

## *GREAT FRIDAY*



All the worship services of Great Friday are devoted to the reverent and touching memory of the saving passion and death on the cross of the God-man. Each hour of this day is the new suffering and the new effort of the expiatory suffering of the Savior. And the echo of this suffering is already heard in every word of our worship service - unique and incomparable both in the power of tenderness and feeling and in the depth of the boundless compassion for the suffering of the Savior. The Holy Church opens before the eyes of believers a full picture of the redeeming suffering of the Lord beginning with the bloody sweat in the Garden of Gethsemane up to the crucifixion on Golgotha. Taking us back through the past centuries in thought, the Holy Church brings us to the foot of the cross of Christ erected on Golgotha, and makes us present among the quivering spectators of all the torture of the Savior. The hymns of the Holy Church cry out: "we see a strange and terrible mystery accomplished today: He whom none may touch is seized; He who looses Adam from the curse is bound; He who tries the hearts of men is unjustly brought to trial; He who closed the abyss is shut in prison; He before whom the hosts of heaven stand with trembling stands before Pilate; the Creator is struck by the hand of His creature; He who comes to judge the living and the dead is condemned to the cross; the Conqueror of Hades is enclosed in a tomb"; "every most pure member" of His "holy flesh endured dishonor for us: the head - the thorns, the face - the spitting, the jaws - the buffeting, the mouth - the taste of vinegar mingled with gall, the ears - the impious blasphemies, the back - the scourge, and the hands - the reed, the whole body - extension upon the cross, the joints - the nails and the side - the spear"; "the creator of all is mocked by His own servants; how great is the Master's love for mankind! He prayed to His Father for those who crucified Him, saying: Father, forgive them this sin: for they know not what they do is unrighteous"; "We worship Thy passion, O Christ, show us also Thy glorious resurrection".

*Troparion*, see Great Thursday.

### *Kontakion, tone 8*

**Come; let us all sing the praises of Him who was crucified for us:  
For Mary said when she beheld Him upon the tree:  
Though Thou dost endure the crucifixion, Thou art my Son and my God.**

### *Exapostilarion*

**The wise thief Thou didst make worthy of paradise  
In a single moment O Lord,  
By the wood of the cross illumine me as well, and save me.**

*Troparion, tone 4 (after "Our Father")*

**By Thy precious blood,  
Thou hast redeemed us from the curse of the law,  
By being nailed to the cross and pierced by a spear,  
Thou hast poured out immortality for man,  
O our Savior, glory to Thee.**

*Great Friday Matins*

In the second hour in the evening (8:00 p.m. according to our time) "**the Order of Holy and Saving Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ**"<sup>1</sup> begins. Similarly for the disciples, who accompanied their Teacher and Lord from the Last Supper to the Garden of Gethsemane with singing, believing during the night of Friday almost all Matins with the singing of the Antiphons and Canon will be done and they will be instructed through the hearing of the full Gospel narrative of the passions of Christ, taken from the four Evangelists and divided into 12 readings, as if in conformity to the 12 hours of the night<sup>2</sup>. Up to the Troparion: "When the glorious disciples", Matins is done the same way as on Thursday of the fifth week of the fast. There are no Kathismas, but directly after singing the Troparion and the Little Litany the reading of the Gospels begins. The reading of Gospels is arranged with some significant features. Before the reading of each Gospel the bell is struck as a sign of victory over Hades and the Lord who suffered death for us: before the first Gospel it is struck once, before the second it is struck twice, before the third it is struck thrice, etc. After each Gospel in accordance with its content is sung: "Glory to thy longsuffering, O Lord" (Notnago Peniia Obikhod [Common Hymns in staff notation]). All listen to the reading of the Gospels with lighted candles as a sign of the burning love for the suffering Lord, and like the Gospel virgins, who went to the meeting with their Bridegroom with firm faith that He will not leave them orphans, but "will depart from the grave to holiness". The Passion Gospels according to the practice established now almost everywhere in Russia is not read in the sanctuary but in the middle of the temple before the Analogion, turned facing the altar, during which the royal doors are not closed. In some places they do the elevation for the Analogion and the church servers (Tserkovnyi Vestnik [Church Messenger] 1890, 14, 27; refer to the Rukovodstvo dlia Selskikh Pastyrei [Manual for Village Pastors] 1894, 15). The composite parts of the Matins Service settle down in the following order: After the Six Psalms and the Great Litany the "Alleluia" and the Troparion "When the glorious disciples" are sung three times. During this singing the rector distributes candles to those who are present, "which they light before each Gospel"; then, if the gospels are read in the middle of the church, the priest takes out the Book of Gospels from the altar through the royal doors and places it on the Analogion, behind which two candle stands with burning candles are placed. Then the censuring is done; if the gospels are read on the altar then the censuring of the holy table is done cross wisely, the entire sanctuary, the clergy and the people; if the reading of the gospels is done in the middle of the church, this censuring begins from the center of the temple - from before the

