



# St. Mary & St. Mark Coptic Orthodox Church Diocese of Sydney & Affiliated Regions

Monthly Newsletter: April 2020 Issue

Coptic Calendar: 23 Paremhotep 1736 – 22 Parmoute 1736

## Bible Readings

<b>5<sup>th</sup> April</b>	27 Paremhotep	Psalms 143:7, 1
Divine Gospel		John 9:1-41
<b>12<sup>nd</sup> April</b>	4 Parmoute	Psalms 65:1-2
Divine Gospel		John 12:12-19
<b>19<sup>th</sup> April</b>	11 Parmoute	Psalms 118:24-25, 27
Divine Gospel		John 20:1-18
<b>26<sup>th</sup> April</b>	18 Parmoute	Psalms 98:1, 4
Divine Gospel		John 20:19-31

## Coptic Feast Days

- + Apr. 1<sup>st</sup> (23 Paremhotep): The Departure of the Great Prophet Daniel
- + Apr. 2<sup>nd</sup> (24 Paremhotep): The Apparition of the Pure Virgin St. Mary on her church in Zeiton
- + Apr. 5<sup>th</sup> (27 Paremhotep): The Departure of St. Macarius the Great
- + Apr. 6<sup>th</sup> (28 Paremhotep): The Departure of Anba Sarabamon, known as "Abu Tarha" Bishop of El-Menufia
- + Apr. 7<sup>th</sup> (29 Paremhotep): The Feast of the Glorious Annunciation
- + Apr. 8<sup>th</sup> (30 Paremhotep): The Commemoration of the Archangel Gabriel the Announcer
- + Apr. 10<sup>th</sup> (2 Parmoute): Last Friday of Lent
- + Apr. 11<sup>th</sup> (3 Parmoute): Lazarus Saturday
- + Apr. 12<sup>th</sup> (4 Parmoute): Palm Sunday
- + Apr. 16<sup>th</sup> (8 Parmoute): Covenant Thursday
- + Apr. 17<sup>th</sup> (9 Parmoute): Good Friday
- + Apr. 18<sup>th</sup> (10 Parmoute): Joyous Saturday
- + Apr. 19<sup>th</sup> (11 Parmoute): Feast of the Resurrection
- + Apr. 25<sup>th</sup> (17 Parmoute): The Martyrdom of St. James One of the Twelve Apostles and the Brother of St. John the Beloved
- + Apr. 26<sup>th</sup> (18 Parmoute): Thomas's Sunday

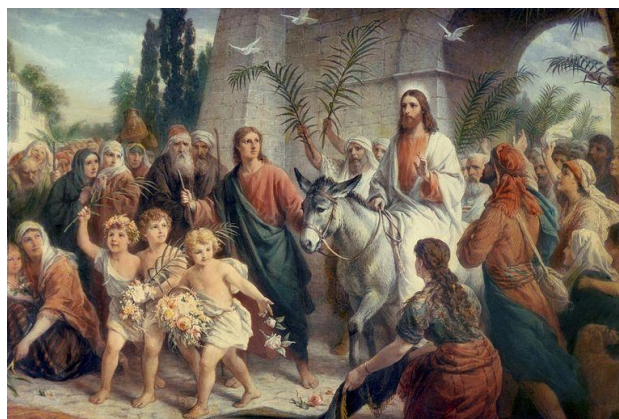
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## Palm Sunday

Palm Sunday is the seventh Sunday in the Great Lent and is also known as "Hosanna Sunday". The word "Hosanna" is Greek and is derived from the Hebrew word "Ho-sha-a-nan" which means "Save us". It is the word that the Jewish multitude said in welcoming Our Lord Jesus Christ as King during His entry to Jerusalem. The word "Palm" came from the way the multitude welcomed Our Lord by using palm and olive branches. From here came the naming of this Sunday as Palm Sunday.

Palm Sunday in the Coptic Orthodox Church has a special rite. During the offering of the morning incense, a procession inside the church consisting of the Holy cross, candles, palm and olive branches, flowers, incense, and the icon of the entry of Our Lord to Jerusalem is made. Twelve readings from the Holy Gospel are read at different locations in the church. Before each reading, the priest prays the prayer of the Holy Gospel. All these do not occur during regular Sundays. But this rite is repeated during the two feasts of the Holy Cross which occur on 17 Thout and 10 Paremhotep.

