

RUSSIAN EASTER

The St. John's Russian Orthodox Choir
under the direction of Lawrence Havriliak
in a program of Russian Easter music

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Russian Easter
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Russian Easter

the Russian Easter midnight service

St. John's Russian Orthodox Choir

Very Rev. John Havriliak

Lawrence Havriliak, choir director

THE RUSSIAN EASTER MIDNIGHT SERVICE

Music by A. L. Vedel (Including Traditional Chants)

Programmed by Very Rev. John Havriliak

The most colorful holiday in the Russian Orthodox Calendar is Easter. This greatest of all services begins with the exciting sounds of church bells spiritedly announcing Christ's Resurrection and Triumph over Death. The accapella choir immediately takes up with a joyful chant.

After circuiting the church three times the Orthodox priest in his most colorful robes raises his cross and lighted tapers symbolically, opens the great doors of the church at the hour of Midnight and thus begins the Russian Easter Service.

SIDE A

Band

- 1 The Angels in heaven, O Christ our Saviour, sing thy Resurrection, and do thou enable us on earth to glorify thee with a pure heart.
Christ is risen from the dead, trampling down Death by death, and upon those in the tomb bestowing life.
- 2 "The Great Litany"
Lord Have Mercy (repeated many times)
To Thee O Lord, Amen.
- 3 The Day of Resurrection! Let us be illumined, O ye people!
The Passover, the Passover of the Lord!
From death unto life, and from earth unto heaven hath Christ our God brought us over, singing a song of victory!
Christ is risen from the dead!
- 4 "Little Litany"
O come, let us quaff a beverage new, not from a barren rock miraculously called forth; but the Fountain of Immortality springing from the tomb of Christ; on whom also we are founded.
Christ is risen from the dead!
"Little Litany"
When they who from Mary came, forestalling the dawn, and found the stone rolled away from the sepulchre, they heard from the Angel: *Why seek ye among the dead, as he were mortal, him who abideth in everlasting light? Behold the grave-clothes. Go quickly, and proclaim to the world that the Lord is risen, and hath slain Death. For he is the Son of God who saveth mankind.*
- 5 Thou didst descend into the nethermost parts of the earth, O Christ, and didst shatter the bonds eternal which held the prisoners in captivity: and after three days thou didst rise again from the grave, like Jonah from the whale.
Christ is risen from the dead! ("Little Litany")
Though thou didst descend into the grave, O Deathless One, yet didst thou annihilate the power of Hell, and didst rise again as conqueror, O Christ-God, announcing unto the Myrrh-bearing Women: Rejoice! and giving peace unto thine Apostles, and bestowing Resurrection upon the fallen.

SIDE B

Band

- 1 He who delivered the Holy Children from the fiery furnace, when he was made man did suffer like unto a mortal; and through his Passion he doth clothe the mortal in the dignity of immortality, he, the only God of our fathers, blessed and exceedingly glorified.

Christ is risen from the dead!

The godly-wise women followed after thee in haste with sweet-smelling spices. But him whom they sought with tears as dead, they joyfully adored as the living God; and announced unto thy disciples, O Christ, the glad tidings of the mystical Passover.

Christ is risen from the dead!

"Little Litany"

- 2 This is the chosen and holy Day, the one King and Lord of Sabbaths, the Feast of Feasts, and the Triumph of Triumphs:

Wherein let us bless Christ forevermore!

Christ is risen from the dead!

O come, on this auspicious day of the Resurrection, let us partake of the fruit from the new vine of divine gladness of the kingdom of Christ, in song magnifying him as God forevermore.

O most Holy Trinity, our God, glory to thee!

Christ is risen from the dead!

"Little Litany"

- 3 My soul doth magnify Christ the Life-giver, who rose again from the grave on the third day.

Shine, shine, O New Jerusalem for the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. Keep high holiday now and be glad, O Zion! And rejoice thou, O pure Birth-giver of God, in the rising again of him whom thou didst bear!

Christ is risen from the dead!