Analogion. The first Gospel is read following the Troparion ("When the glorious disciples"), the Little Litany and its exclamation.<sup>3</sup> Three Antiphons, a Little Litany and a Sessional Hymn are subsequently placed before each of the following Gospels up to the sixth inclusive. Events from the plot of the high priests up to the circumstances of the death of the Savior are recalled in these Antiphons and Sessional Hymns, and the betrayal of Judas and the terrible transgressions of the elders and all the Judean people, who "nailed the Lord of Glory on the cross". Before each of the Gospels, ending with the seventh, there is a censuring of the Gospel<sup>4</sup> during the singing of the Sessional Hymn. After the sixth Gospel the "Beatitudes" with 8 stikhera describing the suffering of Christ are sung, the Prokeimenon: "They divide my garments", and the seventh Gospel is read. After that Psalm 50, "Have mercy on me, O God", is read. "From this point the deacon departs to cense, and the Litany of the Sessional Hymn is not said, only "That we may be accounted worthy, as we say before all the Gospels". After Psalm 50 the eighth Gospel is read. Then we sing the three Ode Canon of Cosmas of Maium and the touching Exapostilarion "The wise thief". After which the ninth Gospel is read. The tenth Gospel is read after reading the Praises and "the stikhera on the Praises". The eleventh Gospel is read after the Great Doxology (the Great Doxology is read not sung) and the Litany of Supplication. And finally the twelfth Gospel is read after the Aposticha. Before the twelfth Gospel "The Deacon censures the whole temple as in the beginning". The termination of the reading the Gospels is accompanied with the brief ringing of all the bells. After the reading of the gospels (if they were read in the middle of the temple) the Gospel Book is brought into the sanctuary. Matins terminates with the Augmented Litany and the special Dismissal.

**The Passion Gospels:** 1) Jn. 13:31-18:1 (Farewell conversation of the Savior with His disciples and His high-priestly prayer for them).<sup>5</sup> 2) Jn. 18:1-28 (the Seizure of the Savior in the Garden of Gethsemane and His suffering at the hands of the high priest Annas). 3) Mt. 26:57-75. (Suffering of the Savior at the hands of the high priest Caiaphas and Peter's denial of Christ). 4) Jn. 18:28-19:16 (Suffering of the Lord in the court of Pilate). 5) Mt. 27:3-32 (The despair of Judas by the new suffering of the Lord by Pilate and the judgment for His crucifixion). 6) Mk. 15:16-32 (Leading the Lord to Golgotha and his suffering on the cross). 7) Mt. 27:33-54 (The continuation of the narrative about the Lord's suffering on the cross, the wonderful signs accompanying His death). 8) Lk. 23:32-49 (The Prayer of the Savior on the cross for His enemies and the repentance of the wise thief). 9) Jn. 19:25-37 (Words of the Savior from the cross to the Theotokos and Apostle John and the repetition of the narrative of His death and perforation). 10) Mk. 15:43-47 (Removal of the body of the Lord from the cross). 11) Jn. 19:38-42 (Participation of Nicodemus and Joseph in the burial of the Savior). 12) Mt. 27:62-66 (Posting of the guards at the tomb of the Savior and the sealing of the tomb).

*Great Friday: Royal Hours*

As the fulfillment of the liturgy is an image of Golgotha's sacrifice or the commemoration of the death of our Lord Jesus Christ on the cross, so on the same day of the sacred commemoration of this worldwide event a full liturgy is not served,<sup>6</sup> neither the Divine Liturgy nor the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts, as a sign of the deep lamentation and fervent contrition of believers on this day. **The Royal Hours** are served instead of the liturgy: the First, Third, Sixth and Ninth Hours together. Their structure includes psalms, paramoedas, readings from the Epistle and Gospel, troparia and stichera concerning the circumstances of the death of the Lord Jesus Christ. In these Hours not only the story of the Gospel events which occurred on this day is recreated but also the comparison of the Old Testament prophecies and the New Testament sacred reading of the Christian teachings about our redemption by the death of the Savior on the cross is opened in detail<sup>7</sup>. In the hymns of the Royal Hours the seizing of the Savior by the guards, the dispersal of the disciples, the attempt of zealous defense of the Teacher by the Apostle Peter, his denial of the Savior and then his bitter repenting of that deed, of the suffering on the cross and death of the Savior is represented. The pangs of the perfidious betrayer and the lawless Judeans are heard. The amazement of the whole world from the angelic and earthborn powers to the abased situation of God Incarnate, His thorny crown and desecrated robe is pictured. All this is transmitted so that in the presence of the Very Lord from His abased position, He wished to touch the hardening of human souls, that in the presence of the Apostles He accused the Elders, Jews and Pharisees, who so unmercifully, inhumanely and criminally tortured the Savior. And that, finally, in the presence of all believers whom the Holy Church invites to the horrifying, unprecedented sight, appealing: "O come Christ-bearing people, let us see what the traitor Judas and the lawless priests have plotted against our Savior: today they made the deathless Word subject to death, and delivered Him to Pilate, who crucified Him on the Place of the Skull".

The service of the Hours begins at the second hour of the day, at 8:00 o'clock in the morning according to our reckoning. For the Hours there are "two rings, one prolonged", i.e. first the long ringing of one bell, but then two, in such a way that the impact of the other bell is stronger and longer than the first. At the Hours the priest carries out the Gospel Book to the middle of the church and places it on the Analogion and having begun the reading of the Hours he censures the Gospel, the Iconostasis, the whole temple and the people. The Royal Doors remain open up to the time when the Gospel Book is brought back into the sanctuary after its reading during the Ninth Hour.

*The First Hour: Troparion, tone 1*

**The tyrant has been destroyed by Thy crucifixion, O Christ,  
The might of the enemy has been trampled down:  
For neither an angel, nor a man,  
But Thou Thyself hast saved us,  
O Lord, glory to Thee.**

**Paramoea:** Zech. 11:10-13. **Epistle:** Gal. 6:14-18; sel. 215 (from the half).  
**Gospel:** Mt. 27:1-56; sel. 210-213.

