

**Holy Assumption Orthodox Church**  
*Celebrating 125 years witnessing to the Apostolic Faith*

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***Holy Assumption Orthodox Church is a parish of the Orthodox Church in America,  
Diocese of the Midwest***

**APRIL 13, 2025**

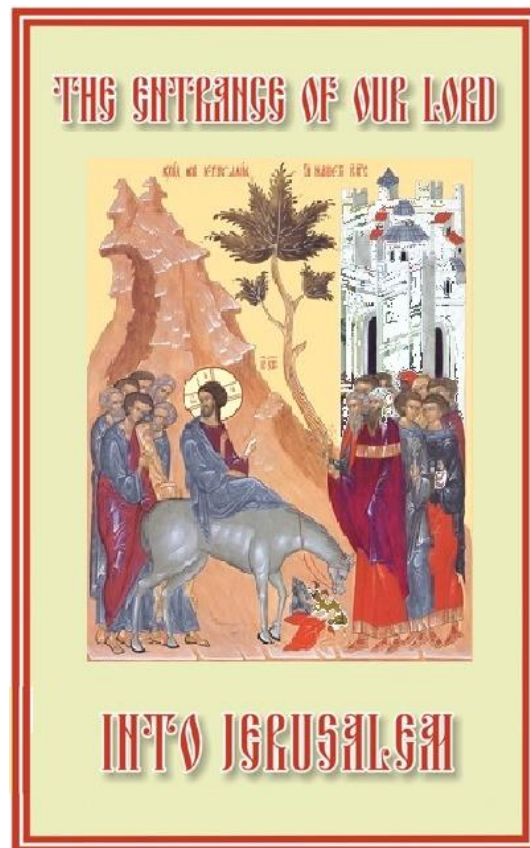
**PALM SUNDAY**  
***ENTRY OF OUR LORD INTO JERUSALEM***

**EPISTLE: Philippians 4:4-9**

Bretheren: 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.



**GOSPEL: Jn 12:1-18**

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.

### LITURGICAL SCHEDULE FOR HOLY WEEK AND PASCHA

<b>MON. Apr 14</b>		<b>Great and Holy Monday; Exod 1:1-20, Job 1:1-12</b>
	<b><u>6:00 PM</u></b>	<b>Presanctified Liturgy, Followed by Lenten soup social</b>
<b>TUE. Apr 15</b>		<b>Great and Holy Tuesday; Exod 2:5-10, Job 1:13-22</b>
<b>WED. Apr 16</b>		<b>Great and Holy Wednesday; Exod 2:11-22, Job 2:1-10</b>
	<b><u>6:00 PM</u></b>	<b>Presanctified Liturgy, Followed by Lenten soup social</b>
<b>THU. Apr 17</b>		<b>Great and Holy Thursday; The Last Supper</b>
	<b><u>9:30 AM</u></b>	<b>Vesperal Divine Liturgy of St. Basil the Great</b>
	<b><u>6:00 PM</u></b>	<b>Matins of Great &amp; Holy Friday - The Twelve Passion Gospels</b>
<b>FRI. Apr 18</b>		<b>Great and Holy Friday; Christ died on the Cross</b>
	<b><u>3:00 PM</u></b>	<b>Vespers of Great &amp; Holy Friday</b>
	<b><u>6:00 PM</u></b>	<b>Matins of Great &amp; Holy Saturday - Procession with the Holy Shroud</b>
<b>SAT. Apr 19</b>		<b>Great and Holy Saturday</b>
	<b><u>9:30 AM</u></b>	<b>Vesperal Divine Liturgy of St. Basil the Great</b>
	<b><u>8:30 PM</u></b>	<b>Nocturns and Resurrection Matins</b>
<b>SUN. Apr 20</b>		<b><i>GREAT AND HOLY PASCHA</i></b>
	<b>9:50 AM</b>	<b>Paschal Hour</b>
	<b>10:00 AM</b>	<b>DIVINE LITURGY Followed by blessing of the baskets</b>



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## FOR YOUR PRAYERS

**Tina Rindfleisch**, 524 Woodshire Lane, E-11 Naples, FL 34105; **Basil Glovinsky**, 1007 Glendale Drive, Port Clinton, OH 43452; **Irene Vangeloff**, 454 Strouse Lane, Sandusky, OH 44870

