

Church Decoration and Beautification



Instruction Manual for the
Decoration and Beautification of
Holy Ascension Orthodox Christian Mission
Melbourne

Beautification Committee

A “Beautification and Decorations Committee” helps to plan and organize the beautification and subsequent clean-up of the church during major feasts and throughout the year. Flower arrangements, icon stand centerpieces, and other decorations are needed for these occasions.

Beautification Committee

A beautification committee is recommended to be set up, even if it's just two or three people.

This group can commit to educating themselves about Orthodox Christian art and liturgy as well as review potential beautification purchases.

They can educate the community that beautification is

- 1) traditional to the Orthodox Christian aesthetic expression,
- 2) positively impacts the liturgical environment and, in turn, everyone who participates in it, and
- 3) is a mighty evangelism tool.

Continuity (Philotimo)

If you cannot fulfill your duties due to illness or otherwise:

- Exchange contacts with others in your team to notify them.
- Notify others in your team to fill in for you.
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Flowers

Some Flower Decoration Tips

- A neutral green houseplant can be used for most services and then floral arrangements can be used on feastsdays.
- Chrysanthemums last a long time.
- A green houseplant is also a welcome addition in the narthex.
- For the plant stands, try and find antique ones, or use metal ones in a basic design (you don't want distracting plant stands with lots of cheap metal work).

An ongoing supply of flowers is needed:

- 1 - for the general beautification of the church
- 2 - for the decoration of icon stands
- 3 - especially on feast days.



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The “Sepulcher” (the wooden canopy) which holds the Epitaphios (the embroidered icon depicting the Burial of Christ) during Holy Week is also richly decorated with flowers on Holy Friday morning.

Fun Fact:

In many parishes, a team of decorators remain after the service on the evening of Holy Thursday to decorate the Epitaphios. They sometimes work all through the night! This kind of work results in the entire surface area of the Sepulcher being covered in flowers. A testament to the devotion of their faith and dedication to their spiritual family – the parish community.



Occasions when Flowers are Required

3rd Sunday of Great Lent Sunday of the Veneration of the Precious Cross

What needs to be decorated?

- (1) The Icon Stand will have a small Cross for people to venerate.
- (2) The Altar Cross. This is the large Cross which usually rests at the High Place (that is, inside the Sanctuary, behind the Altar). On this particular Sunday, the Altar Cross will be in the middle of the church (nave).

What kind of decorations?

It is customary for commemorations of the Cross and of the Crucifixion to use primarily Basil.

Suggestions:

Icon Stand = Rest the small Cross on a bed of Basil or
Frame the small Cross with Basil.

Altar Cross = Wreath and/or
2 stable and sturdy vases placed on either side
of the Altar Cross. White or Red Roses would be
suitable for these vases.



Wreath for Altar Cross on Sunday of Cross Veneration (3rd Sunday of Lent) and for Holy Thursday



*Icon Stand with Cross lying on a bed of Basil
and framed with flowers*

Palm Sunday

What needs to be decorated?

- (1) The church interior in general needs to be decorated. The sanctuary, the icon screen, and the doorways of the main entrances.
- (2) The Icon Stand will have the icon of the Triumphant Entry of Christ into Jerusalem (i.e., The “Palm Sunday” icon).

What kind of decorations?

It is customary on Palm Sunday to have the church interior decorated with palm fronds and the Icon Stand with flowers.

It is a good idea to source at least 10 palm fronds: 6 – 8 long fronds and 2 – 4 short fronds.

Suggestions:

Icon Stand = Frame the icon with flowers. Any colors will do. But green and gold preferred.

= An alternative is to frame the icon with small palm fronds.



Church Interior = We use the long fronds for the icon screen, the sanctuary, and the doorways of the main entrances.

= We use the short fronds to “fill in the gaps” in the church’s interior and to make palm crosses.

Sourcing Palms

- Asking parishioners to bring palm fronds from home if they have palm trees.
- Asking people we may know who are kind enough to donate some palm fronds (relatives, neighbors...etc)



Holy Thursday

What needs to be decorated?

- (1) The Icon Stand will have an icon of the Crucifixion.
- (2) The Altar Cross. This is the large Cross which usually rests at the High Place (that is, inside the Sanctuary, behind the Altar). On the evening of Holy Thursday, during the Matins with the 12 Passion Gospels, the Altar Cross will be brought out in solemn procession, from the Sanctuary to the Nave (middle of the church). The clergy and altar servers will make prostrations before this Cross, after which they will place a wreath at the foot of the Cross.

