

## HOW TO PUT TOGETHER A TRADITIONAL EASTER BASKET

### Philippians 4:4-9 (Epistle)

Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice! Let your gentleness be known to all men. The Lord is at hand. Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy – meditate on these things. The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you.

### John 12:1-18 (Gospel)

Then, six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany, where Lazarus was who had been dead, whom He had raised from the dead. There they made Him a supper; and Martha served, but Lazarus was one of those who sat at the table with Him. Then Mary took a pound of very costly oil of spikenard, anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped His feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the oil. But one of His disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon's son,

who would betray Him, said, Why was this fragrant oil not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor? This he said, not that he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief, and had the money box; and he used to take what was put in it. But Jesus said, "Let her alone; she has kept this for the day of My burial. For the poor you have with you always, but Me you do not have always. Now a great many of the Jews knew that He was there; and they came, not for Jesus' sake only, but that they might also see Lazarus, whom He had raised from the dead. But the chief priests plotted to put Lazarus to death also, because on account of him many of the Jews went away and believed in Jesus. The next day a great multitude that had come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, took branches of palm trees and went out to meet Him, and cried out: Hosanna! 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!' The King of Israel!" Then Jesus, when He had found a young donkey, sat on it; as it is written: Fear not, daughter of Zion; Behold, your King is coming, Sitting on a donkey's colt." His disciples did not understand these things at first; but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things were written about Him and that they had done these things to Him. Therefore the people, who were with Him when He called Lazarus out of his tomb and raised him from the dead, bore witness. For this reason the people also met Him, because they heard that He had done this sign.

Following The Resurrection Matins and Liturgy it is traditional among Slavic peoples to have their "Easter baskets" blessed. The gathered faithful place their baskets in a designated place in the parish hall and place lighted candles in the baskets. After the crowd has quieted down, the priest will begin the opening chant: "Blessed is the Kingdom of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." The congregation replies with Amen!", and the foods are blessed, in three different groups with three different blessings. The bread products are blessed first, then the dairy products, and finally the meat products.

There are traditional foods among every Slavic group: Polish, Russian, Ukrainian, Ruthenian, Bulgarian, Romanian, Serbian, Croatian, Slovenian, Montenegrin, etc. Following is a list of foods commonly included in the basket. It is not necessary to include every item, nor are Pascha baskets restricted to the items listed below. The general rule is place in the basket foods from which one has abstained during the recent Great Lent and Holy Week.

**PASCHA** : a sweet yeast bread rich in eggs, butter and other condiments. This bread is symbolic of Christ Himself, He Who is our Bread of life. It is usually baked as a round loaf with a golden crust decorated with some symbol indicative of Christ, such as a braided cross, a lamb or something similar. Sometimes a cross of dough is placed on top, and the entire loaf rimmed with a braided plait of dough giving it a crowned effect. Sometimes the abbreviation XB is used the initials for "Christos Voskrese!" - "Christ is Risen!").

**CHEESE (Hrutka or Sirets)**: A custard-type cheese shaped into a ball which has a rather bland but sweet taste, and is intended to indicate the moderation that Christians should have in all things. Also, cream cheese is sometimes placed in a small dish and

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### PASCHA EGG HUNT

There will be a Egg Hunt for all of our children following the Agape Vespers on May 1<sup>st</sup>.

If anyone would like to help or donate, please let Fr. Andrew know.

## *Easter Basket Con't*

decorated with initials or patterns by placing peppercorns or cloves in appropriate patterns.

**HAM (Shoon'-ka):** The flesh meat popular among Slavs as the main dish for several reasons: a) the richness of its meat is symbolic of the great joy and abundance of Easter and b) of the richness of the joy in Christ we ought to have, and c) our freedom from the Old Law, now that all things have been made clean in Christ (as indicated to the apostle Saint Peter in the dream on the rooftop at Joppa [Acts 10:9-16]). Being freed from the Old Law and from the curse of death, which is the wage of sin, all things are now permissible to eat - and ham, the most forbidden of all the "unclean" foods is now symbolic of our **total** redemption. Many of the faithful will include meats like roasted veal, roast beef, and other foods prepared well ahead of time - foods which can be enjoyed without a lot of last-minute preparation. Those who have been preparing all week are already exhausted, but, being filled with joy at Our Lord's Resurrection from the dead, are looking forward to sitting down to a celebratory feast.

**BUTTER (Mas'-lo):** The butter is usually shaped into a figure of a lamb or of a three-barred cross and decorated in much the same fashion as the sirets (cheese) above. Butter is to remind us of the goodness of Christ that we are to demonstrate to all men by our lives in Him.

**SAUSAGE (Kohl-ba'-ssi):** A spicy, garlicky sausage of pork, veal, beef and other products. This is indicative of God's favor and generosity to us sinners.

**BACON (Sla-ni'-na):** A piece of uncooked bacon cured with spices. This symbolizes of the lavishness and overabundance of God's mercy toward sinners.

