



Fire & Light

St. Symeon Orthodox Church

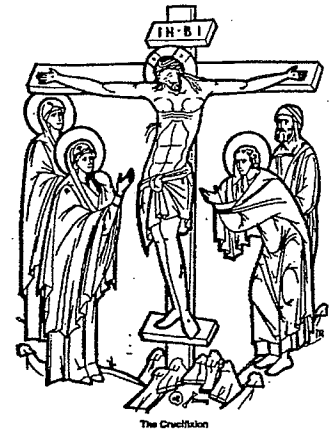
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✠ April 28, 2013 ✠

Palm Sunday



The Crucifixion

The Triumphal Entry of Our Lord into Jerusalem

Apostles Jason & Sosipater of the 70 and their companions at Corfu (63 AD)

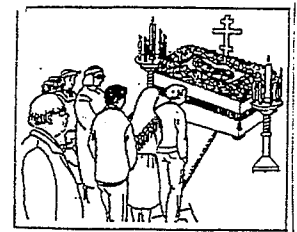
Services of Holy Week

- ✠ TONIGHT 5:00pm First Bridegroom Matins
- ✠ April 29 & 30 - Holy Monday & Tuesday ~ 6:30pm Bridegroom Matins
- ✠ May 1 - Holy Wednesday 6:30pm Holy Unction
- ✠ May 2 - Holy Thursday 10:00am Mystical Supper Liturgy
6:30pm 12 Passion Gospels



✠ Holy Friday Services ✠ May 3 ~

- ✠ 10:00am Royal Hours
- ✠ 4:00pm Vespers - Shroud to the Tomb
- ✠ 7:00pm Lamentations at the Tomb
- ✠ All Night Vigil at the Tomb ✠



- ✠ Holy Saturday ~ May 4 10:00am Divine Liturgy

⇒ Pascha Preparation following - your help is needed

- ✠ Holy PASCHA ✠ Begins Saturday, May 4 at 11:30pm
- ✠ Pascha Sunday May 5 3:00pm ~ Paschal Agape Vespers
- ✠ Bright Monday May 6 10:00am Divine Liturgy w/ Procession



Christ is Everything

✠ "Christ is new life. How can I say it? Christ is everything. He is Joy, He is Life, He is Light. He is the True Light Who makes man joyful, makes him soar with happiness; makes him see everything, everybody; makes him feel for everyone, to want everyone with him, everyone with Christ. When we find some treasure or whatever else, we don't want to tell anybody. The Christian, on the other hand, when he finds Christ, when he knows Christ, when Christ dwells within his own little soul and he feels Him, he wants to shout and tell it everywhere; he wants to talk about Christ, say what Christ is, he wants to say: *Love Christ and put nothing before His love.* Christ is Everything. He is the source of life, the ultimate desire, He is everything. Everything beautiful is in Christ."

~ Elder Porphyrios (+1991)

⇒ Nothing comes without effort. The help of God is always ready and always near, but is given only to those who seek and work, and only to those seekers who, after putting all their powers to the test, then cry out with their whole heart: "Lord, help us."

~ St. Theophan the Recluse

For Holy Week - Wisdom of the Holy Fathers

✠ We were enemies of God through sin, and God had appointed the sinner to die. There must needs therefore have happened one of two things; either that God, in His truth, should destroy all men, or that in His loving-kindness He should cancel the sentence. But behold the wisdom of God; He preserved both the truth of His sentence, and the exercise of His loving-kindness. Christ took our sins 'in His body on the tree, that we by His death might die to sin, and live unto righteousness' (I Pet. 2:24).
St. Cyril of Jerusalem, Catechetical Lectures

✠ "You should continually keep in mind the great humiliation which the Lord took upon Himself in His ineffable love for us: how the divine Logos dwelt in a womb; how He took human nature upon Himself; His birth from a woman; His gradual bodily growth; the shame He suffered, the insults the vilification, ridicule and abuse; how He was scourged and spat upon, derided and mocked; the scarlet robe, the crown of thorns; His condemnation by those in power; the outcry of the unruly Jews, men of His own race, against Him: 'Away with him, away with him, crucify him' (Jn. 19:15); the cross, the nails, the lance, the drink of vinegar and gall; the scorn of the Gentiles; the derision of the passers-by who said: 'If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross and we will believe you' (cf. Mt. 27:39-42); and the rest of the sufferings which He patiently accepted for us: crucifixion; death; the three-day burial; the descent into hell. Then keep in mind all that has come from these sufferings. See to what a height of glory the Lord's human nature was raised up by God's justice through these sufferings and humiliations."
St. Mark the Ascetic