*The Third Hour: Troparion, tone 6*

**O Lord, the Jews delivered Thee over to death,  
Life of all, Thou didst lead them through the Red Sea by the rod (of Moses),  
Yet they handed Thee over to be crucified:  
And Thou didst feed them honey from the rock,  
They repaid Thee with gall;  
But Thou didst willingly endure these things,  
To free us from bondage to the enemy,  
O Christ God, glory to Thee.**

**Paramoea:** Is. 50:4-11. **Epistle:** Rom. 5:6-10; sel. 88 (from the half).  
**Gospel:** Mk. 15:1-41; sel. 66-68.

*The Sixth Hour: Troparion, tone 2*

**Thou hast worked salvation in the midst of the earth,  
O Christ God, by stretching out thy most pure hands upon the cross,  
Gathering together all the nations who cry out:  
O Lord, glory to Thee.**

**Paramoea:** Is. 52:13-15, 53:1-12, 54:1. **Epistle:** Heb. 2:11-18; sel. 306.  
**Gospel:** Lk. 23:32-49; sel.111.

*The Ninth Hour: Troparion, tone 8*

**When the thief beheld the Author of Life hanging upon the cross, he said:  
If it were not God in the flesh crucified here with us,  
The sun would not have hidden its rays,  
Nor would the earth have quaked and trembled;  
But remember me in Thy kingdom, O long-suffering Lord.**

**Paramoea:** Jer. 11:18-23. **Epistle:** Heb. 10:19-31; sel. 384. **Gospel:** Jn. 18:28-40, 19:1-37; sel. 59-61.

*Great Friday: Vespers*

At the "tenth hour of the day" (3:00 p.m. according to our reckoning) there is the (blagovest) ringing of the large bell and then "all bells together". The priest, after his entrance into the sanctuary, vests fully and serves Vespers to the order shown in the Triodion. After the introductory Psalm, Litanies, stichera and the entrance with the Gospel, three paramoeas are read (1, Ex. 33:11-23; 2, Job. 42:12-16; 3, Is. 52:13 - 54:1) and the Epistle (1 Cor. 1:18-31, 2:1-2) in which the straight teaching of the power of the death of the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross is symbolically depicted. In the reading of the Gospel, gathered from three evangelists (Mt. 27:1-38, Lk. 23:39-43, Mt. 27:39-54, Jn. 19:31-37, Mt. 27:55-61), the full history of the death on the cross of the Lord of Jesus of the Christ is depicted. Representing the removal of the immaculate body of the Lord from the cross, the church servers take out the "shroud"<sup>8</sup>, i.e. the image of the Lord Jesus Christ lying in the tomb, from the sanctuary at the end of Vespers. After the Aposticha, usually during the slow hymn of the last verse of the Aposticha: "O

Thou, Who putttest on light like a garment, Joseph and Nicodemus took Thee down from the tree", the Royal Doors are opened, candles are distributed to those praying; the priest, preceded by the deacon with a candle, as though conforming to the words of the Stikhera, "O Thou, Who putttest on light like a garment", representing the bewilderment of Joseph and Nicodemus as they bury the Lord wrapping Him in fine linen, censes the shroud lying on the holy altar table three times from four sides, and prostrates before (worships) the Lord represented on it three times. At the singing of the Troparion (after "Now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace" and "Our Father"): "The noble Joseph when he had taken down Thine immaculate body from the tree", church servers, by their own actions representing that which is sung in the initial words of the Troparion, remove the Lord from the cross: the priest will lift up the shroud on his head, and take the Gospel holding it at his breast (representing what is woven in fine linen as taught by the Holy Evangelist John the Theologian (1:1) "In the beginning was the Word of God" preceded by altar servers carrying two candlesticks with burning candles, and the deacon with a lit censer, takes the shroud out from the sanctuary through the North Doors (in some places, the Royal Doors) and places it on the prepared table or tomb<sup>9</sup> prepared in the middle of the temple, then places the Holy Gospel on it. After that the priest with the deacon again censes the shroud three times from four sides, going around it, and the choir sings: "Glory, both now and ever" "The angel came to the myrrh-bearing women". After the troparia there is a sermon appropriate for the day, followed by the kissing of the shroud on the wounds on the feet of the Savior<sup>10</sup>. Then the priest enters the sanctuary, finishes Vespers and the Dismissal before the Royal Doors. The Royal Doors are shut, and the curtain is drawn<sup>11</sup>. After Vespers follows the Little Compline in which the touching canon is read: "about the crucifixion of the Lord and the lamentation of the All Holy Theotokos". This canon is more properly read by the priest before the shroud. After the dismissal is completed, either a lampada or candles are lit before the shroud during the whole night (and, certainly, take all precautions against a fire).

*Aposticha (after "Glory, Both now and ever", tone 5)*

**Joseph and Nicodemus took Thee,  
Who clothest Thyself with light as with a garment,  
Down from the tree,  
And having gazed upon Thy Body, dead, naked and unburied,  
And in grief and tender compassion he lamented:  
Woe is me, sweetest Jesus, Whom, a short while ago,  
The sun beheld hanging on the cross hid itself in darkness,  
And the earth quaked in fear,  
And the curtain of the temple was torn in two:  
But lo, now I see Thee, willingly submit to death for my sake;  
How shall I bury Thee, my God, or how can I wrap Thee in a shroud?  
How can I touch Thine uncorrupt body with my hands?  
Or what songs can I see for Thine Exodus, O compassionate One?**

**I magnify Thy passion,  
I glorify in hymns both Thy burial and resurrection, crying out:  
O Lord, glory to Thee.**

*Troparia, tone 2*

**The noble Joseph,  
When he had taken down Thine immaculate body from the tree,  
Wrapped it in fine linen,  
Anointed it with spices  
And placed it in a new tomb.**

**The Angel came to the myrrh-bearing women at the tomb, saying:  
Myrrh is fitting for the dead,  
But Christ has shown Himself a stranger to corruption.**

The above procedure for **carrying out of the shroud** is not done in all places. In some places in doing the church services for Vespers of Great Friday the transfer is adapted from the warm into the cold temple, and at this time the shroud is transferred from a warm sanctuary to the middle of a cold temple and in this case it is placed on a table near the Royal Doors. In other places the shroud will be prepared in the middle of the temple soon after the Royal Hours, and the people who have come to Vespers already see it laying on the special table arranged for it, kiss it and place candles up to the entrance of the priest.

