

Mini-Messenger - Holy Week 2021

Fr. Stavros Message

I wrote extensively in the April 2021 *Messenger* with some guidelines for Holy Week. There were a few things at press time for that issue that were still up in the air. As we approach Holy Week, the Metropolis of Atlanta has relaxed a few of the guidelines. Our Parish Council and our Leadership Team have discussed what is allowed under the new guidelines as well as what is safe for us, as we mark Holy Week this year. Other parishes may have slightly different practices, but these are offered with careful and prayerful thought and after a lot of discussion. Here are some guidelines for Holy Week, as well as some changes in the protocols. Please read carefully.

We're Looking for Help with Holy Week Photos—Because most of our photo ministry people are fulfilling other roles this year, we don't have people to take photos for Holy Week. Many of you bring phones and take pictures during Holy Week. If you wouldn't mind, please send some photos from the services to Fr. Stavros at frstav@gmail.com. Also if you are interested in taking photos for a specific service, such as Good Friday evening or the Anastasis, please let Fr. Stavros know directly.



Holy Week Books for sale—If you don't own a Holy Week book, you can buy one for \$30. These books are what we use for the services of Holy Week, and they last a lifetime. (I still have my first one from 1981). You can call the office at 813-876-8830 and come in to pick one up or you can see Charlie or Alex after any service and they can get you one.

Changes to the General Worship Guidelines in Our Parish (Effective Saturday, April 10)

1. **Front door open** - We will open the front door of the church and people may enter through the front door.
2. **Light candles** - Worshippers may light a wax candle when they enter the church if they wish to do so. This is optional. Seven day candles will now return to the narthex.
3. **Venerate icons** - Worshippers may venerate icons if they feel comfortable. For those who do not feel comfortable venerating icons, simply make a small bow in front of the icon and make the sign of the cross.
4. **Do not congregate in the Narthex** - please do not congregate in the Narthex. Light your candles efficiently, venerate the icons and take your seat in the church. The ushers will monitor how many people are in the narthex at a time. If many people arrive at the same time, some will be asked to remain outside until the narthex is emptied so that only a few people are in the narthex at one time. Please pause only as long as needed to light a candle.



5. **No sign-in table** - Because we will be using the front doors of the church to enter, we will not require everyone to go to the sign-in table at the side of the church. We will still be utilizing SignUpGenius.
6. **No taking of temperatures** - The Metropolis of Atlanta issued a new set of protocols for COVID-19, which included discontinuing the practice of temperature taking prior to entering the church.
7. **Books will be in the pews (liturgy books) or in the Narthex (Lenten books).** Leave liturgy books in the pews at the end of the Divine Liturgy. Leave Lenten books on the front pew after any Lenten service.. Liturgy books will also be available on a sign in table in the hall.
8. **Once church is filled, people will be directed to the hall.** There will be a narthex set up in the hall, with a place to light candles as well as an icon to venerate for those who wish to do so.
9. **Bulletins will be handed out.** There will be a bulletin for each Sunday available in the Narthex. Please feel free to take one. Bulletins will also be available online and on our app.
10. **Veneration of the Gospel during Orthros** - During the Orthros service, it is customary for the Gospel to be taken out on to the solea after it is read so that the faithful may venerate the Gospel. You will be invited to venerate the Gospel, either by reverencing the Gospel itself or bowing in front of the Gospel.
11. **Antithoron after Holy Communion when we can do it** - It has been a custom for those receiving Holy Communion to receive a piece of Antithoron (blessed bread) after receiving Holy Communion. This practice was suspended because of the pandemic. We will be resuming this as we are able. An altar boy or designated server will be handing people a piece of bread with either tongs or gloves. This will be possible only when we have enough altar boys to assist with this tasks, so it may not happen at weekday services. Also, please do not put your hand in the bread bowl or allow your children to put their hands in the bread bowl.
12. **Veneration of Cross and Epitaphios during Holy Week** - During Holy Week, it is customary to venerate the icon of the Bridegroom, the Cross of Christ and the Epitaphios (burial shroud). You are invited to venerate them as you feel comfortable, either reverencing them or making a bow in front of them.



Some Things that are Not Changing

1. **We will still utilize SignUpGenius in order to register to come to worship.** It gives us an idea of how many people will be at a service, so that we can plan appropriately. This is certainly needed through Holy Week.
2. **Masks are still required in church and on our property.** They may be removed momentarily to receive Holy Communion.
3. **Limited Seating in Church**—the seating capacity in the church will remain at the level it is now, approximately 85 people in the pews, plus the “workers” —choir, ushers, altar boys, etc. Once the number goes over 85, additional people will be seated in the hall. *Should things open up further, we will revisit this number. Also, should*



we open up at a higher capacity at some point where social distancing is not required, the Saturday Divine Liturgies will continue to allow for social distancing and the hall will be set up for social distancing as well.

