The faithful should partake of the Artos with awesomeness as it is holy, but it does not follow that eating it has the same significance as partaking of the Holy Mysteries: The Christian should know and remember that nothing holy can replace the immaculate body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore there is no need as some do to keep the Artos for a whole year, and, in the case of danger of death, to give the dying one a piece of the Artos (usually together with the water of Theophany), with firm confidence that in the next world it will be reckoned for the dead the same as partaking of the Holy Mysteries. It is forbidden by church authority to attribute this meaning, which it doesn't have, to the Artos (see Ukase of the Holy Synod 15 Jun 1723).

¹ Russian people, always so kind and sympathetic to the misfortunes of their neighbor, especially on the day of Holy Pascha willingly render generous gifts of various sorts for the poor, orphaned and unfortunate, wishing to meet the bright feast of Christ not in sorrow and tears, but in joy and happiness. In some places of our country there is a custom to free even little birds on Pascha (Novgorodskiiia Eparkhialniia Vedomosti [Novgorod Diocesan News] 1897, 8).

Lately in some cities the praiseworthy custom to collect good will offerings before Pascha has taken root to help the poor break the fast on Pascha, for which they gathered considerable sums. Because of this Pascha is truly a

Bright Feast for poor people, and they, expressing deep gratitude to their benefactors, carry out the day of the "Feast of feasts" in comparative sufficiency. One wishes that this custom was spread everywhere where there are poor people.

² The feast of Pascha represents the most cheerful and solemn festival in all Rus. Not in vain did our ancestors surround this feast with special beliefs and customs living up to then in the popular way of life. Spring and awakening of nature, incorporated with the great religious paschal celebration, gives the feast special attraction and charm: nature at this time, according to popular belief, empathizes with the resurrection of the Savior and expresses this joy in its appearance. So, our ancestors were quite sure that on the Bright Resurrection the flash of the morning dawn in the eastern sky is redder, rosier than on other days, that the sun in its rising is flashing, playing.

According to popular belief, the brightest paradise is opened on the first day of Pascha, and its gate remains opened during all of Bright Week. Therefore any one who dies during Bright Week becomes a saint, his soul entering directly into paradise. This idea was easily born in the popular mind partly under the influence of the sacred hymns proclaiming forgiveness in general, partly under the influence of the tradition to keep the Royal Doors open in the temples during all Paschal Week, itself signifying "an opening of the heavens". The Book of Needs explains why very little of the usual Burial Service for the Laymen is kept for their burial during the days of Pascha, saying that "the dead person has died in repentance (during these days); but even if he has not yet made satisfaction for his sins, these are remitted to him through the prayers of the Church and he will be freed from its bond".

Closely connected with the idea of the opened paradise is the superstitious idea, against which Maxim the Greek in the 16th century spoke, that if the sun does not set during all Paschal week, and the whole week is as though one long day, also is often the pagan conviction that during this fertile time the gods of light descend from heaven to earth and bestow fertility on it.

According to popular stories, the Savior and the Apostles wander over the earth in beggarly sackcloth from the first day of Pascha and until the Ascension of the Lord, testing human mercy, and rewarding good and punishing evil. The belief that Christ the Savior wanders about the earth departs from the Gospel narratives frequently mentioning the appearances of the Incarnate God after His resurrection from the dead. These popular views on the feast of the Resurrection of Christ were expressed as if they were of antiquity, and are now also the most advanced.

In the ancient Christian Church the feast of the Resurrection of Christ was preferentially devoted to deeds of philanthropy. During Pascha in Rus our sovereigns visited hospitals, alms-houses, imprisoned strangers, and convicts and with the paschal salutation brought them clothes, money and food. In general, our tsars and tsarinas spent all Bright Week as pilgrims, traveling to near and far monasteries, with generous charity to the needy and the lame. And now during the whole week food is taken from the table and is hospitably offered to each traveler and beggar.

But of all the paschal customs the most widespread and oldest included in Russian popular life is the use of colored eggs on Pascha. Besides the use of eggs during the Paschal kissing, simple people used them as symbols of all that is vital and flowers in the nature.

The paschal egg, especially the first received after the Paschal kissing in the opinion of the people, has some superstitious meaning. It carefully protects, as a talisman, they find treasures with its help, are released from misfortunes, fire, robbery, illnesses. With it they go to the cemeteries to give the Paschal kiss to the departed, in full confidence that the departed will hear their greetings when this egg is there with them. They go into the fields to sow grain with Paschal eggs in the firm hope for a good crop. In some places during harvesting of hemp they snack with paschal eggs and scatter the eggshells in the fields, saying: "O God, they whipped crops of hemp like eggs". On Ascension Day they go to the fields and toss up the red eggs so that the rye will rise as high as the tossed egg. In choral dancing games and songs for the days of St. Nicholas and Pentecost, Paschal eggs play a role as a symbol of fertility and the rebirth of nature. With the end of spring the symbolical use of eggs by the people diminishes.

Also from of old the Russian people have an egg, especially on the feast of Pascha, to serve as some kind of toy: it is used for rolling, hitting and other entertainment. However, such reference to the paschal egg even from antiquity was not considered decent and proper and is why in the monastic decrees of the 17th century, signed by rectors and bishops, it is forbidden for peasants along with a number of other superstitions to beat themselves with eggs as an activity opposed to the faith and degrading the importance of the feast.

And at the present time it is required for the shepherds of the Church to care about uprooting customs connected with the paschal eggs through edification and exhortation, inasmuch as their use is connected to *the superstitions* opposed to the spirit of Christian teaching, but certainly is exactly the same as all other sorts of superstitious views and customs, and with every other, attached to the feast of Holy Pascha (Rukovodstvo dlia Selskikh Pastyrei [Manual for Village Pastors] 1894, 15).

³ The full vesting of the priest for Matins and Vespers is specified in the Offices of Pascha for first day only. But all the days of the Paschal week are considered the same (Tserkovnyi Vestnik [Church Messenger] 1895, 21, 1892, 28).

⁴ The Temple of the Life-bearing Spring, renovated during the flow of centuries by the Greek Emperors and Empresses, was destroyed to its foundations after the capture of Constantinople by the Turks, and this blooming area was converted into a Moslem cemetery. Only in 1834 was a new large stone temple built on the ruins of the former holy place. In this temple even now as before, the healing water of the wonderworking spring flows and attracts both Christians and non-Christians from everywhere. (S.Peterburgskii Dukhovnyi Vestnik [St. Petersburg Theological Messenger 1896, 12-13).

*S. V. Bulgakov, **Handbook for Church Servers**, 2nd ed. 1274 pp. (Kharkov, 1900) pp 0581-0585
Translated by Archpriest Eugene D. Tarris © May 25, 2006. All rights reserved.*