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## PRAYER LIST

**Parishioners & Family:** Renee Haynal / Tina Rindfleisch / Sharon Shaheen (Patti Owen's sister) / Norb / Heidi Golob / Ron & Bobbie Royhab / Rodney Clevenger / Jennifer Heffernan / Tom Hileman / Pam / Jim Twarek / Ed Garrity / Patti Owens / Barbara Wroblewski / Michal Tomáš / Helena Tomášová / Ruth Sheller / Basil Glovinsky / Dale / Sophie / Carol / David Martin / Fred Soski / Chris Hannon / Irene Vangeloff / Sonja Rose / James Bargdill / Carole Conaway / Gary Conaway / Sharon Dietrich / Michael Glovinsky / Shirley Gresh / Joseph Habegger / Betty Kovach / Child Stella Miller / William Pipenur / Earl Rindfleisch / Helen Jean Rofkar / George Royhab / Marianne Royhab / Kathy Jacob / the child Bodhi Cassell / Gleice, Sophie & Chloe / Carol / Nora.

**Other Requests:** Nicole Williams / John Couture / Don / Ann Turinsky / Marcia / Tony Sudac / Sarah King / Catechumen Blake Shoemaker / Catechumen Nickolas Dawenport / Catechumen Joshua Paull / Catechumen Danielle Paull / Catechumen Wrenley Paull / Arimus Paull / Linkoln Paull / Catechumen Ryan Stamp / Matushka Melania / Sharyn Osborne / Christine Zahm / Amy / Bill Byrnes / Susanne / Charles Schlett / Kathy Debevits / Maxwell Chaney / Anthony / Archpriest Ján Čížmár / Archpriest David Lis / Archpriest Emilian & Matushka Laryssa Hutnyan / Donald Gresh / Mark Ludvik / Robert Piznar / Mark Masica / Valerie Ritzenthaler / William / Rick Rowe / Chris.

**Military:** Craig Cassell / Jake Ellithorpe / Jordon Fulton / Justin Issler / Tikhon / Nicholas / & All Military

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## ATTENDANCE

**04/05** Vespers, **7** attending; **04/06** Divine Liturgy, **36** attending (14 guests); **04/09** Presanctified Liturgy, **17** attending (1 guest); **04/11** Vespers **13** attending (1 guest);

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## READERS LIST

Sunday Apr 13 – Jake  
Sunday Apr 20 – Joe  
Sunday Apr 27 – Tim

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## APRIL REPOSED

Michael Elchisco (1913) No date provided; Andrew Kopchock (1914) No date provided; Anna Onyock (1916) No date provided; Dolores Martin (1974) No date provided; Herb Hobson (2004) No date provided; Charles Rose (2015) No date provided; **1-** Larry Twarek (2019); **4-** Sophia Jump (2012); **4-** Harry Flewelling (2018); **5-** Nancy Sitzler (2022); **6-** John Kotch (2022); **7-** Louis M. Benya (1976); **7-** Mitered Archpriest Basil Dziama (1969) Former Pastor; **7-** Bob Mazur (2018); **9-** Julia Guzy (2021); **11-** LaVerne Schutt (2014); **12-** Helen Tomko (1989); **14-** Paul Glovinsky (1978); **15-** Stephen Brooks (2005); **16-** Mary Wright (2005); **17-** Lois Mazurik (1999); **22-** Olga Belenky (1971); **22-** John Beadle (1988); **22-** Fred Millie (1996); **24-** Demathony Ballan (1968); **26-** Margaret Mazur (1987); **26-** Russell Kovach (1981); **28-** Ann Kovalick (2018); **29-** Olga Kollmeier (1972); **30-** Anthony Hubicki (1977)