In the Moscow Dormition Cathedral (see The Sacred Offices and Rites observed in the Great Dormition Cathedral) the carrying out of the shroud is done prior to the beginning of Vespers: first the hierarch censes the tomb or table prepared under the shroud, then, entering the sanctuary, censes the shroud laying on the altar table from the front three times, then the priests bear the shroud from the sanctuary through the Royal Doors and place it on the prepared table with a triple censing around. After this Vespers begins, after whose dismissal the church servers kiss the image of the Savior on the shroud, kissing only the wounds of the feet, the hierarch kisses His wounds on the side, hands and feet.

In the southwest of the country there is a custom to carry the shroud around the temple for Vespers on Great Friday.

Such a variety of divine service practice explains that the Typikon says nothing about carrying out of the shroud in Vespers on Great Friday. The Typikon speaks only about carrying out of the shroud in Matins of Great Saturday.

The custom to carry the shroud around the temple for Vespers on Great Friday, not having a basis for itself in the Typikon, is not justified nor does it have any historical basis. Precisely the same custom does not exist in the manuals for the explanation of the church Typikon, nor in the practice of the authoritative churches (cathedral temples in some ancient cities), decisively making such a procession around the temple unnecessary. The preparation of the shroud directly after the Royal Hours or at the beginning of Vespers without all the prayers

follows from the attachment to the letter of the present Typikon, which does not mention the carrying out of the shroud for Vespers of Great Friday. The priests, not wishing to break the flow of the Office of Vespers by customs and rites not stipulated in the Typikon, prepare or order the clergymen and concelebrants to prepare the shroud without any religious ceremonies and church hymns, assuming that in this case they remain true to the Typikon. What is shaking the custom to take the shroud out during Vespers during the singing of the Aposticha is undoubtedly the influence of the latest practice of the Eastern Churches (Greek and Bulgarian) where at the present time the carrying out of the shroud is done in Vespers of Great Friday during the singing of the Aposticha<sup>12</sup>. This final rite of carrying out of the shroud (during Vespers at the singing of the Aposticha) merits full attention on the part of the present spiritual authorities and priests not only because of the touching picture of carrying the shroud on the heads of priests, during the harmonious melodic singing of the beautiful Aposticha, makes a deeply religious impression on those praying which plays on the same sentimental strings of their hearts and causes their sincere tears but also that this rite quite agrees with the practice of the Eastern Churches from which our divine service practice was in full dependence during all of the history of the divine services in our Church and from which influence, though also unspoken, was not exempted as it demonstrates from the described custom. Hitherto the given practice, being in many respects in agreement with the practice of the Eastern Churches, was countenanced even by the famous First Hierarch of the Russian Church, by the late Metropolitan of Moscow Philaret (Moskovskiiia Eparkh. Ved. [Moscow Diocesan News] 1876, 50), by many Russian hierarchs issuing their instructions of the actual custom when to do the carrying out of the shroud on the feast of the Annunciation occurring on Great Friday, and, finally, even officially authorized with some features by the Holy Synod in 1855 with a special decree (see it below). It remains to wish that this practice would possibly be accepted in the near future in the pages of our Typikon and that it would remove the rather numerous cases of evasion from it. In the ideas of contemporary liturgicists, the very rite of carrying out the shroud should be made to conform with the practice of the Eastern Churches during the singing of the stikhera: "O Thou, Who putttest on light like a garment" or as already established in practice in many places among us in Russia and approved by Holy Synod during the singing of the Troparion: "The noble Joseph". In this case it is necessary to ensure that the singing of the Troparion is stretched out and the priest should finish carrying out the shroud and have it placed on the prepared spot before singing the final words of the Troparion: "Wrapped it in fine linen and anointed it with spices and placed it in a new tomb". What moves this is what doors should be used in carrying out of the shroud: that 1) it is more conforming with the significance of this rite to take the shroud out not through the Royal Doors through which it is brought to the holy altar table on the Paschal night, but through the North Door; 2) in the absence of any instruction in our Typikon directly concerning this rite, in the same place we meet certain instructions for the similar rite of carrying out the cross on the feast of the Elevation and on the Sunday of the



Veneration of the Cross, namely through the North Door, and 3) the main thing, according to the Typikon of the Eastern Churches from where we borrowed this rite, it is necessary to carry out the shroud not through the Royal Doors but through the North Door. In view of these fundamentals one must give decisive advantage to carrying the shroud out through the North Door. Thus psalm readers or those from among the laymen may conveniently help the priest as is done in many temples, and there will be no special prompting for the priest to shrink from the ancient custom, to carry the shroud and Gospel out (Rukovodstvo dlia Selskikh Pastyrei [Manual for Village Pastors] 1885, 9; Tserkovnyi Vestnik [Church Messenger] 1888, 2; Khristianskoe Chtenie [Christian Reading] 1888, vol. 2, pp. 561-570).

The "Tserkovnyi Vestnik [Church Messenger]" (see 1897, 14) gives this explanation concerning the existence of variety in the practice of carrying out of the shroud: "Many local features during the carrying out of the shroud have its own historical prescription and are not done without a known idea; therefore they may be beneficial for those praying accustomed to known religious actions, and to aspire to uniformity is not always useful". But in other village churches the variety occurs "not from care to preserve the ancient customs, but is simply from the ignorance of church servers on how to do the Divine Services when there is no clear instruction in the Typikon. They do it according to their own logic, not being found in the more general custom in many of the other churches". In view of this the "Tserkovnyi Vestnik [Church Messenger]" in doing the carrying out of the shroud "according to its own logic" also instructs how the carrying out of the shroud will be done in St. Petersburg. These instructions with some updating are found in the text of our book (see Vespers of Great Friday and Matins of Great Saturday).