What kind of decorations?

It is customary for commemorations of the Cross and of the Crucifixion to use primarily Basil.

Suggestions:

Icon Stand = Frame the icon of the Crucifixion with Basil and other flowers.

Altar Cross = Wreath



Icon of the Crucifixion on Holy Thursday framed with flowers



Holy Friday

What needs to be decorated?

- (1) The Epitaphios (Sepulcher)
- (2) The Icon Stand will have an icon of the Burial of Christ.

What kind of decorations?

Lots of flowers especially for the Epitaphios.

Suggestions:

Icon Stand = Frame the icon of the Burial of Christ with flowers. Suggested flower colors: White and Red.

Epitaphios = Plenty of green and gold for an “Australian” touch to our Epitaphios. Otherwise white and red flowers is a nice alternative.

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The Epitaphios (Sepulcher/Bier)



Icon of the Burial of Christ framed with flowers

Ascension

What needs to be decorated?

The Icon Stand will have the festal icon of Ascension.

What kind of decorations?

Mainly flowers (any color) for the icon stand.

Suggestions:

Icon Stand = Frame the festal icon of Ascension with flowers.



Festal Icon of Ascension framed with flowers and greenery

Pentecost

What needs to be decorated?

The Icon Stand will have the icon of Pentecost.

What kind of decorations?

Mainly flowers for the icon stand. **Green** is the main color for this feast.

Suggestions:

Icon Stand = Frame the festal icon of Pentecost with flowers.



Universal Elevation of the Precious and Life-Giving Cross (September 14/27)

What needs to be decorated?

The Icon Stand will have a small Cross for people to venerate. There may be a second Icon Stand. It will have the icon of the Elevation of the Cross.

What kind of decorations?

It is customary for commemorations of the Cross and of the Crucifixion to use primarily Basil.

Suggestions:

Icon Stand = Rest the small Cross on a bed of Basil or

Frame the small Cross with Basil.

Frame icon with Basil and Flowers (red preferably)



Christmas (Nativity of Christ)

What needs to be decorated?

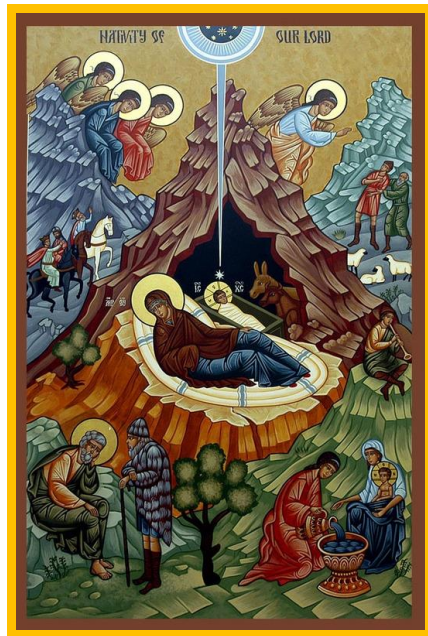
The Icon Stand will have the festal icon of the Nativity of Christ.

What kind of decorations?

Mainly flowers (any color) for the icon stand.

Suggestions:

Icon Stand = Frame the festal icon of the Nativity of Christ with flowers.



Theophany (January 6/19)

What needs to be decorated?

The Icon Stand will have the festal icon of Theophany.

What kind of decorations?

Flowers (any color) for the icon stand. Basil especially.

Suggestions:

Icon Stand = Frame the festal icon of Theophany with flowers and basil.



Remaining 12 Great Feasts

If we serve Vigil and/or Divine Liturgy on any of the remaining 12 Great Feasts, whether they fall on a weekday or on a Sunday, the Icon Stand holding the festal icon of that feast should be framed with flowers (any colors).

The 12 Great Feasts

Nativity of the Theotokos (Sep 8/21)

The Exaltation of the Precious Cross (Sep 14/27)

The Entrance of the Theotokos to the Temple (Nov 21/Dec 4)

The Nativity of Christ (Dec 25/Jan 7)

Theophany (Jan 6/19)

Presentation of Christ (Feb 2/15)

Annunciation (March 25/April 7)

Transfiguration (Aug 6/19)

Dormition (Aug 15/28)

Palm Sunday

Ascension

Pentecost

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Every Sunday

What needs to be decorated?