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## APRIL CANDLE SPONSORS

**Altar Candles:** Fr. Peter and Mat. Michelle, For Health and God’s Blessings for Barbara Wroblewski, and Michal & Helena Tomáš **(\$50)**; **Chandelier:** Joe & Valerie Schutt, In loving memory of LaVerne Schutt and Violet Bargdill **(\$50)**; **Eternal Light & Icon Screen:** Jean Hileman, In Memory of William & Helen Pipenur and Robert & Elaine Hileman **(\$25)**; **Candles at the Cross:** Laura Kovach, In memory of my mom Margaret and brother-in-law Russ **(\$20)**; **Candles at St. Tikhon Icon:** Available **(\$20)**



## APRIL BIRTHDAYS AND ANNIVERSARIES

**17** – Natalie Twarek; **18** – Nancy Bunge; **20** – Ron & Bobbie Royhab Anniversary (56)



## VIGILS FOR APRIL 6

**Susan Guzy 1** In loving memory of mom(4/9/21) Vichnaya Pamyat

**Laura Kovach 3** For health and/or healing of infant Benny, Alex M., Tina R., Nick S., Mike T., Andrew K., Matushka Melania, Ron R., Betty K., Margaret M., Hannah S., Mark M., Dana M., Bodhi C., Kathie J., Jerry P., Irene V, Heidi & Wayne G., Sarah K., Brett D., and Rick H.  
Safe travels for family and friend  
Prayers for Brett & Chris DeOreo

**Sandy Martin 3** Safe travel for family, Health and recovery of Nicole, Special Intentions

**Gabe Mazurik 1** Special Intentions

**Natalie Twarek 8** In loving memory of dear friend Sue, For health and recovery of Tina, For health and recovery of Nicole Oglesbee Williams, For health and recovery of Ann, Laura, Mike, Marcia, For the health & recovery of Matushka Melania, For the health and recovery on Basil, Ron, Rodney, Betty, Carol, Kayla, Pam, Jim, Heidi, Wayne, Health and healing for Father’s parents Michal & Helena and Matushka’s mom Barbara, and Walter, For the health of Jen, Tony, Father David, Carole, Gary, Sharon, Tina’s dad, Earl, Sonya, Margi & Joe, Jackie, MaryAnn & Bob, Bodhi, Stella, Jake, Pat



## SUNDAY OFFERING

### Sunday, April 6, 2025

Tithe	\$2,292.00
Donations	\$ 30.00
Candles	\$ 77.00
Vigils	\$ 65.00
Holy Day Donation	\$ 300.00
Flowers Donations	\$ 375.00
Wine Donations	\$ 55.00
Altar Candles	\$ 50.00
Eternal light & Icon Screen	\$ 25.00
Lions Club/Diabetes (April)	\$ 290.00
<b>Total:</b>	<b>\$3,559.00</b>

*May the Lord reward you for your financial and spiritual support!*

## UP-COMING EVENTS IN OUR PARISH – MARK YOUR CALENDAR

**Apr 18<sup>th</sup>** Holy (Good) Friday (*Friday*)

**Apr 19<sup>th</sup>** Holy Saturday Nocturns and Resurrection Matins (*Saturday*)



- Apr 20<sup>th</sup>**    HOLY PASCHA (*Sunday*)
- Apr 24<sup>th</sup>**    Bright Thursday - Monthly social 6:00 pm at local restaurant (*Thursday*)
- Apr 27<sup>th</sup>**    Antipascha, Thomas Sunday, Blessing of the Graves (*Sunday*)
- May 4<sup>th</sup>**     Holy Myrrhbearers (*Sunday*)
- May 11<sup>th</sup>**    Paralytic – Mother’s Day (*Sunday*)



**COFFEE HOUR SPONSOR LIST**

- Apr 6–        Natalia
- Apr 13 -     Palm Sunday – Matushka Michelle & Bobbie Royhab
- Apr 20 -     Holy Pascha

Please sign up to host coffee hour. Signup sheet is located in the Social Hall



**CLEANING SCHEDULE**

- Apr 14, Sandy
- Apr 21, Greg
- Apr 28, Roddie & David
- May 5, Bobbie



**CHARITY OF THE MONTH**

“Lions Club/Diabetes” is the charity we donate to for the month of April.



**ST. TIKHON SEMINARIANS VISIT HOLY ASSUMPTION SATURDAY MAY 3**

We are happy to announce that we are hosting the Mission Choir of St. Tikhon of Zadonsk Orthodox Theological Seminary on Saturday, May 3. There will be 9:30 AM Divine Liturgy with the seminarians singing at Holy Assumption Church.