✠ Adam received the sentence, 'Cursed is the ground in your labors; thorns and thistles shall it bring forth to you' (Gen. 3:17,18). For this cause Jesus assumes the thorns, that He may cancel the sentence; for this cause also was He buried in the earth, that the earth which had been cursed might receive the blessing instead of a curse.
St. Cyril of Jerusalem

✠ For by the sacrifice of His own body, He both put an end to the law which was against us, and made a new beginning of life for us, by the hope of resurrection which He has given us. For since from man it was that death prevailed over men, for this cause conversely, by the Word of God being made man has come about the destruction of death and the resurrection of life; as the man which bore Christ saith: For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive: and so forth. For no longer now do we die as subject to condemnation; but as men who rise from the dead we await the general resurrection of all, which in its own times He shall show, even God, Who has also wrought it, and bestowed it upon us.
St. Athanasius the Great

✠ For what principle did the Blood of His Only-Begotten Son delight the Father, Who would not receive even Isaac, when he was being offered by his father, but changed the sacrifice, putting a ram in the place of the human victim? Is it not evident that the Father accepts Him, but neither asked for Him nor demanded Him; but on account of the Incarnation, and because humanity must be sanctified by the Humanity of God, that He might deliver us Himself, and overcome the tyrant, and draw us to Himself by the mediation of His Son, Who also arranged this to the honor of the Father, Whom it is manifest that He obeys in all things? So much we have said of Christ; the greatest part of what we might say shall be revered with silence.
St. Gregory the Theologian, Second Oration on Pascha

“How much has He honored wretched man...”

A meditation on the Crucified Lord – the Word made flesh

From Counsels from the Holy Mountain, Elder Ephraim

The death of the Lord on the Cross brought us back to our former status as sons, in which the children of God cry out, "Abba, Father!" (Gal. 4:6) The terrible sufferings of the Lord made us worthy to become children of God, heirs of God and joint heirs of Christ! (Rom. 8:17) I am so filled with elation when I reflect that I am a child of God and that the good Father has a place of ineffable repose and bliss prepared for me!

"O death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?" (1 Cor. 15:55) What joy the Christian feels when he considers that when the time comes for these physical eyes to close, at once the eyes of the soul will open, and he will see a new world new beings, new creations, incomparably superior, incorruptible, eternal!

The heavenly kingdom is not eating and drinking (Rom. 14:17), but spiritual ambrosia of the holy love of God, eternal delight, unspeakable joy.

"I desire that they may be with Me where I am, that they behold My glory." (Jn. 17:24) Oh, the infinite depth of God's love! How much has He honored wretched man by exalting him up to God Himself and bestowing upon him eternal glory and blessedness!

So shall we deprive ourselves of such glory and blessed-the sake of a short-lived, sinful pleasure? May God show compassion on all Christians and enlighten them to follow the path of salvation and repentance. Amen, my Panaghia!

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If one meditates on the crucified Lord and penetrates the mystery of God's love for man, he sees how much the Lord endured for each one of us personally. What shall we render unto the Lord for everything? (Ps. 115:3) Man, however, was not found worthy of this great and immense love.

As soon as we do something good, we see our ego jump up as if we have created heaven and earth. Whereas God made everything out of nothing, and yet He humbled Himself so much!

The compassion of God has no bounds, and blessed is the man who through prudence has come to realize the love of God. For the sake of earthy, disobedient, insubordinate man, who had become a prey to the passions and demons, the Son of God Himself came down and was hanged on the Cross! Alongside this we see our own laziness, coldness, indifference, while God on the other hand shows us His providence and love in many different ways. Truly, man is a mystery.

Boundless and unlimited is God's patience! What doesn't He hear and see within each person! When we see some ingratitude in a person close to us; when we see him behave harshly, ungratefully, inhumanly, mercilessly; when we see that he does not say at least one "thanks," we hold it against him. How many things could God hold against us men who behave callously and abominably towards Him?