If **Great Friday** falls on **Annunciation**, that is called "the Annunciation Chapter", Vespers is done before the Divine Liturgy which begins directly after reading the Paramoedas, and therefore the Aposticha and everything after that falls out and is not done. In this case, being guided by the Decree of the Holy Synod (1855), it becomes necessary to take the shroud out during Little Compline. In this Decree we read: "For Compline at 5:00 p.m. the blagovest [tr. note: Blagovest is a preliminary call to the major services. Strike the largest bell once every second for 12 times] ringing of the big bell and a full ringing [tr. note: ringing the bells rhythmically] of all the bells. The rector is fully vested but the rest of the clergy are vested minimally. Beforehand the shroud is placed on the holy altar table and lamp stands are positioned. Compline begins as usual. After reading "I believe in one God", the Royal Doors are opened at the singing of the Aposticha verse "O Thou, Who puttest on light like a garment". During this time the rector, having distributed candles, censes the shroud on the holy altar table, circling three times. After the singing of the Aposticha, they lift up the shroud from the holy altar table during the singing of the Troparion "The noble Joseph" and carry it out as usual to the prepared place in the middle of the temple or in another temple. After putting the shroud in place, the rector again censes the shroud circling it three times during the singing of the other Troparion: "The angel came to the myrrh-bearing

women". After this comes the kissing of a shroud during which the Typikon prescribes the singing of the Canon in Compline "About the crucifixion of the Lord and the Lamentation of the All Holy Theotokos". Compline ends according to the instructions in the Typikon<sup>13</sup>.

"On this Holy day neither a **meal** is offered nor do we eat on this day of the crucifixion. If someone is unable or has become very old and those unable to fast, he may be given bread and water after sunset. In this way we come to the holy commandment of the Holy Apostles not to eat on Great Friday<sup>14</sup>.

---

<sup>1</sup> If circumstances demand, then on Great Friday with the reading of the 12 Gospels in the same churches it is possible to do both the All-night Vigil and Matins (then begin serving it at 6:00 p.m.). Not being confused with those circumstances where the same service is repeated, it is not appointed for one and the same pilgrim. It does not follow that the working people who are occupied until late in the evening be deprived of hearing the 12 Gospels (Tserkovnyi Vestnik [Church Messenger] 1889, 44).

<sup>2</sup> The terrible night is recreated by the morning Worship service of Great Friday. The darkness of nature, the darkness of the black rage of the Judeans who were seeking to kill the Savior, the mortal grief of the Redeemer in the darkness of the Garden of Gethsemane, then the extreme degree of His humiliation already betrayed by the disciple and seized by the enemies, -- all this aggravates the horror of this night. Before the mind's eye pictures in the temple were presented one after the other and replaced by another more sorrowful, by another more awful and by another more amazing.

On the one hand, the Creator and Savior of all is seen everywhere shining with heavenly light, immensely benefited everything and everyone through all His life, Who gave sight to the blind, Who healed the sick, Who raised the dead. Even now He is the one overcoming torture to grieve not only for Himself but also for His torturers, not only from His mortal wounds but also from the moral wounds of those who mock Him.

On the other hand, everywhere He now persistently improves them, they in their Hadean rage will in every possible way wound and torment Him who created them and up to the end had done much good for them: for manna they render Him bile, for water, vinegar, for all His love for them, the cross and death.

In its various hymns, the Holy Church, piercing the very heart it has embraced with its sorrow, as if cannot collect its thoughts, quietly pays attention to one or another. Where she will not pay attention in thought, she directs attention to the sight anywhere and everywhere of new and newer occasions to the wailing, to the tears, to new sources of sorrow and suffering.

That heart is indignant with the Judeans, who so recently enthusiastically shouted: "Hosanna to the Son of David"! But now with criminal perfidy frantically cry out: "Crucify, crucify Him"! That heart shudders from the memory of the black, Hadean action of one of the elite, beloved disciples of the Savior, criminally ungrateful, who despised everything, who forgot everything and sold everything for an insignificant "thirty pieces of silver". That will rise again before the mind's eye, the Divine Sufferer Himself tormented with scourging, in the shameful, ugly robe moistened with streams of immaculate blood, His head covered with wounds in a crown of thorns, unmercifully insulted, brutally beaten and, finally, tortured to death on the cross. That the prophesies of the Old Testament righteous men and the New Testament messengers of God, who prophesied or told about His suffering are remembered and by all the power of the believing heart who suffers with Him. That vision falls in the sky and on earth as witnesses of Golgotha's oblations, and they, always quiet and to all unimpassioned, could not bear: "The sky was darkened, the foundations of the earth quaked".

By this amazing display of all that was accomplished in these hours of unprecedented and most terrible sacrilege on earth, the Holy Church completely embraces the believing soul, concentrates it and directs it to the unique contemplation of the cross of Christ, trying to lead the Christian up to that beneficial estate where the divine apostle is found, who did not wish to know anything, "except Christ and Him crucified" (see 1 Cor. 2:2).

But the one, who with the living participation of his loving heart can in his mind reach such a condition, looks to the voluntary passion of the Savior of the world, lets go of everything that distracts attention from the suffering of the Lord, fills the imagination with impure images, excites the mind with vain thoughts, or pollutes the heart with evil lusts, - who truly "descends" to the suffering of the Savior, "will be pierced and destroyed for His sake by daily pleasures".