The other peculiar rite in the Holy Liturgy is the general funeral prayers after the Liturgy and taking away the white clothes. The reason for the General Funeral is that no offering of incense is made during the Pascha week because during this week the church concentrates only on Our Lord's suffering. If a person departs during the Pascha week, his coffin is entered into the church and one of the Pascha hours is prayed, no offering of incense is made, the priest prays for him the absolution and then sprinkles on the coffin water from the General Funeral.

Source:

[https://www.suscopts.org/deacons/church/palm\\_sunday.html](https://www.suscopts.org/deacons/church/palm_sunday.html)



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## The Coptic Feasts

### Feasts and Worship

Moses' Law arranged seven major feasts (lev. 23), which had their rites and sanctity, as a living part of the common worship. These feasts are: the Sabbath or Saturday of every week, the first day of every month, the Seventh Year, the Year of Jubilee, the Passover (Pasch), the feast of the weeks (Pentecost), the feast of Tabernacles (feast of Harvest). After the Babylonian exile two feasts were added, i.e., the feast of Purim and the feast of Dedication. The aim of these feasts was to revive the spirit of joy and gladness in the believers' lives and to consecrate certain days for the common worship in a holy convocation (assembly) (Exod 12:16; Lev. 23); and to remember God's promises and actions with His people to renew the covenant with Him on both common and personal levels. The feasts were a way leading to enjoy Christ, the continuous "Feast" and the Source of eternal joy.

When the Word of God was incarnate and became man, He submitted to the Law and attended and celebrated the feasts. However, He diverted the attention from the symbol to reality, and from the outward appearances to the inner depths (John 2, 5, 6, 7, 12); to grant the joy of the feast through practicing the secret communion with God and receiving His redeeming deeds.

Almost all the days are feasts to the Coptic Church. Although she is known for bearing the cross, she is eager to have her children live, in the midst of sufferings in spiritual gladness. She is capable, by the Lord's help, to raise them above tribulations. In other words, the Coptic Church is continuously suffering and joyful at the same time, her feasts are uninterrupted, and her hymns with a variety of melodies are unceasing.

### A Church of joy

One of the main characteristics of the Coptic Church is "joy," even in her ascetic life. St. John Cassian described the Egyptian monks who spread from Alexandria to the southern borders of Thabied (Aswan) saying that the voice of praise came out perpetually from the monasteries and caves, as if the whole land of Egypt became a delightful paradise. He called the Egyptian monks heavenly terrestrials or terrestrial angles.

St. Jerome informs us about an abbot called Apollo who was always smiling. He attracted many to the ascetic life as a source of inward joy and heartfelt satisfaction in our Lord Jesus. He often used to say: "Why do we struggle with an unpleasant face?! Aren't we the heirs of the eternal life?! Leave the unpleasant and the grieved faces to pagans, and weeping to the evil-doers. But it befits the righteous and the saints to be joyful and pleasant since they enjoy the spiritual gifts."

The church relates and joins the feasts to the ascetic life. The believers practice fasting, sometimes for almost two months (Great Lent) in preparation for the feast, in order to realize that their joy is based on their communion with God and not on the matter of eating, drinking and new clothes.

The Coptic feasts have deep and sweet hymns, and splendid rites which inflame the spirit. Their aim is to offer the living heavenly and evangelic thought and to expose the Holy Trinity and Their redeeming work in the life of the church, in a way that is simple enough to be experienced by children, and deep enough to quench the thirst of theologians.

*Fr. Tadros Y Malaty, Introduction to the Coptic Orthodox Church*



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## How to Benefit Spiritually in the Holy Pascha Week

### 1. Our Behavior Inside and Outside of Church

It is very noticeable that many people during Pascha Week are one thing inside church and completely different outside. Inside church, black curtains, somber hymns, solemn readings, and concentrating on the suffering of Christ. Outside of church, we often laugh, joke around, socialize, think and talk about many worldly issues. We lose all the spiritual depth that we gained inside church. Let us concentrate our thoughts, conversations, and meditations around the events of this holy week and the Passion of our Savior.

### 2. Retreat

During our regular fasting days, we put the words of the bible before us, "Consecrate a fast, call a sacred assembly." (Joel 1:14). How much more then should we apply this commandment during Holy Week? This week should be characterized by solitude and retreat with God, by staying away from idle discussions and various means of entertainment of pleasure. Reserve your time to God and to spiritual activities worthy of this week.