Every person in this world, every one of us, is more or less ungrateful. God feeds us, He clothes us, He protects us. He has given us a guardian angel. He feeds us with His holy Mysteries, with His Flesh and Blood. He has prepared a vast kingdom for us. He puts up with us when we go astray. He welcomes us when we repent. But we are impious, we blaspheme Him, insult Him, disregard Him, and He is forbearing and tolerant; He awaits our return. But as if God were indebted to us, we never even think in passing about the fear of God, reverence for Him, or the piety we should have when we remember His presence. We forget that we should bow our heads in veneration of this great God—the most wondrous, inexpressible, unsearchable, boundless, and most sweet God. If each one of us had thousands of mouths, we would still be unable to extol Him worthily and fittingly for His countless gifts for us! This is why the Apostle Paul, after repeated ecstasies and theorias and delights of God, was often overcome and cried out those immortal words: "Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways beyond finding out!" (Rom.11:33)

"Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has become His counselor?" (Rom.11:34) Who can know how the infinite Nous works, not only in the heavenly realm, but also in the earth and the underworld?

Just think – effortlessly, without toil, He feeds every living thing: men, animals, the fields, the reptiles, the fish, the microbes, the millions of living creatures. He cares for everything and looks after everything.

"How magnified are Thy works, O Lord! In wisdom hast Thou made them all; the earth is filled with Thy creation." Ps.103:26) "He spake and they came to be; He commanded, and they were created. (Ps.148:5) Let there be light, and there was light; there be earth, and there was earth; let there be stars, sun, and moon, (Gen.1:3-18) and there were these stupendous creations, these colossal, huge bodies, hanging and moving in space, which illuminate and beautify the sky—all came to be at a single command of God!

"The Word became flesh and dwelt among us," (Jn.1:14) the Word of the Father. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." (Jn1:1) He came and took on flesh and became man, and the world came into being through Him—He made the world! He gave us the right to become children of God. (Jn.1:12) He came to His creatures, and they did not receive Him. Now just think—He made the world and the people, and they were cold and callous and did not receive Him. He came as a stranger; He was given hospitality on the wood of the Cross instead of on a mattress; He was given hospitality in a grave; the earth was shaken, the veil was rent, the sun was darkened, the universe was terrified!

"Who is so great a God as our God?" (Ps.76:13).Great art Thou, O Lord, and wondrous are Thy deeds, and no word will ever suffice to hymn Thee fittingly!" † † †

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✠ My spirit is given over to the humble service of the Cross, which is a stumbling block to unbelievers, but to us salvation and eternal life. St. Ignatius of Antioch (c.110)

# Hymns of Holy Week

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"As the Lord went to His voluntary Passion, He said to His apostles on the way: 'Behold we go up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man shall be delivered up, as it is written of Him.' Come, therefore, let us also go with Him, purified in mind; let us be crucified with Him and die for His sake to the pleasures of this life, that we may also live with Him and hear Him say: 'I go no more to the earthly Jerusalem to suffer, but I ascend to my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God; and I shall raise you up to the Jerusalem on high in the Kingdom of Heaven.'"

*Praises from Bridegroom Matins of Great and Holy Monday*

"Behold, my soul, the Master entrusts thee with a talent. Receive His gift with fear; make it gain interest for Him; distribute to the needy, and make the Lord your Friend. So shall you stand on His right hand when He comes in glory, and you shall hear His blessed words: 'Enter servant into the joy of your Lord.' I have gone astray, O Savior, but in Thy great mercy count me worthy of this joy."

*Doxastikon from Bridegroom Matins for Great and Holy Tuesday*

"While the sinful woman brought oil of myrrh, the disciple came to an agreement with the transgressors. She rejoiced to pour out what was very precious, he made haste to sell the One Who is above all price. She acknowledged Christ as Lord, he severed himself from the Master. She was set free, but Judas became the slave of the enemy. Grievous was his lack of love! Great was her repentance! Grant such repentance also unto me, O Savior Who has suffered for our sake and save us."

*Stichera from Bridegroom Matins for Great and Holy Wednesday*

"In haste the council of the Jews assembles, to deliver the Fashioner and Creator of all to Pilate. O transgressors, O unbelievers! For they make ready to surrender unto judgement He Who comes to judge the living and the dead; they prepare the Passion of Him who heals the Passions. Great is Thy mercy, O Long-suffering Lord, glory to Thee."