Please plan to attend Divine Liturgy which will be followed by a brunch. We will have the opportunity to interact with the seminarians in the choral group, and

they will have the opportunity to learn about Holy Assumption Church.

V. Rev. John Parker, Dean of the Seminary, will be visiting with Choir and serving with Father Peter; he will give a short talk about the Seminary.

The Choir’s visit is in conjunction with their fundraising tour at SS. Peter and Paul Orthodox Church in Lorain. On Saturday they will return to the Lorain church for 6 PM Vespers, followed by a concert by the Choir, and a reception.

St. Tikhon’s Seminary needs our support, and 100 percent of all donations will go to the Seminary (please write checks to St. Tikhon’s Seminary).

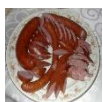
The Seminary, founded in 1938, is affiliated with the Orthodox Church in America and located in a rural area in South Canaan, Pennsylvania. It is next to the Monastery of St. Tikhon of Zadonsk, the oldest Orthodox Christian Monastery in America. St. Tikhon of Moscow founded the Monastery in 1905.

## A Traditional Paschal Basket



**Paska** - Symbolic of Jesus Christ who is the “bread of life” (John 6:35). Yeast is a symbol of the New Covenant; the Jews made unleavened bread, and since we are children under the New Covenant, we make leavened bread. Paska bread is rich and sweet and is made with eggs, milk and butter. Braids, crosses and decorations can be seen on Paska bread and the letters **ХВ** indicate **Христос Воскресе** (Christos Voskrese) and the response to this greeting is **Воистину Воскресе** (Voistinu Voskrese).

Christ is Risen! Indeed, He is Risen!



*The meat products symbolize the sacrificial animals of the Old Testament, foreshadowing the true sacrifice of our Savior, who became for us “the Lamb of God, taking away the sins of the world.”*



**Kolbasa** -Smoky, garlicky and delicious. Meat products represent the fattened calf presented to the Prodigal Son on his return to His father. Just like Pascha, we celebrate our return to God and our joyous participation in the blessings of Jesus Christ.



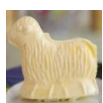
**Bacon** - Symbolizing the overabundance of God’s mercy to us.



**Ham** - Symbolic of the joy and abundance of Pascha. Because it is roasted or cured, the festivities of the day can be enjoyed by all without the burden of cooking.



**Eggs** - Hard boiled eggs, brightly decorated or dyed red. Symbolizes new life and Resurrection. Red signifies the death on the cross, while the egg itself is new life. Crack the eggs into each other symbolizing the tomb breaking, by death he conquered death! Christ is Risen! He came forth from the tomb, just like a chick breaking through its shell at birth.



**Cheese** - Hrudka - A custard like cheese, shaped into a ball, that is bland, but can be sweet and mild, reminding us of the moderations we should have towards everything. It can be decorated, using cloves or whole peppercorns, with Paschal symbols.



**Butter** - Reminds us of the Goodness of Christ that we should have towards all things. Often shaped like a lamb or cross.



**Horseradish with beets** - Bitter horseradish mixed with sweet red beets, a bittersweet mix to remind us of Christ’s suffering on the Cross, but sweetened to remind us of Christ’s Resurrection.



**Salt** - It is necessary for flavor and should remind us of our duty to others. The truth of the message of Jesus Christ. Just as salt preserves food, so preserved are the teachings of Jesus Christ and the promise of eternal salvation through Him.

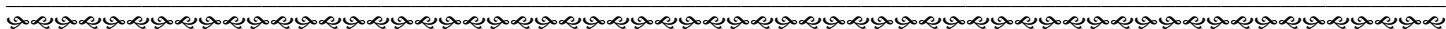


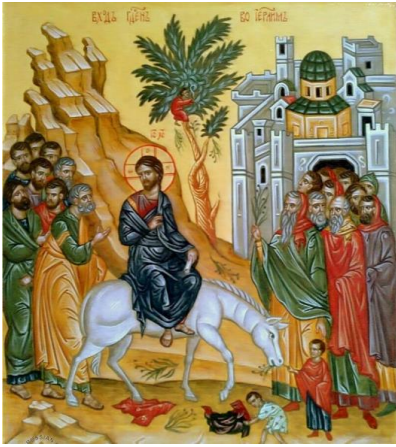
**Wine or red grape juice** - A symbol of love towards our neighbor’s and the goodness of the faith.