**SALT (Sol):** A condiment necessary for flavor reminding Christians of our duties toward others to "flavor" the world.

**EGGS (Py-san'-ky):** These are highly decorated eggs with symbols and markings made with colored dyes and beeswax. Covered with extremely complicated and intricate designs, some of these eggs take a full week to complete. The word "pysanky" derives from the verb "pysat'," meaning "to write." A pysanka, then, is an egg which has been written (drawn) upon. Eggs represent the new life and Resurrection. There are some fascinating pious legends concerning the origin of these pysanky.

**HORSERADISH (Hrin):** Horseradish is commonly mixed with grated red beets to give this a rich, "blood red" hue. This is symbolic of the Christ's Passion which is still in the minds of the faithful, but which is now sweetened with some sugar because of the Resurrection.

A bittersweet red-colored mixture which reminds us of the blood and suffering of Christ, at which great price was purchased the astonishing gift of our Redemption

**WINE:** In some places, it is also customary to include a bottle of wine. Poorer areas of Eastern Europe tended to ignore this element of the basket (e.g. Southern Poland, Northern Czechoslovakia, Northeastern Hungary), but American descendants are beginning to include them once again.

All the food articles are placed in a wicker basket, and a ribbon or bow is tied to the handle. A decorated candle is placed in the basket (Sometimes it is our baptismal candle) at the time of the basket blessing. A linen cover, normally quite intricately embroidered with various Resurrection themes and symbols of Christ, or simply an intricate multicolored border and the words "**CHRISTOS VOSKRESE**" or "**CHRIST IS RISEN,**" is placed over the food when it is brought to the church.

It is customary to break one's Easter fast with foods blessed at this time and only then proceeding to the foods now ready on groaning tables, foods which have been in process of preparation for the past few days.

**PASCHA Gathering**  
Bright Monday - May 2, 2016  
Where: Venetian Gardens in Bridgeview  
5:30pm Cocktails / 6:30pm Buffet Dinner  
RSVP requested by April 28, 2016  
Rectory: 708-552-5276

CHRIST  
IS RISEN

Sponsored by Fr. Andrew on the occasion  
of his Priestly Anniversary & his Birthday

## The Sweet Relief of Repentance

by Priest Joel Weir

*“The end is approaching, O my soul – it is approaching! So why do you not care or prepare yourself for it? Arise! The time is short! The Judge already stands at the door. Life is vanishing like a dream – so why do you continue living in vanity? Arise, O my soul, and reveal the evil things you have done. Ponder them well and allow your tears to flow. Then confess your deeds and thoughts openly to Christ, and He will make you righteous. There has never been a sin, a deed, an evil act which I have not cherished, O Savior. I have sinned in my thoughts, my words, and my deeds – and no one has sinned more than I.”—From the Great Canon of St. Andrew of Crete*

Recently, as I celebrated the Great Canon of Saint Andrew of Crete at our parish, I had an experience unlike any I have ever had while chanting and hearing the strongly penitential prayers and verses of instruction. I felt a sweetness and comfort at the harshest of verses—verses that in years past have been convicting (as they should be), perplexing, or just difficult to swallow. As I do not have any righteousness to speak of, I can only attribute this experience to my age. By that, I mean, I’m older—older than I was when I first came to know Christ, at Sunday school classes in the basement of Yountsville Community Church. Older than I was when I first felt serious regret for sin, as a teenager waking up the pastor at midnight, asking if I could go to the church to pray for forgiveness. Older than I was when my dad died, leaving me, a still young father myself, fatherless. Older than I was when I first experienced the prayers of penitence during Lent in the Orthodox Church. Older than I was when I was ordained a priest six years ago. Older than I was last year.

You see, life gets hard, even bitter sometimes. As one gets older, one just knows it more acutely. I was reminded, right in the middle of the Great Canon, of the words attributed to King Solomon in Ecclesiastes: “Remember your Creator in the days of your youth, before the days of trouble come and the years approach when you will say, ‘I find no pleasure in them’” [Ecclesiastes 12:1].

Tradition informs us that Solomon most likely wrote Ecclesiastes late in his life. He spends much of the book explaining all that he had indulged, attained, consumed, accomplished – and then says it is all meaningless. When he does speak of meaning, it has to do with being content with one’s daily work, and remembering God. That’s it. Solomon had much that he regretted, and he wishes to spare his readers the same meaningless pursuit.

I wondered why Solomon came to mind as I was reading, in the midst of prayers that say things like “no one has sinned more than I.” And why was there a sweetness that came with these thoughts? I realized that, as an older man now, the prayers of the Church have become even more poignant. The words of forgiveness, of hope, of resurrection have always been a source of comfort and renewal. But now the penitential words became something not just to hear seriously, to cause self-examination and effort to let light shine on the places still dark in my heart, but they were also relieving.