*Stichera from Bridegroom Matins for Great and Holy Thursday*

"For my sake was Thou crucified, to become for me a fountain of forgiveness. Thy side was pierced that Thou mightest pour upon me the streams of life. Thou wast transfixed with nails, that through the depth of Thy Sufferings I might know with certainty the height of Thy Power, and cry to Thee, O Christ, the Giver of Life: O Savior, glory to Thy Cross and to Thy Passion."

*Stichera from Lamentations of Great and Holy Friday*

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## And once more from Great Lent

"Thou hast put to death the passions of my flesh by Thy divine Cross, and by Thy Passion Thou hast given all men freedom from the passions. Lord, count me worthy also to see Thy holy Resurrection --- that I may receive Thy great and abundant mercy."

*- 1st Friday of the Great Fast*

"Heal me, O Lord, and I shall be healed; by Thy wounds, cleanse the wounds of my soul, O Christ, Who has accepted suffering in the flesh."

"O Lord, Who in Thy surpassing love hast been crowned with thorns, cleanse my soul, for it is full of thorns and overgrown with the weeds of all the passions."

*- 3rd Friday of the Great Fast*

"Thy tomb, O Christ, has brought me life; for Thou, the Lord of life, hast come and cried to those who were dwelling in the grave: 'O all who are in bonds, be loosed; for I am come, the Ransom of the world.'"

*- 3rd Saturday of the Great Fast*

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## Let us learn...

Let us learn humility from Christ, humiliation from David, and from Peter to shed tears over what has happened; but let us also learn to avoid the despair of Samson, Judas, and the wisest of men, Solomon.

**St Hesychios the Priest (5<sup>th</sup> C)**

For Holy Thursday:

**HOMILY ~ On Our Spiritual Food ~ St. Nikolai of Serbia (+1956)**

***"I am the Bread of Life." (John 6:48)***

Thus spoke the Lord Jesus to the hungry generation of man. This word was realized throughout the centuries to the numerous followers of Christ who received the Lord as the nourishment of their souls. A desperate young man who was close to suicide confessed to a spiritual father. The spiritual father listened to him carefully and said to him: "My son, you are to blame for your misfortune. Your soul is starved to death. Throughout your entire life, you learned only how to nourish your body but you never thought that the soul requires nourishment; greater and more often than that which the body needs. Your soul is at the point of death from hunger. My son, partake of and drink Christ [Holy Communion]. Only that can restore your soul from death. Daily and continually partake and drink of Christ. He is the Life-creating Bread of our souls." The young man listened to the elder and returned to life.

Brethren, let us nourish our soul with Christ so that our soul may be alive and healthy. Let us continually nourish our mind with Christ's thoughts so that our mind might be enlightened and clear. Let us continually nourish our heart with the love of Christ so that our heart might be full and joyful. Let us continually nourish our will with the commandments of Christ and the example of Christ so that our will, every minute, might perform good deeds. Let Christ's thoughts be our thoughts and Christ's love our love and Christ's good will our good will. Let us continually nourish our souls with Christ the Lord; with our soul let us continually partake of Him and drink Him! There is no more nourishing Bread than He; there is no sweeter drink than He. In Holy Communion, He gives Himself completely to us: Body and Blood. But, Holy Communion is a warning that our souls must continually be nourished by Him; continually partake of Him and drink of Him just as we continually breathe. O, our God and Sweet Lord, stir our souls that they be continually nourished by You and remain alive. You are our Bread of Life.

### **The Divine Consecration**

If a human blessing had power to change nature, what can we say of divine consecration where the very words of Our Lord and Savior act? The Sacrament that you receive is consecrated by the word of Christ. If the word of Elijah had power to draw down fire from heaven, will not the word of Christ be powerful enough to change the character of the elements?

You have read of the work of creating all things that he spoke the word, and they were made; He commanded, and they were created. The word of Christ which then could make what is out of nothing, can it not change the things that are into what they were not? To give new natures to things is no less wonderful than to change their natures.