That is why the Holy Church right at the beginning of its majestic "Office of the Holy and Saving Passion" of Christ tenderly appeals to us: "Let us offer our pure senses to Christ and as His friends let us sacrifice our lives for His sake, and let us not be weighed down with earthly cares like Judas, but let us cry in the hidden chambers of our heart: Our Father, Who art in the heavens, deliver us from the evil one".

---

Darkened by unclean and vain thoughts the mind cannot behold the light of the divine glory revealed in the redemption of the human race through the suffering and death of the Son of God. Embroiled with passions and impure desires the spirit is not able to assume and reflect in itself the divine image of Golgotha's Sufferer. Being fattened on carnal lusts the heart will not feel again and will not embrace the majesty of the love of the Heavenly Father, who gave His Only-begotten Son over to death for our deliverance, - will not soften with dew the grace of God and will not exhale the fragrance of tearful tender prayers, connecting our soul in one spirit with the Lord. Not having sincerely turned away all that is sinful and impure the soul becomes dead and does not live with the Lord, will not be relieved from the fetters of gloom which Satan has attached to her. That is why, in order "to descend and be crucified" with Christ, it is necessary to cleanse "our senses", to expel from our hearts, from its memory and imagination, all that is evil, unclean and sinful.

If any one has enmity with his neighbor, he should expel it from his heart for the sake of Him Who taught "Let us reproach against reproaching, let us be vigilant not threatening", - one should forgive from the whole heart any reviling, offence and animosity for the sake of Him Who did not name the betrayer as His friend at the moment of betrayal and prayed for those who crucified Him.

If the spirit of pride, conceit, exaltation of oneself and vanity possesses anyone, he should eradicate it from his heart, humble and abase himself as a useless servant, worthy of every dishonor and humiliation for the sake of Him, Who being in essence the Lord of glory, "belittled Himself, receiving the image of a servant", "humbled Himself, being obedient even unto death, the very death on the cross", humbly underwent all humiliations, spitting, ridicule and the most shameful death with evildoers.

If one torments any one with the spirit of cupidity, covetousness or usury, then one should extract it from his heart for the sake of the Lord, Who for our salvation was born in a manger and lived, "not having a place to lay His head", and died on the cross, of Whom they crucified they were not even ashamed to deprive Him of His last chiton (robe).

If one's mouth is accustomed to be opened for idle talk and malignant gossip, condemnation and slander, for murmur and indignation, then one should block this out with silence like the One Who "like a sheep that is led to the slaughter, and like a lamb that before its shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth (Is. 54:7)".

If one confronts any one with the spirit of voluptuousness and sensuality, if one inflames any one with the fire of fleshly lusts and passions, then one should extinguish this unclean fire in view of the One Who for our sake hungered and thirsted, partook of vinegar and gall, Who turned over His immaculate body to suffering and crucifixion, to scourging and wounds, to torture and nailing to the cross.

If any one's soul is embraced with earthly cares, excessive and vain, unnecessary and useless, then one should be released from them in order to not profane the holy days only with business but also from profanity, in order to not distract the mind and heart from holy thoughts and reverent feelings, in order to not become like Judas who could not be parted from his money chest, who only thought about purchases and sales in the midst of the Mystical Supper.

For this reason our Lord took up his voluntary passion and death to cleanse us from all sin, to Himself create for us a holy nation, a royal priesthood, a renewed people. Vainly some wish that "the cross of Christ be emptied" (1 Cor. 1:17) and think that they may "comprehend the power of His resurrection" without "sharing His sufferings" (Phil. 3:10).

If Christ alone is both the "life" and the "way" (Jn. 14, 6) to the life, then how can they achieve the "life" of Christ by not going by His "way"? Can these members be knitted together in union with the body, whose "head" is crowned with thorns (Eph. 4:15, 16)? Is it possible for members to be in repose and without care when the Head is in labor, and in both wounds and animosity; to be immersed in noisy pleasures when He is grasped by illness; to revel in the full cup of temporal pleasures when He thirsts and partakes vinegar; to be praised when He is bowed; to not want to be ill even for a minute with one's own sins and iniquities when He guards the stranger and dies? Would it be offensive to our Redeemer if we were shown to be in old impure sins before His cross and tomb, in the sackcloth of passionate lusts and everyday pleasures: if all the deeds of His unexampled love and condescension to us as poor and condemned sinners; all His suffering and ills have remained barren in us?

Let us not be the cause of new suffering for our Savior and Lord, lest for His sake, being slaughtered for our sins, we should not want to slaughter and destroy any passion possessing us. What are we doing sinning after Baptism, after everything our Lord Jesus Christ has done for us and has revealed to us? According to the words of the Holy Apostle Paul: "we crucify the Son of God on our own account a second time" (Heb. 6:4-6).

A second time we change before the Lord, we deny Him, we betray Him, we condemn Him every time when, knowing His Holy will, we break it, we reject His voice which calls to repentance, we trample on our conscience and we betray it in the offering of passions and carnal lusts. A second time we crown Him with thorns when we take great interest in criminal musings, when we are charmed by proud and vain, ambitious and covetous, mad and blasphemous thoughts. A second time we nail His hands to the cross when we extend our unclean hands for bribery and extortion, for plundering and unrighteousness. A second time we give Him vinegar and gall to drink, when our shameless tongue pours forth idle and rotten words; malevolent and carping, sarcastic and reproachful speech. A second time we sneer at the crucified Lord when we scoff and sneer, when we reproach and condemn, when we scold and revile our neighbor. A second time we pierce his heart when we defile our heart with impure

---

cravings and lusts, covetous desires, stinking and shameful sensations. A second time we wound, torture and tear open His immaculate flesh, when we are insatiably turned to carnal pleasures and lusts. In a word: a second time changes for the Lord, we deny Him, we judge Him, we crucify Him every time when knowing His Holy will, we break and reject His holy commandments, we do not listen to His voice which called us to repentance, we trample on our conscience and we betray it in the oblation of passions and lusts.