The Icon Stand.

What kind of decorations?

Mainly flowers (any color) for the icon stand.

Suggestions:

Icon Stand = Frame the icon(s) with flowers.

Special Occasions

Example

When we have a visiting miracle-working icon.

What needs to be decorated?

The Icon Stand.

What kind of decorations?

Mainly flowers (any color) for the icon stand.

Suggestions:

Icon Stand = Frame the icon(s) with flowers.

Cleaning and Maintenance of Flowers

Mold & Running Colors

Do not place flowers directly onto the fabric covering the stand.

The colors of the flowers may run.

Also, if flowers are placed directly onto fabric covering the stand, and are left for prolonged period, mold begins to grow.

Use a tray or lay a clear Perspex cover on the icon stand.

Removing Flowers

Remove flowers from Icon Stand:

- At the end of the service
- At the end of the feast
- We can encourage people to take flowers home at the end of the service or feast as keepsakes.

- A dedicated person(s) can stand near the Icon Stand/Epitaphios...etc., and hand flowers to the faithful in similar manner when the congregation lines up to venerate the Cross held by the priest after the Divine Liturgy.

Church Cleanliness

The church environment needs to be kept clean and free of cobwebs, dust, and dirt.

Routine cleaning is a must, but an annual deep clean is recommended with the following tasks:

- Flooring professionally cleaned according to manufacturer recommendations (carpet, stone, marble, tile, linoleum)
- Woodwork should be oiled with orange oil or similar protective product
- Wax stains should be removed from chairs, pews, and carpeting
- Brass polished
- Textiles gently vacuumed to remove accumulated dust (for intricate textiles like an epitaphios, use a micro vacuum attachment like those used for computers)
- Ceilings and light fixtures dusted to remove cobwebs
- Altar server robes and altar cloths checked for tears and/or stains and repaired or cleaned

Rose Water

Quite simply, rose water is used to wipe icons, crosses and anything else that may be frequently “kissed” by the faithful to:

- Remove lip-marks and various other smudges.
- Leave icons with a pleasant aroma.

Rose water may be purchased from supermarkets like Coles and Woolworths (check the International Food Section), and from Greek delis as well as specialist grocery shops (Middle-Eastern groceries, delis, nut shops...etc, around Melbourne).



Volunteering and Raising Funds for Flower Decorations

Please see Amy or one of the clergy if you would like to buy flowers or help with flower decorations.

Donations towards flowers are most welcome:

BSB: 033134

Account: 321425

Name: Holy Ascension Orthodox Mission

Reference: Donation Flowers.



Candles

Meaning and Symbolism

There are many profound symbols behind the candle.

The candle represents the Light of Christ, the flame of faith.

It represents the purity of our soul because it is made of pure beeswax.

It also represents the plasticity of our soul because we can easily engrave anything on it.

It represents deification, to which we must aim, because the candle is mixed with fire.

It represents the light of Christ because, as it burns, it illuminates the darkness.

It represents the love and peace which are attributes that every Christian should have because the candle burns and comforts everyone with its light in the darkness.

When lighting a candle, we must remember that we must live in the light we received with our baptism.

Every time we light a candle the flame and the light should remind us of God.

Lighting a candle on entering church expresses our belief that Jesus is the Light of the world and that as His disciple, I am called daily to reflect His light in my life.

Safety and Weekly Maintenance

Someone (or two, or three people) must always keep an eye on candles during services, activities and events at the Mission. **This is a must.**

Don't have too many candles lit as they will just melt over each other, perhaps fall onto the divider screens or on the floor and set a fire.

Extinguish candles when they burn down to a small stub.

Extinguish by butting them out in the sand or have a small bucket with water.

Dispose candle stubs in candle bin. The candle bin is located underneath the candle stand, next to the icon stand. There is also a bucket located underneath the candle stand which you can fill with water to extinguish candles or as a precaution against fire.

When candle bin is full, throw out paraffin candles in regular waste. If they are beeswax candles, keep the beeswax candle stubs as the re-supplier may wish to recycle the beeswax.

Replace candles in candle basket on the candle desk once a week. A half-full or almost empty candle basket is not a good look. You will find boxes of tapers and other candles under the candle desk.

