

Great Thursday today



Today is Great Thursday. The Church on this day recalls the Mystical Supper in the Upper Room, where Jesus Christ gave a radically new meaning to the food and drink of the sacred meal.

The Eucharist is at the center of Church life. It is the Church's most profound prayer and principal activity. In the Eucharist the Church recounts and sacramentally enacts the redemptive event of the Cross and participates in its saving grace.

The events initiated by Jesus at the Mystical Supper, or Last Supper, are profoundly significant.

The Synoptic Gospels have preserved for us another significant episode in the series of events leading to the Passion, namely, the agony and prayer of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane.

The moving events in the Garden of Gethsemane dramatically and expressively

disclosed the human nature of Christ.

The abominable betrayal is also recounted today.

Christ was betrayed by Judas with a kiss, the sign of friendship and love. The betrayal and crucifixion of Christ carried the ancestral sin to its extreme limits.

The main service of the day is the Vespereal Divine Liturgy of St. Basil, which is conducted on Holy Thursday morning. This Liturgy commemorates the institution of the Holy Eucharist.

By custom two Lambs are consecrated at the Divine Liturgy on Great Thursday.

The Service of the Nipter, or the Washing of the Feet, was, for the most part, limited to Cathedral Churches and certain monasteries. In time, the service fell into disuse, except in certain areas. It is now being recovered by many dioceses throughout the Orthodox world.

The service is elaborate, dramatic and moving. It is conducted with special solemnity at the Patriarchate of Jerusalem and at the Monastery of St. John the Theologian on the Dodecanese island of Patmos.