**Basket Cover** - Reminds us of Christ’s burial shroud. Every family usually has a basket cover that they proudly display that has been passed down the generations.

**Candle** - Christ is revealed as the Light “that shines in the darkness,” and that the darkness cannot overcome the Light. (John 1:5) The candle is lit during the time when the basket is blessed. This is usually a beeswax candle that was blessed and given out on February 2<sup>nd</sup>, for the Feast of the Meeting the Lord in the Temple with Righteous Simeon.





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

Commemorated on April 13

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).

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## Three Days Preceding Pascha: Insights into Holy Week

*by Archpriest Dimitry Yurevich*

Is everything in the Gospel account of Holy Week, from Christ’s crucifixion to His resurrection, perfectly clear? Many have questions and uncertainties about these pivotal events. We’ve gathered some



common queries and sought answers from Archpriest Dimitri Yurevich, head of the Department of Biblical Studies at St. Petersburg Theological Academy.

### **Who exactly arrested Christ?**

The arrest of Christ involved two groups: the temple guards sent by the high priest Caiaphas, and a detachment of Roman soldiers. The exact role and status of these Roman soldiers remain a topic of historical debate. It's unclear whether they were performing their official duties or had been hired by the Jewish high priests.

At the time, Judea was under Roman occupation, complete with a stationed garrison. St. John Chrysostom suggests that these soldiers were sometimes allowed to undertake private jobs for extra money, with their superiors turning a blind eye. This view is supported in his "Homilies on the Gospel According to John," where he notes that these soldiers were often willing to do anything for additional pay.

Alternatively, it's possible that the chief priests formally requested assistance from the Roman garrison to apprehend a potential rebel from Galilee. This theory could merge with the first: the soldiers might have been following orders from their commanders while also being compensated by the Jewish leaders. The involvement of Roman soldiers was likely a strategic decision by the chief priests. They might have wanted a backup in case Jesus had armed protectors or if the temple guards, potentially harboring secret followers of Christ, proved unreliable.

### **What was Judas' role in the arrest of Jesus? Could it have been done without him?**

Judas played a critical role in the arrest of Jesus, which went beyond merely betraying Him for thirty pieces of silver. His involvement was multifaceted: firstly, he was responsible for leading the temple guard and Roman soldiers to the precise location at the correct time. Secondly, he had to clearly identify Jesus among those gathered on the Mount of Olives. To the Roman soldiers, distinguishing Jesus from His disciples was challenging as they were not familiar with the individuals involved.

Moreover, Judas had to manage any arising issues during the arrest. An intriguing incident is recorded in the Gospel of John, which other evangelists do not mention. As the armed group approached Jesus, He asked them, "Whom are you seeking?" They responded, "Jesus of Nazareth." When Jesus declared, "I am He," everyone, including the Roman soldiers, fell to the ground.

This reaction raises questions: Why did everyone fall? It's theorized that when Jesus said "I am," it echoed the sacred name "Yahweh" in Hebrew, a name traditionally not spoken aloud. The profound impact of hearing this might have caused the Jews present to fall down in awe or fear. But why would the Roman soldiers react similarly, given that the sacred implications of the name would be meaningless to them? St. John Chrysostom suggests that something about the way Jesus presented Himself in that moment revealed a divine authority that even the Roman soldiers could sense, causing confusion and disarray.

At this critical juncture, Judas intervened decisively to quell any potential panic. He stepped forward and greeted Jesus, both signaling to the soldiers whom to arrest and reassuring them by his familiar manner: "Everything is under control; this is just an ordinary man." This act of greeting was crucial in marking Jesus for arrest and maintaining order among the troops. Thus, Judas' involvement was essential, not just for identifying Jesus but also for managing the situation, ensuring the arrest proceeded as planned.

