



## Celebrate!

Each year we are given by the Church an opportunity to experience the season of Great Lent. During this period of forty days we prepare ourselves through study, confession, fasting, and prayer. But what is it really that we are preparing ourselves for? Why is this season of the year different than any other?

We work hard to prepare ourselves during the Great Lent so that we will be ready for the greatest feast of the Church, the Resurrection of our Lord. On Great and Holy Pascha our preparations are completed and it is time for us to celebrate. We can see this change from preparing to celebrating through our experience of Holy Week and Pascha in the Church.

Think about how the Church remains dark during the services of Holy Week. In the hymns that are quiet and slow we hear about the days leading up to Jesus' crucifixion. We learn with sorrow through the Gospel readings on Holy Thursday how Christ was betrayed, suffered, and hung upon the cross to die. On Holy Friday we see Him taken down from the cross and placed in the tomb where His death is mourned. The services of the Church show us these events very clearly so that we can understand the incredible sacrifice that Christ made for us.

Then, at the Resurrection Liturgy on Great and Holy Pascha we see a change. Our time of preparation is over and it is now time to rejoice. The Church that had been dark is now filled with light. The services that were quiet and solemn are now festive and lively. We exclaim with great joy, "Christ is Risen," because through His death and resurrection the door to Paradise is opened and the love of God is revealed.

Now that the period of preparation is over and the feast of Great Pascha has arrived, rejoice in the Lord. Know that He died and rose again on the third day so that we might live with Him forever in the Kingdom of Heaven.