In the first hour of the Monday of the Holy Pascha, we read St. Shenouda's homily, which warns us: "Brethren if we want to escape God's punishment and find mercy in His eyes, let us sit every evening alone by ourselves and search our souls..."

### 3. Follow the Steps of Christ

Meditate on the events of the week one by one: from Palm Sunday, when Christ refused His worldly kingdom and the Jews gave up their hope in Him, until they crucified and buried Him. On Palm Sunday, ask yourself, "Is Christ King and Lord over everything in my life? Do I, like Christ, turn down worldly glory for spiritual and eternal glory? During the General Funeral Service, do I consider myself attending my own funeral?"

And when the church denounces Judas' traitorous kiss on the eve of the Wednesday of Pascha Week, ask yourself in prayer, "How often, O Lord have I betrayed You? How many times have I told You words of love in prayers, while my actions show the opposite and my heart is far away from You?"

### 4. Share in the Fellowship of His Suffering

Saint Paul said, "That I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His suffering, being conformed to His death." (Philippians 3:10) Can we give ourselves an exercise this week to share in the fellowship of His suffering and be conformed to His death? Can we follow Him in His suffering and ascend with Him to the Cross? Can we say with St. Paul, "With Christ I have been crucified; it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me."? (Galatians 2:20).

Therefore, in order for Christ to live in us, we have to carry our cross and follow Him. If you have a cross in your life, do not complaint about it. Instead, rejoice in it and bear it for Christ's sake. "for to you has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him but to suffer for His sake." (Philippians 1:29).

### 5. Asceticism

Whoever puts the suffering of Christ before him will not take any pleasure in eating and drinking or pampering the body. But in order to succeed in pursuing asceticism, we must satisfy our souls with spiritual food so that it may thrive and overcome physical hunger. It was customary for the Church to fast until at least the 9th hour on normal fasting days and until sunset during the Holy Week of Pascha.



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St. Athanasius even declared that this period of Holy Week should be received with “longer prayers, fasts, and vigils so that we may be able to anoint our lintels with precious blood and escape the destroyer.” And again, the blessed saint says, “Let us thus engage in the holy fasts, as having been prescribed by Him, and by means of which we find the way to God.”

### 6. Spiritual Readings

Spiritual readings are also food for the soul. The church has organized for us a treasure of appropriate readings for every day of the Holy Week, comprised of Gospel readings, Old Testament prophesies that correspond to the events of each day, spiritual explanations and sermons of the Church Fathers. On Joyous Saturday (Apocalypse night) the church reads the entire Book of Revelation.

### 7. Hymns

The hymns of the Pascha Week are moving and full of spiritual depth. Hymns, like reading, preserve the thought from wandering and guide it in spiritual direction. We should continue to recite the hymns while walking, meditating, resting.

### 8. Prayer

Since the prayers of the Agpeya (Book of Prayers) are not used during Holy Week, we are to substitute personal prayers in their place, in addition to the intensive prayers of the church, asking the Lord who bore the sins of the world and died for us, to forgive and have mercy upon us according to His great mercy.

### 9. Confession and Communion

During this week, each person must sit with himself and remember his sins and put them on Christ’s shoulders and tell Him in shame, “Carry O Lord my sins too, with the sins of the rest of humanity. Take my sins and nail them to the Cross with You, so that Your Blood may wipe them away!”

Look carefully at your sins and know that they are the cause of His crucifixion. Many people cry out of their sorrow for Christ’s suffering while they crucify Him every day with their sins. We should not feel sorry for Christ during this week, but should be sorry for our sins that caused Him these pains. As Jesus told the women that were crying over Him, “Daughters of Jerusalem, do not cry for Me, but cry for yourselves and your children.” (Luke 23:28).

Before the Cross, we all stand as sinners, all under the condemnation. “no one is righteous, not even one.” (Psalm 14:3). We confess our sins and prepare ourselves for communion. There are three liturgies during Holy Week: on Passover Thursday, Holy Saturday, and Easter Sunday (Preceded, of course, by the Liturgy of Palm Sunday).

### 10. Spiritual Storage

Pascha Week is not an opportunity to benefit for a week only, but a time to store up spiritual nourishment enough to last the whole year, particularly needed during the 50 days after the Resurrection when there is no fasting.

Source:

<https://lacopts.org/story/how-to-benefit-spiritually-in-the-holy-pascha-week/>



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## Photos of March