Christ the New Passover, the living Sacrifice, the Lamb of God, taketh away the sins of the world.

Christ is risen from the dead!

O Christ, the Passover great and most holy! O Wisdom, Word and Power of God! Grant that we may more perfectly partake of thee in the day which knoweth no night of thy kingdom.

The Angel, dazzling the Women, cried: Desist from tears for Christ is risen.

Christ is risen from the dead!

"Little Litany"

- 4 After that thou hadst fallen asleep, as thou wert mortal, O King and Lord, thou didst rise again on the third day, and didst raise up Adam from corruption, and abolish Death:

O Passover of incorruption! O Salvation of the world!

- 5 Let everything that hath breath praise the Lord.
O praise the Lord of heaven: praise him in the height. To thee, O God, is due our song. Praise him in his noble acts: Praise him according to his excellent greatness.

We sing thy redeeming Passion, O Christ, and glorify thy Resurrection. Praise him in the sound of the trumpet: praise him upon the lute and harp.

O thou who didst endure the Cross, and abolish Death, and didst rise again from the dead, given peace to our life, O Lord:

For thou alone art almighty.

- 6 Let God Arise, and let his enemies be scattered.

Today is the holy Passover revealed unto us: the Passover new and holy: the Passover mystical, the Passover all-august, Christ, the Passover and the Atonement. The spotless Passover, the great Passover, the Passover of the faithful, the Passover which openeth unto us the gates of Paradise; the Passover which sanctifieth all the faithful.

- 7 And unto us hath he given life eternal.

Wherefore, let us adore his Resurrection on the third day.

Christ is risen! Indeed he has risen! (thrice)

The Feast of Feasts

by the Rt. Rev. V. E. Lilikovich

Easter (Pascha) begins on Holy Saturday night, when at the stroke of Midnight the Resurrection Service begins; some call it the Rush Service. The Royal doors open and clergy in brilliant vestments come forth from the sanctuary, with censers filled with fragrant incense. Preceded by men carrying the crucifix, banners, icons, lighted candles and the Artos and followed by the congregation, they walk in solemn procession around the church singing:

To Thy Resurrection, O Christ our Saviour, the Angels in heaven do sing. Make us also who are on earth worthy to glorify Thee with pure hearts.

After the third time around the church, the procession stops at the front entrance which has remained closed all this time. Then we hear sung by the priest the glorious song:

Christ is risen from the dead; by Death hath He trampled upon death, and upon those in tombs hath He bestowed life.

This procession symbolizes the journey of Mary Magdalen, Salome and Mary Cleophos to the sepulchre of Christ for the purpose of embalming the body of their saviour.

Church bells are rung during the procession around the church, and in Europe they used to be rung every day of Easter Week from sunrise to sunset, with interruptions only for Services. This ringing of the bells signifies the great joy and happiness of all Christians in the victory of Christ over death and hell.

It is a custom in our Orthodox Church for the faithful to kiss one another with the greeting 'Christ is risen'. This custom is a venerable one and had its beginnings in the first century of Christianity. St. John Chrysostom, archbishop of Constantinople in the fourth century mentions this custom in one of his writings. In the seventeenth century Peter Mogila, Metropolitan of Kiev, wrote in defense of it against those who were trying to end it:

We kiss each other on Easter because the kiss is a sign of peace and brotherly love. The first time our Lord Jesus Christ appeared before His Apostles after His Resurrection he said simply: 'Peace be with you'.

The blessing of Easter baskets is another custom. These baskets are filled with bread, pascha, ham, cheese, meat and eggs, and are brought to church on Holy Saturday night to be blessed. What joy children get out of these baskets!

These are only a few brief explanations of some of our customs of the Glorious Feast of the Resurrection. This Holy Day brings much satisfaction to Christians and leaves on their souls indelible marks of joy and reverence. It is no wonder that our churches are filled to overflowing on Easter, to celebrate with their brother Orthodox Feast of Feasts.

— Orthodox Herald

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