Maybe I’ve had more years to sin, more times of being hurt, and of hurting others, more losses of loved ones, than I had as a young man. Perhaps that’s it. But there was something so soothing about being able to come before God and even say things like “no one has sinned as I have” and feel a great weight lift from my shoulders. It’s easy to feel like a wreck in life. To be able to come before God and just say, “I’ve been a wreck, and yet you still receive me, after all of this.” What a relief. It doesn’t feel like groveling, or getting beat up (as I used to struggle that the penitential language was). No, groveling and getting beat up is that to which life has often reduced me. So it feels freeing, like “coming to my senses” and being honest, naked before the One Who created me. I do not have to be anyone but who I honestly am before Him, even in my brokenness. As we chant in the Great Canon, “In the darkness of night has my whole life passed, amidst shadowy delusions I cannot escape. But, O Savior, make me now a child of the day.”

So while I’m certainly not one of the “older folks” in our parish yet—there are others with much more experience and wisdom—I think I can safely step out and share some words to one and all, regardless of age—the words of Solomon with a “Lenten” twist: “Remember your Creator in the days of your youth, do not despise or ignore the prayers of the Church, even when they do not yet resonate with you or are hard to understand. For the days of trouble will come and the years approach when you will say, ‘I find no pleasure in them.’ It may be then that you will find the prayers and security of the Church to be a great sweetness, a great relief, a place where you can stand honestly before our God. This is worth cultivating throughout your life.”

**Priest Joel Weir** is Rector of Saint Stephen Church, Crawfordsville, IN. He also was a participant in the Orthodox Church in America’s first Mission School, held in Detroit, MI in 2015.





## Entry of Our Lord into Jerusalem (Palm Sunday)

Commemorated on [April 24](#)

### Palm Sunday

Palm Sunday is the celebration of the triumphant entrance of Christ into the royal city of Jerusalem. He rode on a colt for which He Himself had sent, and He permitted the people to hail Him publicly as a king. A large crowd met Him in a manner befitting royalty, waving palm branches and placing their garments in His path. They greeted Him with these words: "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel! (John 12:13).

This day together with the raising of Lazarus are signs pointing beyond themselves to the mighty deeds and events which consummate Christ's earthly ministry. The time of fulfillment was at hand. Christ's raising of Lazarus points to the destruction of death and the joy of resurrection which will be accessible to all through His own death and resurrection. His entrance into Jerusalem is a fulfillment of the messianic prophecies about the king who will enter his holy city to establish a final kingdom. "Behold, your king is coming to you, humble, and mounted on an ass, and on a colt, the foal of an ass" (Zech 9:9).

Finally, the events of these triumphant two days are but the passage to Holy Week: the "hour" of suffering and death for which Christ came. Thus the triumph in an earthly sense is extremely short-lived. Jesus enters openly into the midst of His enemies, publicly saying and doing those things which mostly enrage them. The people themselves will soon reject Him. They misread His brief earthly triumph as a sign of something else: His emergence as a political messiah who will lead them to the glories of an earthly kingdom.

### Our Pledge

The liturgy of the Church is more than meditation or praise concerning past events. It communicates to us the eternal presence and power of the events being celebrated and makes us participants in those events. Thus the services of Lazarus Saturday and Palm Sunday bring us to our own moment of life and death and entrance into the Kingdom of God: a Kingdom not of this world, a Kingdom accessible in the Church through repentance and baptism.

On Palm Sunday palm and willow branches are blessed in the Church. We take them in order to raise them up and greet the King and Ruler of our life: Jesus Christ. We take them in order to reaffirm our baptismal pledges. As the One who raised Lazarus and entered Jerusalem to go

to His voluntary Passion stands in our midst, we are faced with the same question addressed to us at baptism: "Do you accept Christ?" We give our answer by daring to take the branch and raise it up: "I accept Him as King and God!"

Thus, on the eve of Christ's Passion, in the celebration of the joyful cycle of the triumphant days of Lazarus Saturday and Palm Sunday, we reunite ourselves to Christ, affirm His Lordship over the totality of our life, and express our readiness to follow Him to His Kingdom:

... that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, that if possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead (Philippians 3:10-11).

Very Rev. Paul Lazor

**ST. PANTELEIMON ORTHODOX CHURCH**  
7549 WEST 61ST PLACE, SUMMIT

**HELLENIC DINNER**

Adults: \$15.00  
Souvlaki (Pork shish Kabob)  
Greek rice  
Greek salad  
Bread  
Dessert  
Alcoholic beverages available for dine-in only.

Children: (12 & under) \$4.00  
Hotdog  
Chips  
Drink

Take out available

May 21, 2016  
Saturday  
Vespers: 5:00 pm  
Dinner  
4:00 to 8:00 pm

Food  
Fun  
Raffles

RSVP - May 17, 2016 (not needed but appreciated)  
Rectory: 708-552-5276

Proceeds benefit  
Building Renovation Project