4. **The Saturday Divine Liturgies and the Paraklesis Services will continue.** We will review these each month. Right now, the schedule calls for Divine Liturgies each Saturday through the month of May and Paraklesis each Wednesday morning in April (except for Holy Week) and each Wednesday evening in May at 6:00 p.m.
5. **No Gathering after church for the time being**—we will discuss resuming some kind of outdoor coffee hour after Pascha.

Holy Week Plans Specific to Our Parish, and Specific to This Year

Palm Sunday and Pascha Greetings One of the highlights of last year's Holy Week was having our children offer Palm Sunday greetings and our families offer Paschal greetings. Please stay tuned for instructions on how and when this is going to be done.

Making Palm Crosses will not be done this year. We will order them pre-made and will distribute them at the end of the Liturgy on Palm Sunday. We hope in 2022 to resume the tradition of a breakfast after liturgy on Saturday of Lazarus and making Palm Crosses as a community.

Philoptochos Palm Sunday Luncheon - There will not be a Palm Sunday Luncheon this year. We hope to continue this tradition next year.



Choir will sing every night except Holy Wednesday night - One awesome improvement to the Holy Week journey is that the choir will sing every night this year, except for Holy Wednesday night.



All Night Vigil at the Cross - do it in personal or virtual - For the past eight years, we have done an All-Night Vigil at the Cross of Christ. Those who participated found it VERY inspiring. The vigil will begin following the service of the 12 Gospels and will continue until the service of the Lamentations on Good Friday Evening. Thus, beginning at 6:30 p.m. on Holy Thursday, there will be 28 continuous hours of prayer in our church. ***This way, even those who can't come out in the middle of the night can participate by taking a shift during the day*** The schedule will be as follows:

Holy Thursday Evening

6:30 p.m. - 10:00 p.m.

Service of the 12 Gospels

10:00 p.m. - 9:00 a.m. (Fri.)

Vigil of Psalm Reading at the Cross

Good Friday

9:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.

Service of the Royal Hours

11:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.

Vigil of Psalm Reading at the Cross

3:00 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.

The Service of the Un-nailing

4:30 p.m. - 7:00 p.m.

Vigil of Psalm Reading at the foot of the Cross

7:00 p.m. - 10:30 p.m.

Service of the Lamentations

A SignUpGenius is available on our website for people to sign up for an hour or two to stand at the Cross and read from the book of Psalms. Charlie Hambos will again be coordinating this for us. If you are interested in participating at the All-Night/Add-Day Vigil on Holy Thursday or have any questions, please contact Charlie Hambos at 813-843-8471 or chambos@stjohntpa.org ***There will be a virtual option to participate in the all-night vigil for those who cannot be here in person.***

Good Friday Decoration of the Kouvouklion—We will use the large Kouvouklion once again this year. However, we are going to use silk flowers on it, so that there isn't the pressure to have many people come and decorate it within a short period of time. The Kouvouklion will be decorated long before Good Friday. We hope to have the traditional decorating take place in 2022. We will have baskets of carnations around the Kouvouklion which will be handed out at the end of the Lamentations.

Good Friday Procession—Last year, one of the most poignant memories of Holy Week was the indoor procession on Good Friday night. We didn't go outside with the Kouvouklion. Rather the church was completely darkened, with only a few candles burning. It was silent, heavy, beautiful. We've decided to give the faithful this same experience this year. Rather than go outside, we are going to take the Kouvouklion around the inside of the hall and the inside of the church. Everyone can stay in their seats. Only the procession will move. The Kouvouklion will be raised in both the Hall and the Church so that people may pass under the Epitaphios as they have in the past.

Anastasis (Resurrection Service) *As of the writing of this letter, we are still not sure what our plans will be for the Resurrection Service. So please stay tuned for more details as the time get closer.*

The Easter Egg Hunt will resume in 2022.

Even though Holy Week will be modified a little bit this year, it will be beautiful and will be a wonderful change after last year's stay-at-home Holy Week experience. I wish you all a blessed remainder of Great Lent, an uplifting Holy Week and a Kali Anastasi!

With love in the Lord,

+Fr. Stavros N. Akrotirianakis

Holy Friday Sunday School Retreat

Friday, April 30 1:00 p.m.- 3:00 p.m.

The retreat will conclude in time to attend the Apokathelosis Service - The Unnailing/Burial of Christ at 3:00 p.m.

All parents are encouraged to attend!

We are excited to offer a smaller scale retreat this year for Sunday school students who would like to attend. We will also post the lessons we prepared last year for those that would like to participate from home.

1:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m. Small Sessions Journey through Holy Week including a craft

Individual Snacks and Waters will be provided



We Hope you can join us!
Please call or email Zackie Ameres to RSVP at
813-245-3813 or zackiec@yahoo.com