But why do we use arguments? Let us give more immediate examples, and by the instance of the Incarnation show the truth of the mystery. Did the use of nature proceed when the Lord Jesus was born of Mary? If we look to the order of generation, it normally results from the union of a woman with a man. It is then clear that the Virgin gave birth outside the order of nature. This body that we consecrate is virgin-born. Why then do you seek the natural order in the case of the Body of Christ, since the Lord Himself was born of a virgin in a way beyond nature? In truth it was the true flesh of Christ that was crucified and buried; indeed, therefore, the Sacrament is of His flesh.

**St. Ambrose of Milan (397)**

### **When Christ lives within you...**

When Christ lives within you, fear nothing. In order for Christ to live within you, much humility is needed. Mentally fall at His immaculate feet and weep saying, "My Jesus, Thou alone art left for me in this humble life of mine as light and life. Show me Thy spiritual beauty, so that I may be filled with divine eros and run after Thy myrrh and cry out, 'My soul has cleaved to Thee, Thy right hand has helped me.' (Ps.62:8). Oh, my Jesus, when shall I come and appear before Thy face? (Ps.41:2) When, O light of my soul, shall I see Thee and be filled and say, 'Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God!'" (Rom.11:33).

**Elder Ephraim**

## His Sacrifice on the Cross

Our faith in Jesus Christ and in His Sacrifice on the Cross is founded upon our willingness to forgive, just as we seek forgiveness from Him. One who dismisses the necessity for forgiveness betrays the very Sign of the Cross being offered with their own right hand. Rather, to forgive is to taste the joy of spiritual liberation from the shackles of sin. Fr. Schmemmann said, "To forgive is to put between me and my 'enemy' the radiant forgiveness of God Himself. To forgive is to reject the hopeless 'dead-ends' of human relations and to refer them to Christ. Forgiveness is truly a 'breakthrough' of the Kingdom into this sinful and fallen world."

"We are children of God, and if children, then heirs, . . . provided we suffer with Him in order so that we may also be glorified with Him (Rom. 8: 16).

**Christ's suffering is never divorced from His victory over death.** He had to suffer and die in order to meet and conquer death. His voluntary obedience to His Father to die on the Cross enabled Him to "trample down death by death."

So too, for us to be called Christians, followers of Christ, we must accept our cross and suffering. We must die with Christ in order to reign with Him. This connection between suffering and glory is frequently presented to us by the Holy Church in order to encourage us when we meet trials.

For example, in the Church calendar, every Friday of the year is dedicated to the memory of the Cross and Crucifixion, while each Sunday is a celebration of the Resurrection. Also, each Sunday at Matins we sing a hymn which says, "Behold, through the Cross joy has come into all the world."

~ Fr. Anthony Stratis, New Orleans

*Someone Said:*

It has become what can Jesus do for me rather than taking up our cross daily and following Him, rather than conforming ourselves to His likeness - a painful process.

**St. Innocent of Alaska said:** "A Christian's duty is to "take up his cross." The word Cross means sufferings, sorrows and adversities. To take up one's cross means to bear without grumblings everything unpleasant, painful, sad, difficult and oppressive that may happen to us in life. . . without expecting any earthly reward in return, but bear it all with love, with joy and with courageous strength."

## While We Were Yet Sinners ~ St. Isaac the Syrian

"Do not call God just, for His justice is not manifest in the things concerning you. And if David calls Him just and upright, His Son revealed to us that He is good and kind. 'He is good', He says 'to the evil and to the impious.' How can you call God just when you come across the Scriptural passage on the wage given to the workers?...How can a man call God just when he comes across the passage on the Prodigal Son who wasted his wealth with riotous living, how for the compunction alone which he showed, the father ran and fell upon his neck and gave him authority over all his wealth?...Where, then, is God's justice, for while we are sinners Christ died for us!"

.... "Let us not be in doubt, O fellow human, concerning the hope of our salvation, seeing that the One who bore sufferings for our sakes is very concerned about our salvation; God's mercifulness is far more extensive than we can conceive, God's grace is greater than what we ask for."

## Biscuits ~ A word from the Desert

There was an elder who each day ate three biscuits. A brother came to him, and when they sat down to eat the old man set three biscuits before the brother. The old man saw that the brother needed more food and brought him three more biscuits. After they had their fill and got up, the old man condemned the brother and said to him, "It is not right, brother, to serve the flesh." The brother asked pardon and left. The next time the old man ate, he placed before himself three biscuits, as was his custom. He ate them, and was still hungry although he restrained himself. Again the next day he withstood his hunger. The old man began to weaken and he knew that God had abandoned him. Prostrating himself before God with tears, he begged that he be not abandoned. Then he saw an angel who said to him, "Because you condemned your brother, this has happened to you. Know therefore that the ability to deny the flesh or to do any good work is not within your power; rather it is the goodness of God which strengthens you."