### **What was the significance of Judas' kiss during the arrest of Jesus?**



The kiss that Judas gave Jesus was not merely a signal to the soldiers; it was laden with deeper symbolic and cultural meanings. In Judea at the time, a kiss was a common greeting among friends, signifying respect and affection. By choosing this particular gesture, Judas not only identified Jesus to the soldiers but also underscored his close relationship with Him. This act could have been a way for Judas to overcome any personal hesitation or to assert his familiarity with Jesus, which in turn would demonstrate to the arresting party that Jesus was merely a man, not a divine entity.

This gesture of betrayal was profoundly cynical, something that did not escape Jesus' notice. His response to Judas, "Are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss?" as recorded in Luke 22:48, highlights the stark contrast between the intimate form of the greeting and the treachery it concealed. Thus, the kiss was not just a practical tool for identification—it was a complex act of betrayal that carried significant emotional and symbolic weight, deeply intertwining closeness and betrayal.

### **Why was Jesus arrested on the night between Thursday and Friday, and not at another time?**



The timing of Jesus' arrest was influenced by both divine intention and practical considerations. Theologically, His arrest and subsequent crucifixion were divinely timed to coincide with the Jewish Passover. This was not coincidental; it held deep symbolic significance. As Apostle Paul notes in his first letter to the Corinthians, Christ is likened to the Passover lamb, sacrificed to deliver not just the Jews but all humanity from the bondage of sin and death (1 Corinthians 5:7). In this way, Jesus' death during Passover underscored His role as a sacrificial lamb for mankind's salvation.

Practically, the night between Thursday and Friday presented an opportune moment for Judas to enact his betrayal. Knowing Jesus' routine to visit the Garden of Gethsemane after the Last Supper, Judas found this secluded spot ideal for carrying out the arrest away from the public eye, thus avoiding any potential disturbance from Jesus' followers. This convergence of divine symbolism and logistical timing underscores both the spiritual and earthly dimensions of the events leading up to the crucifixion.

Why did Pilate insist on the inscription "King of the Jews" on Jesus' cross?

The reason Pilate ordered the inscription "King of the Jews" to be placed on Jesus' cross in Hebrew, Latin, and Greek involves both a political maneuver and a practical declaration. Firstly, it was a form of sarcasm aimed at the Jewish leadership. Despite their insistence that the inscription should read, "He said, 'I am King of the Jews,'" Pilate's refusal to alter the wording served as a taunt, effectively stating, "You present Him as a king; therefore, He shall be labeled as such." This was Pilate's way of mocking their accusations and their desire for Jesus' condemnation under the guise of His royal claims, highlighting their lack of genuine sovereignty under Roman rule.

Secondly, the inscription served a legal purpose by clearly stating the grounds for Jesus' execution to all who observed, including the diverse populace gathered in Jerusalem for Passover. It communicated that Jesus' crucifixion was due to His alleged aspirations to kingship, a politically motivated charge rather than a condemnation for His teachings or supposed miracles. This was crucial in a city swelling with Jews and others familiar with Jesus' reputation, as it underscored the Roman perspective of maintaining order and quelling any potential uprisings by clarifying that the crucifixion was a matter of state security, not religious dispute.

### **Could Pilate have acquitted Jesus, and what alternatives did he have?**

Pilate certainly possessed the autonomy to acquit Jesus, exercising the free will inherent to all individuals rather than acting as a predetermined agent. He faced a real decision: to risk the ire of the

Jewish leaders by releasing Jesus or to succumb to their pressures. Indeed, acquitting Jesus could have jeopardized his own position and safety. Given that Pilate's primary role was to uphold Roman authority and suppress any signs of insurrection, releasing someone accused of claiming kingship could have been seen as a failure to maintain control, potentially inviting rebellion in a region already simmering with discontent due to movements like the Zealots.

The Jewish leaders were adept at manipulating this dynamic, threatening to report Pilate for any perceived leniency towards a potential insurgent, which could undermine Roman rule and jeopardize their own position. Such an action would have positioned Pilate as complicit in weakening Roman authority, a serious accusation that could end his career and result in severe punishment, though not necessarily execution.

