

## **GREAT AND HOLY FRIDAY** **(Good Friday)**

Friday of Holy Week, has been traditionally been called Good Friday or Holy Friday. On this day, the church commemorates Jesus' arrest (since by Jewish customs of counting days from sundown to sundown it was already Friday), his trial, crucifixion and suffering, death, and burial. Since services on this day are to observe Jesus' death and since Eucharist is a celebration, there is traditionally no Communion observed on Good Friday. Also, depending on how the services are conducted on this day, and if possible all Icons and the cross are covered in mourning black.

There are a variety of services of worship for Good Friday, all aimed at allowing worshippers to experience some sense of the pain, humiliation and ending in the journey to the cross. These also help us remember the great sacrifice that has been offered. Since God the Father does not regard the world as being material or spiritual but sees all creation through His Son, and since mankind fell into the slavery of nature, of that which was corruptible of death, the Son of God was incarnated and lived an earthly life in human body only in the end to die a martyr's death on the cross—so that he may rise, resurrect human nature from the grave, and open the path to eternal life for men.

In Christ's earthly life time crucifixion was at that time the most shameful and terrible of deaths, to which none but the greatest criminal were subjected. The doctrine of the Crucified was a scandal to the Jews and folly to the heathen (1 Cor.23) Yet today the cross is venerated and exalted, In the words of St. Athanasius sin was repaired on the tree where sin was committed; and where death began there life arose. Christ was not beheaded, nor His body dismembered; so are we taught that His mystical body, the Church, should remain ever undivided.

On Good Friday at noon, Christ was nailed to the cross on the hill of Calvary just outside Jerusalem, and died on the cross about three o'clock. During these three hours the sun darkened over the earth. As St. John Chrysostom says, the sun hid its rays so that it could not behold the sufferings of his Maker. At the death of Christ the earth opened, rocks split the veil of the Temple was torn apart. All creation was in sympathy with Christ excepting man, for whom Christ was suffering (St. Jerome). These marvels caused many to acknowledge the Godhead of Christ, as in the case of the centurion, who exclaimed: "Indeed, this was the Son of God!" Matt. 27:54.

Christ spoke on the cross the seven last words. (1). "Father, forgive them." (Luke 23:34) (2). "Today thou shalt be with Me in Paradise." (Luke 23:43) (3). "Women, behold you son" (John 19:26-27) (4). "My God, My God, why has Thou forsaken Me!" (Matthew 27:46, Mark 15:34) (5). "I thirst." (John 19:28) (6). "It is finished." (John 19:30) (7). "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit." (Luke 23:46) The great cry which Christ gave before His death was a sign that He gave up His Life of His own free will. The cross, as St. Augustine says, is no longer the instrument of Christ's suffering, but the pulpit of Christ's preaching; from it He teaches the lessons of love, of our enemies, gentleness, patience, obedience, God's mercy goodness, justice and power, the immortality of the soul, the Last Judgment and the resurrection.

Our Lord suffered crucifixion and yet He was the only One without sin. He was sent to the cross with shouts "Crucify him!" Christ was crucified "under Pontius Pilate". But He is Crucified again and again with every sin we ourselves commit. On the occasion of Great Friday the Church marks each moment in the event of salvation of the world with services. Time of Saviors' arrest in the Garden of Gethsemane and His sentencing by archpriest and elders to suffer death is marked with matins. Celebrating the first hour marks time when our Savior was on his way to be judged by Pilate; time of His sentencing by Pilate is marked by the third hour; time of His suffering on the cross is remembered by the sixth hour; and taking down of Christ's body from the cross with evening service ( it is then that the Shroud is brought out to the center of the church so that the faithful can venerate the image of the dead Lord depicted on it) On Great Friday hours are being celebrated in the following order: first, sixth, ninth, and they are called the Imperial Hours since Byzantine emperors always attended them at church.