## The Processions of Holy Week

In **Holy Friday Matins of the Twelve Passion Gospels** (Thursday evening), after the fifth Gospel is read, the priest carries the Crucifix into the center of the Church in procession. The Antiphon XV is sung: "*Today, He Who suspended the earth in the midst of the waters is hung upon the Tree.*" This procession symbolizes Christ going to be crucified. In some churches, the priest carries the cross with the body of Christ attached to the cross. In others, the priest carries the cross only and puts the body of Christ on the cross, or simply carries the processional cross, while the Golgotha cross is already in place in the center of the church.

In **Holy Friday Vespers**, the body of Christ is removed from the Cross and is carried into the altar and put aside, wrapped in a white shroud. Then the procession with the Shroud (Greek: *Epitaphios*; Russian: *Plaschanitsa*) from the altar to the tomb is made during the singing of "The Noble Joseph". This symbolizes the taking down of the Lord's body from the Cross and placing it in the tomb.

In **Holy Friday Matins** (Friday night) after the Great Doxology, another procession with the Shroud is made around the Church. This is a type of funeral procession of the Lord, and again symbolizes the noble Joseph of Arimathea carrying the body of Christ to the tomb and anointing it. In Byzantine tradition, the Shroud is brought into the altar after everyone passes beneath it upon returning within the church and the Tomb is set aside. In Slavic tradition, the Shroud returns to the tomb in the midst of the church until the **Midnight Service**, when at the ninth ode, "*Do not lament me, O Mother, seeing me in the tomb...for I shall arise and be glorified...*" it is taken up by the priest and laid upon the altar. The Tomb is dismantled or set aside during the Paschal procession. In both traditions, the Shroud remains on the altar and liturgies are served upon it through the forty days of Pascha until the eve of Ascension.

The **Pascha night** procession before the Resurrection Matins is the journey of the Myrrhbearing Women who went to the tomb to weep and to prepare the Lord's body according to the Jewish burial customs. They were surprised instead by the angelic message of Christ's Resurrection: "*Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here. He is risen, as He said.*" In the early Church, it was in this procession that newly baptized catechumens were physically brought to the Church. Every baptismal procession around the font is a reminder of this ancient procession, just as every Pascha procession is a reminder to the baptized of their baptismal vows.

The next processions of those of **Bright Week** and they are repeated after Liturgy on all six days. These remind of the journeys of the Apostles and each of us who follow the commands of Christ to go and preach to all nations, proclaiming the Good News of the Risen Christ. These processions can be repeated at the Mid-Pentecost with the Blessing of Waters and the Leavetaking (Greek: *Apodosis*) of Pascha, revealing that our Paschal joy remains with us throughout the forty days of "*the Feast of Feasts.*"

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## The Altar and the Tomb

The Altar corresponds to the Holy Tomb of Christ. On it, Christ brought Himself as a sacrifice to His God and Father through the offering of His Body as a sacrificial lamb, and as High Priest and Son of Man, offering and being offered as a mystical bloodless sacrifice, and appointing for the faithful reasonable worship, through which we have become sharers in eternal and immortal life. This lamb Moses prefigured in Egypt "*towards evening*" when its blood turned back the destroyer so that he would not kill the people (Exodus 12:7-13). The expression "*towards evening*" signifies towards evening the true Lamb is sacrificed, the One Who takes away the sin of the world on His Cross: "*For Christ, our Pascha, has been sacrificed for us.*" - **St. Germanos of Constantinople (8thC)**

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✦ Three monks once came to Elder Stephen in Palestine. They sat with him a long time discussing the salvation of the soul. Abba Stephen was silent. "Why don't you say something to us, Father? We came to you for spiritual benefit." "Forgive me, I heard nothing that you said up till now. However, what I know I shall tell you. Day and night, I gaze on nothing but our Lord Jesus Christ, nailed to the tree of the Cross." The monks departed, having received a lesson. - Palestine Paterikon