What will be our sin? What will our stony (hard) heart feel when the Omniscient will judge our secret? Of what will our evil conscience be absolved before the all-scrutinizing Judge? Truly, "then many call to the mountains and the hills, fall on us: hide us from the face of Him who is seated on the throne!" (Rev. 6:16).

But then none and nothing will hide us from His omnipresent presence if we shall not now be covered in these very wounds, which through our sins we have imposed on our Lord. From His impartial judgment none and nothing will protect us if we do not now turn ourselves to the protection of this same cross on which we crucified the Lord through our unrighteousness. Bitter crying for our sins, sorrowful destruction of our ingratitude before our Redeemer and Lord, united by firm resolve to no more go the way of iniquity, to love cleanliness of conscience and to amend our life, - here is what is more becoming to us during the holy days of the Lord's passion when we stand before His cross and tomb! On this cross of the Only-begotten the Son of God have we uplifted our sins, but on this same cross is nailed the handwriting of all our sins in the presence of the truth of God. In this tomb the Son of God has minimized the condemnation of death laying upon us, but in the same tomb death was destroyed and from it a new life was sent up to us. The cross of Christ will judge us if we remain unrepentant and insensitive, but the cross of Christ will also absolve us if we resort to Him crucified on it with faith and repentance, with tears and compunction of heart. The tomb of the Lord will judge us if we remain dead in transgressions, but this tomb will both give life to and raise us if we begin to repent and renew our life. (See details in the Poln. Sobr. Propov. Dimitriia, Archiep. Khersonskago [Complete Collection of the Sermons of Demetrius, Archbishop of Chersonese], Vol.4, pp. 383-419).

St. Ephraim the Syrian teaches: "Come, all children of the Church, bought by the precious and holy blood of the All-pure Master. Come, let us reflect on His suffering with tears and lamentations, with fear and trembling, saying to ourselves: 'Christ our Savior is given over to death on the cross for us unrighteous ones'. Think deeply on this, brother, that you now hear that the sinless God, the Son of the Most High, was betrayed for you. Open your heart, consider His suffering, and tell yourself: 'Today the sinless God is betrayed, today He is mocked, today He is insulted, today His ears are boxed, today He bore scourging, today He carried a crown of thorns, today the Heavenly Lamb is crucified. Let my heart tremble, let my soul be terrified! Every day I should shed tears with reflection on the Master's suffering. The soul is enlightened by these delightful tears by continually reflecting on the suffering of Christ'. So reflecting always, crying daily, and thanking the Lord who endured suffering for you so that in the day of His coming your tears will have turned into praise and glorification before His judgment seat. Guard against evil, reflecting on the suffering of the Good Master. Endure temptations, thanking God from the heart for them. Blessed is the man who has the heavenly Master and His suffering before him, who has crucified himself for all of the passions and for all earthly things, and became an imitator of his Lord. Here is prudence; here is the position of God-loving servants, if they always are imitators of the Master in good deeds".

The Holy Church appeals to us in its hymns: "Come therefore, let us go with cleansed thoughts" to the Lord, "having adorned our way of life with chastity and having preserved our faith with wisdom, let us seek moral truths that we may courageously follow and be crucified with Christ", and "let us destroy the life of pleasures in us for His sake that we may be made alive in Him"; "let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement and let us pray in purity: Arise, O Lord, save us; for Thou lovest mankind".

<sup>3</sup> The exclamations after the Little Litanies are not written in the Triodion, but are available in the Order of Passion Week (in a specially published booklet) in the following order: after the first: "For Thine is the might and Thine is the kingdom"; after the second: "For unto Thee are due all glory"; after the third: "For sanctified and glorified is Thine all-honorable and majestic name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit"; after the fourth: "For Thou art our God, and unto Thee do we send up glory"; after the fifth: "Blessed and glorified be the might of Thy kingdom"; after the sixth: "For blessed is Thy name, and glorified is Thy kingdom"; after the seventh: "For all the Powers of Heaven praise Thee".

<sup>4</sup> During cathedral services, at the words of the deacon: "And that we may be accounted worthy", the priest reading the next pericope approaches the Book of Gospels to that place where it was read by the first priest, and, having bowed to him, after the second exclamation of the deacon, blesses the people, saying: "Peace be to all" (Tserkovnyi Vestnik [Church Messenger] 1889, 14).

<sup>5</sup> In the divine service Gospel Book published by the Moscow Synodal printing house in 1862 (21st edition), in the first Passion Gospel, the following wrong positioning of the words: "Let it not be confused I say to you: I go away and I will come to you. Let not your hearts be afraid. For you have heard Me"... was printed. The passage should read this way: "Let not your hearts be confused, neither let them be afraid. You heard Me say to you: I go away and I will come to you".

---

<sup>6</sup> But if Annunciation falls on Great Friday the Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom (see 25 Mar.) is then served.

<sup>7</sup> In the **First Hour**: Psalms 2 and 21 prophetically describe the vain rebellion of the earthly princes against the Savior and His suffering on the cross. In the Paramoia, the Prophet Zechariah announces beforehand the confirmation of the New Covenant sealed by the cross and the betrayal of Judas. The Epistle glorifies the cross of Christ as the greatest power, glory and blessing of the Christian.