In case of fire, use bucket of sand/water (under candle desk) or fire blanket (on candle desk).

Cleanliness of Candle Area

It is important to keep the Candle Area clean and presentable at all times as befits a place of worship to the Almighty.

Vacuum around the Candle Area, including underneath the candle stand and candle desk and around the icon stand.

Keep the candle desk clean. Over time dust and sand builds up on the candle desk, the candle basket and the commemoration tray. Remove items from candle desk and dust/wipe down candle desk. Clean the commemoration tray and the candle basket by removing dust and sand.

Keep the candle desk and the icon stand presentable. Make sure the covers are presentable and not crumpled.

Re-Supply

Candles need to be replenished at least once a year depending on frequency of usage.

We usually order one box of tapers (Tapers are the “spaghetti-thin” candles).

Beeswax is always preferable, but also the more expensive option.

When we are running low on candles, you should notify either Fr Kyril or Erica (the Mission Secretary and a Choir Leader). Let them know when we are down to our last box of candles (tapers) and when that last box is half full. Please do not forget to notify or wait until we have run out of candles completely to resupply or to notify either Fr Kyril or Erica.

Suppliers

You can purchase a ***box of paraffin tapers*** from:

Angel Candles

3 Bailey Ave, Keilor East

Phone: (03) 9336 4648

Email: info@angelcandles.com.au

Web: angelcandles.com.au

Contos Candle Makers

43 McIntosh St, Airport West

Phone: (03) 9338 4984

You can purchase a ***box of paraffin or a box of beeswax tapers*** from:

St Paraskevi Greek Orthodox Church

22 Marsden Crescent, St Albans

Phone: (03) 9367 2860

Email: admin@stparaskevi.org.au

Web: stparaskevi.org.au

Prilep Candles

1/25 Norwich Avenue, Thomastown

Phone: 03 9460 1605

Web: prilepcandles.com.au

You can purchase a *box of beeswax tapers* from:

Pantanassa Monastery

567 Mangrove Creek Rd
Mangrove Creek, NSW 2250

Email: admin@pantanassa.org.au
www.pantanassa.org.au/product-category/candles/

Sand

Sand needs sifting once a week. You will find a bag of sand with a scoop under the candle table.

Replenish sand as needed.

Buy washed, fine sand from places like Bunnings. Do not use sand straight from beaches. It may be contaminated and polluted and befouled by animals (and humans!).

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Icon Stand

Icons are windows into Heaven and the veneration we give shows our respect for Christ, the Theotokos and the Saints who are in Heaven.

Cleanliness of Icon Stand

It is important to keep the Icon Stand clean and presentable at all times as befits a place of worship to the Almighty.

Vacuum around the Icon Stand Area, including underneath the candle stand and candle desk and around the icon stand.

Keep the ledge/base where the icons rest clean. Over time dust, flower remains and even sand may build up.

Keep the Icon Stand presentable. Make sure the covers are presentable and not crumpled.

Cleanliness of Icons

It is important to keep icons resting on the Icon Stand clean and presentable at all times as befits a place of worship to the Almighty. Remember these icons are being venerated by the faithful. Lip marks from lip balms and lip stick (or just marks on icons left by over-zealous people venerating icons with much fervor!) are unsightly. Icons are considered sacred and holy. It is disrespectful to leave icons unsightly and dirty.

You will find some bottles of Rose Water, on a ledge, behind the Icon Stand. Spray some Rose Water on the icons. Wipe the icons dry with paper towels. You will find paper

towels/serviettes in the kitchenette. You can also pour some Rose Water onto paper towels and wipe down icons. Discard paper towels in bin located in the kitchenette. Put the Rose Water bottles back on the ledge, behind the Icon Stand.

You will find spare Rose Water bottles and Paper Towels in the cupboard in the Meeting Room.

Please do not forget to notify the relevant person to resupply Rose Water and/or Paper Towels. Please do not wait until we have completely run out of Rose Water and/or Paper Towels to notify the relevant person. If you do not know who the relevant person is, ask someone in your team, your team leader or Fr Kyril or Erica the Mission Secretary.

You may consider donating Rose Water or Paper Towels as part of your regular giving to the Mission.

Rose water may be purchased from supermarkets like Coles and Woolworths (check the International Food Section), and from Greek delis as well as specialist grocery shops (Middle-Eastern groceries, delis, nut shops...etc, around Melbourne).

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