Thus, Pilate faced a stark choice between justice and personal and professional security. Ultimately, he opted for the latter, prioritizing his career over the righteous decision, showcasing the tragic reality of political expediency over moral rectitude.

### **Understanding Christ's Cry on the Cross: "God, why have You forsaken Me?"**

When Jesus cried out, "God, why have You forsaken Me?" from the cross, He was expressing a profound aspect of His humanity. This cry is not just a simple question but a deep expression of human suffering and isolation. This moment highlights the extreme degree of suffering that a person can feel when they sense that God has abandoned them.

Christ, fully divine yet fully human, chose to experience the full scope of human pain without any alleviation, including the profound spiritual suffering of feeling abandoned by God. He could have lessened His suffering but chose to endure it fully to align His human will with the divine will, rejecting any form of relief.

This aspect of His Passion is crucial for believers to understand because it emphasizes that Christ underwent the greatest sufferings imaginable, surpassing the hardships that any human could endure. His experience includes every facet of human agony, up to and including the sensation of being forsaken by God, which is perhaps the most intense suffering a human being can endure.

The significance of this cry is also to reassure us that there is no human experience of pain, abandonment, or despair that Christ has not Himself experienced. Unlike us, who suffer due to our own sins or the sins of the world, Christ's suffering was wholly undeserved and was borne out of His immense love for humanity. Thus, no one can rightfully claim that Christ does not understand their suffering or that He has not experienced their pain. His cry from the cross is a powerful assurance that He truly empathizes with the human condition.

### **Exploring the Divine Mystery: God's Presence in Christ's Suffering on the Cross**

The question, "How could God have forsaken Him if He is God Himself?" probes deep into the mystery of the Incarnation and the nature of Christ's suffering on the cross. This issue is pivotal in Christian theology and has historically been a focal point for significant doctrinal disputes.

The core of the dilemma lies in understanding the dual nature of Christ. Christ is both fully God and fully human—a fundamental truth affirmed by Christian doctrine. This dual nature is not a blending where attributes become diluted or merged into something lesser; each nature remains distinct and fully intact within the one Person of Jesus Christ.

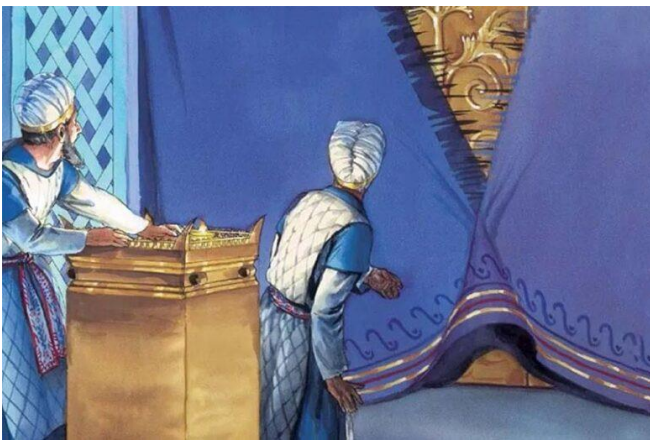
In addressing who suffered on the cross, we confront two historical heresies: Nestorianism and Monophysitism. Nestorianism asserts that Christ's divine and human natures are so distinct that only His human side suffered, implying He was more of a divinely favored man than truly divine. Monophysitism suggests the opposite, claiming Christ's divine nature absorbed His human nature, thus denying that His suffering was genuine and undermining the reality of His humanity.

The Church, at the Fourth Ecumenical Council in 451, navigated between these extremes by articulating the doctrine of the hypostatic union: in Christ, the divine and human natures are united without confusion, change, division, or separation. This means that while the human nature experienced the physical and emotional agonies of crucifixion, these sufferings belonged to the whole Person of Christ, who is both God and man.

Thus, when Christ expressed the feeling of abandonment—“God, why have You forsaken Me?”—He did so in His human capacity, illustrating the depth of His suffering and the completeness of His empathy for human despair. Simultaneously, His divine nature was fully present, sharing in the suffering yet overcoming death, not aloof from human pain.

