

Passion of Jesus on Great and Holy Thursday in Orthodoxy



Great and Holy Thursday is observed today at Orthodox churches around the world, with the Passion of Jesus reaching a climax, as the day seals the Lord's path to the Cross.

Several unique services mark the Orthodox observation of Holy Thursday.

The main service is the Vespereal Divine Liturgy of St. Basil, which is conducted in the morning.

This Liturgy commemorates the institution of the Holy Eucharist.

By custom two lambs are consecrated at the Divine Liturgy on Great Thursday. The second lamb is used as the Reserved Sacrament, an occasion used to give communion to the sick and infirm.

The Service of the Nipter, or in other words, the Washing of the Feet, is annually held on Great Thursday, in imitation of the event at the Last Supper, better known in Greek Orthodoxy as the Mystical Supper.

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

The service is contained in a separate liturgical book.

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.

Hymns of Holy Thursday are the Troparion, which recounts Judas' betrayal, and the and the lyrical and moving Communion Hymn, where Christ recites:

"...Receive me today, Son of God, as a partaker of Your mystical Supper. I will not reveal Your mystery to Your adversaries. Nor will I give You a kiss as did Judas. But as the thief I confess to You: Lord, remember me in Your Kingdom.

The Orthodoxia news agency will be in the Holy City of Jerusalem, with videos and images of the services from the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, as well as the live broadcast of the lighting of the Holy Fire at midnight on Holy Saturday.

The Divine Liturgy of St. Basil was held today at the Cathedral of St. James in Jerusalem in commemoration of the Mystical Supper, held at the "Anagaion", Greek for upper room, where the Mystical Supper on Mt. Zion was held. The Service of the Nipter follows in the courtyard of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, officiated by the Patriarch of Jerusalem.

A grandstand is erected in the middle of the courtyard, where His Beatitude, Theophilos III, the Greek Orthodox Patriarch of Jerusalem, removes his elaborate vestments, and then washes the feet of 12 Holy Brotherhood Archimandrites, symbolizing the 12 Apostles. A video is posted today on the Orthodoxia news agency's web pages.

The Orthodoxia news agency's cameras will be in Jerusalem to bring you the scenes from the procession up the Via Dolorosa, known in Biblical Greek as Golgotha, or Calvary.