In the **Third Hour**: Psalms 34 and 108 prophesy the unrighteous judgment over the Savior and the perditions of the betrayer. In the Paramoia the Prophet Isaiah prophetically describes the Righteous One of the Most High, Who incontestably goes to his voluntary death as a lamb to the slaughter and Who "gave his back for scourging, his cheeks for smiting, hiding not His face from shame and spitting". The Epistle opens the reason, aim and fruits of the death of the Son of God on the cross.

In the **Sixth Hour**: Psalms 53 and 139 prophesy the suffering on the cross and the prayer of the Savior. In the Paramoia the Prophet Isaiah prophetically pictures the extremely "despised One by the sons of men" Who "is wounded for our iniquities". The Epistle opens the mystery of the incarnation of the Son of God.

In the **Ninth Hour**: Psalms 68 and 69 prophetically describe the actions of the crucified one and the prayer in agony of the Savior. The Paramoia is the same as in the First Hour of Great Thursday. The Epistle shows the renewed opened way "in the sanctuary" by the blood of Christ.

The Gospels in the Hours repeat those read in the Matins of Annunciation, with this one significant difference that in that Matins the time sequence of events was observed, here in the four Hours with its narration of the four evangelists one after the other they successively act as direct and indisputable witnesses of the same event as being of the greatest importance and immense significance.

<sup>8</sup> On Great Friday, before Vespers, church servers take the shroud from the tomb where it was set aside either in the sanctuary or other part of the temple and place it on the holy table. Then the tomb is set up in the middle of the temple facing the altar (Tserkovnyi Vedomosti [Church News] 1897, 14).

<sup>9</sup> The Holy Shroud is placed in the middle of the temple before the Royal Doors in such a manner that the Lord represented on it, having the head to the north side and the immaculate feet to the south, is facing turned to the south. The Holy Shroud is an icon, and therefore it is not placed with the lateral side opposite the Royal Doors, but directly against them in such a way that it could be hung up over the Royal Doors (Tserkovnyi Vedomosti [Church News] 1888, 16).

<sup>10</sup> In most churches the shroud is not covered (with the exception of a small strip in the front part of the table to avoid rubbing by the covering and causing damage to the shroud). In some churches the shroud is covered, and frequently so much that it is absolutely impossible to look upon the image of the reposed Savior. But the face of the Savior is already completely covered by the Aer, and therefore is completely invisible. One wishes that this custom of covering the shroud with a cloth and the face of the Savior with the Aer would be dropped, and that the impression of the image of the Savior placed in the tomb be vividly and clearly imprinted in the hearts of believers (see details in the Tserkovnyi Vedomosti [Church News] 1897, 14).

<sup>11</sup> According to an explanation in the "Tserkovnyi Vestnik [Church Messenger]", on Great Friday and equally on Great Saturday there is a massive crush about the shroud by the people kissing it and that none can stand including the priest and deacon (Tserkovnyi Vestnik [Church Messenger] 1890, 27). It is obvious that the priest should warn everyone to take measures to avoid this crush.

<sup>12</sup> In the Moscow Tserkovnyi Vedomosti [Moscow Church News] in 1896 (see No. 25-27) was the special article which the author stated the following positions concerning the carrying out of a shroud:

a) This rite undoubtedly has Greek origins. Having received in the beginning the known features of the services of the Constantinopolitan patriarchs, this rite of Constantinople has come into the practice of the Russian Church in the 15th-16th centuries and naturally before all was in the practice of the cathedral churches and the greater monasteries. In our Russian practice this rite has changed in its details and has no uniform form.

b) In general church practice this rite has already come after the publication of the present Typikon, hence, right at the end of the 17th century.

c) In its native land in Constantinople, this rite at the present time is not done any more as it was done in antiquity (in the 16th century).

d) The present custom of some Russian temples to take out the shroud in Vespers of Great Friday during the singing of the Dismissal Troparion "The noble Joseph" is not justified in the present Typikon nor in ancient church practice. This custom closely approaches the present Constantinople Typikon in which the shroud is taken out in Vespers at the beginning of the singing of the Aposticha.

---

e) The custom to place the grave and shroud in the middle of the church before Vespers does not find justification in the present Typikon that agrees with the ancient practice of the Russian Churches (Novgorod and Dormition Cathedral Typikons).

f) The custom to carry the shroud around the temple during Matins of Great Saturday agrees with the 17th century practice of cathedral churches and with the contemporary Constantinople Typikon but disagrees with our present Typikon and with the more ancient practice of both the Russian and Greek cathedrals.

<sup>13</sup> In considering what more has been interwoven and taken root in our church divine service practice, some consider the instruction of Philaret, Metropolitan of Moscow (see *Moskovskiiia Eparchialniia Vedomosti* [Moscow Diocesan News] 1870, 50) issued in 1855 according to which if Great Friday falls on the Day of Annunciation "it is necessary (similar to the Compline of Theophany of the Lord) to chant the Aposticha of Great Friday before the Ambo and then during the singing of the Troparion "The noble Joseph", to transfer the shroud, venerate and kiss it and follow with the dismissal of the Divine Liturgy; the Little Compline with the canon should be read at 5 o'clock in the evening" (see *Khristianskoe Chtenie* [Christian Reading] 1888, vol. 2, p. 570).

<sup>14</sup> St. John of Damascus bears witness to his contemporaries: "Look at the whole circle of the universe: how many settlements there are, how many cities and places, how many people, how many nations and various peoples, and all of them now fast for the sake of the cross, overcoming their passions by its power".

*S. V. Bulgakov, **Handbook for Church Servers**, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 1274 pp. (Kharkov, 1900), pp 0543-0551.  
Translated by Archpriest Eugene D. Tarris © February 25, 2007. All rights reserved.*