This profound mystery underscores that it is not merely man who suffered, nor was it a being who was only superficially human. Instead, it was God in human flesh, fully participating in human suffering, thus bridging the infinite gap between the Divine and fallen humanity through His atoning sacrifice. This theological insight ensures that Christ’s suffering was both genuinely human and suffused with divine purpose, making salvation accessible to all.

### **Understanding the Subtle Signs of Christ’s Resurrection Compared to His Crucifixion**



The dramatic signs accompanying Christ’s crucifixion—three hours of darkness, an earthquake, the temple veil tearing, and the resurrection of some dead saints—underscore the profound cosmic and theological significance of that moment. These events symbolize the old covenant’s culmination and the ushering in of a new era through Christ’s sacrifice, a transition from the Old Testament practices to the new salvation offered in Jesus.

The darkness, unexplainable by natural phenomena such as a solar eclipse or weather conditions, underscores the world’s spiritual darkness at the moment of its Savior’s death. This darkness lasted three hours, far exceeding any natural eclipse, symbolizing the profound spiritual change occurring.

The earthquake and the tearing of the temple’s veil physically represented the shattering of the old religious order. The temple veil, separating the holiest part of the temple from the rest, symbolized the barrier between God and man that Christ’s death tore apart, granting believers direct access to God.

Moreover, the resurrection of the righteous before Christ’s resurrection prefigures the ultimate victory over death that Christ’s own resurrection would accomplish. These signs served to underscore the significance of Christ’s sacrifice to the contemporaries and were later interpreted by the apostles as they spread the Gospel, helping early Christians and subsequent generations understand the crucifixion’s profound implications.

In contrast, the Resurrection itself was a quieter event in terms of cosmic phenomena. Christ rose from the dead and appeared directly to His disciples rather than to a wide public audience. This approach was deliberate, serving a pedagogical purpose. The disciples, as witnesses of the Resurrection, were tasked with spreading the news of Christ’s victory over death. By appearing to them rather than performing a public spectacle, Christ ensured that the foundational Christian testimony was based on personal encounter and witness, not on spectacle.

This distinction highlights a shift in how divine intervention was manifested: the crucifixion signs were to affirm the New Covenant’s establishment to all, while the Resurrection’s relatively private revelation

was to equip the apostles for their mission to testify about Christ's victory, emphasizing faith based on witness and proclamation rather than public signs.

Thus, the different nature of the signs accompanying Christ's death and Resurrection reflects the different purposes these events served in the divine plan for humanity's salvation.

### **The Paradox of Belief: Why Jesus Only Appeared to the Disciples After His Resurrection**

Understanding why Jesus chose to appear only to His disciples rather than to the general populace after His resurrection is crucial for grasping the nature of faith and belief. The answer ties into the essential characteristics of true faith, which involves freedom—the freedom to believe or reject.

When considering the impact of Jesus' miracles during His life, such as the raising of Lazarus, we observe that not everyone who witnessed or heard about these miracles believed in Him. In fact, some of the most astounding miracles precipitated greater opposition and hostility, rather than faith. This pattern underscores a profound biblical truth illustrated in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, where Abraham tells the rich man that those who do not listen to Moses and the prophets will not be persuaded “even if someone rises from the dead” (Luke 16:31). This suggests that miraculous evidence is not always sufficient to engender true faith.

Additionally, when Jesus addressed Thomas after the resurrection, He highlighted, “Because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed” (John 20:29). This statement points to the higher value placed on faith that does not rely on sight or empirical proof. True faith transcends visible proof and enters the realm of personal conviction and trust, which must be freely chosen.

Faith compelled by undeniable proof, such as a public resurrection spectacle, could lead to belief out of fear or compulsion rather than love and voluntary commitment. James's epistle reflects this by comparing the belief of demons, who believe out of fear, not love or trust (James 2:19). Had Jesus appeared to His skeptics and detractors after His resurrection, their belief might have been driven by fear or a desire to control or manipulate the newfound truth of His power, rather than a genuine conversion of heart. This would not result in the salvific faith that Christianity calls for, which is rooted in love and personal commitment.

Therefore, the limited appearances of the resurrected Jesus highlight the importance of faith that is freely chosen and transformative. This approach respects human freedom and the profound nature of faith as a personal journey toward truth, rather than a coerced acceptance of irrefutable evidence.