

The Truth and Power of the Resurrection

The mind can prove the truth of the Resurrection through reason based on the scriptures, and a non-believer cannot but admit the power of its arguments, as long as a sense of truth is not yet dead in him. A believer does not need proof, because the Church of God is filled with the light of the Resurrection. Both of these indicators of truth are faithful and convincing. But counter-reasoning can spring up and contradict the mind's reason, and faith can be trampled and shaken by perplexities and doubts, coming from without and arising within.

Is there no invincible wall around the truth of the Resurrection? There is. It will occur when the power of the Resurrection, received already at baptism, begins to actively be revealed as it purges the corruption of soul and body, and establishes within them the beginnings of a new life. He who experiences this will walk in the light of the Resurrection, and anyone talking against the truth of the Resurrection will seem to him insane, like a person saying in the daytime that it is night.

Saint Theophan the Recluse



**On Sunday 20 April 2014, we
celebrate the Great and Holy
Pascha of our Lord and Saviour
Jesus Christ**

Resurrection Gospel: Mark 16:1-8

Epistle: Acts 1:1-8

Gospel: John 1:1-17

Apolytikion:

Christ has risen from the dead, by
death He has trampled on death,
and to those in the graves He has
given life.

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Readings and saints for this week:

Monday: Acts 1:12-17, 21-26; John 1:18-28
Hieromartyr Januarius; Maximian of Constantinople

Tuesday: Acts 2:14-21; Luke 24:12-35
Saints Raphael, Nicholas, Irene, and the Other Newly-revealed Martyrs of Lesbos; Theodore of Sykeon; Holy Apostle Nathaniel

Wednesday: Luke 21:12-19; Acts 12:1-11; John 1:35-52
Great Martyr George

Thursday: Acts 2:38-43; John 3:1-15
Elizabeth the Wonderworker; Savvas the General of Rome

Friday: Acts 3:1-8; Luke 10:16-21
Apostle and Evangelist Mark; New Martyr Emmanuel and Companions

Saturday: Acts 3:11-16; John 3:22-33
Hieromartyr Basil of Amaseia; Glaphyra the Righteous



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The Joy of Pascha

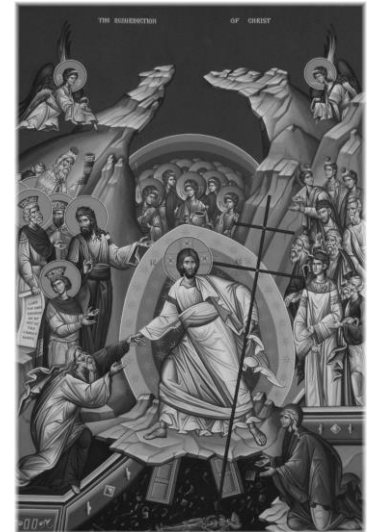
Easter is at the very centre of the Church's calendar and at the very centre of our faith. It is the feast of feasts. As St Paul tells, if Christ is not risen from the dead, then our faith is in vain. (1 Corinthians 15:14)

The word "Pascha" comes from the Hebrew word for "Passover." This Passover is recounted in the book of Exodus and commemorates the liberation of the people of Israel from slavery in Egypt, a liberation that foreshadowed and pointed to the great saving act of Jesus Christ in His Resurrection from the dead.

We are all-too-aware of the power of death in our world. Since the beginning of Lent we have been identifying with Adam and Eve in their fall from Paradise. In our broken human condition we experience the consequences of sin, and our own powerlessness to change this.

However, Christ comes to us as the new Adam. He takes our corrupted nature upon Himself in order to renew it and in His death He conquers the power of death in our flesh. With Him we pass over from slavery to sin and death, to freedom and new life.

This is the reason for our Paschal joy: Jesus Christ has destroyed the power of death, and by rising from the dead, he has opened for us the gates of Paradise.



The day of Resurrection, let us be radiant, O peoples!
Pascha, the Lord's Pascha;
For Christ God has brought us from death to life,
and from earth to heaven, as we sing the triumphal song.

Katavasia for Pascha Matins

The Icon of the Resurrection

Saint Gregory the Theologian calls Easter the “feast of feasts and the celebration of celebrations.” Like the Birth of Christ, it is a great mystery and cannot be explained or depicted, for it involves the breaking in of eternity into our world of time and space. The Orthodox Church therefore does not depict the actual moment of the Resurrection of Christ in icons. Instead, the two icons that are used for the

Resurrection depict the events just before and just after the Resurrection. These are the Descent of Christ into Hell, which we commemorate on Holy Saturday, and the visit of the Myrrhbearing Women to His Empty Tomb.



The icon of Christ’s Descent into Hell encapsulates, as it were, our whole understanding of the mystery of our salvation. Adam was dead in sin because he was cut off from God, but in His death Jesus Christ descended into the very depths of death. Saint Peter tells us that Christ “went and preached unto the spirits in prison” (1 Peter 3:19). In voluntarily entering into the depths of our human condition and encountering evil and suffering at its very heart, Jesus Christ conquered death and His Light began to shine into the darkness of hell.

In the icon we see the radiance of Christ’s glory dispelling the darkness of sin as he draws Adam and Eve out of hell and towards the Light. Around them we see groups of Old Testaments saints who represent all who have been waiting for Christ in hope.

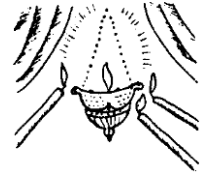
Thou hast descended into the abyss of the earth, O Christ, and hast broken down the eternal doors which imprison those who are bound, and, like Jonah after three days inside the whale, Thou hast risen from the tomb.

Irmos of Ode 6 of the Paschal Canon

Come, Receive the Light!

As the Paschal Vigil begins, we sing “Come, Receive the Light” as the Light of Christ’s Resurrection illuminates the darkness. Jesus Christ is our Light, but He also calls us to become light, to allow His light to illumine our lives so that we may provide light to those around us. Saint Gregory the Theologian describes how we can learn to participate in Christ’s Light when he writes:

Yesterday, I was crucified with Him;
Today, I am glorified with Him;
Yesterday, I died with Him;
Today I am quickened with Him;
Yesterday, I was buried with Him;
Today, I rise with Him.



But let us offer to Him Who suffered and rose again for us — you will think perhaps that I am going to say gold, or silver, or woven work, or transparent and costly stones, the mere passing material things of earth, that remains here below, and is for the most part always possessed by bad men, slaves of the world, and of the Prince of the World.

Let us offer ourselves,
The possession most precious to God, and most fitting;
Let us give back the image that is made after the Image,
Let us recognize our Dignity; let us honour our Archetype;

Let us know the power of the Mystery, and for what Christ died.

Let us become like Christ, since Christ has become like us.

Let us become God's for His sake, since He for ours became Man.

He assumed the worse so that He might give us the better;
He became poor, so that we through his poverty might become rich;
He took upon Him the form of a servant that we might receive back our liberty;

He came down, that we might be exalted;
He was tempted, that we might conquer;
He was dishonoured, that He might glorify us;
He died, that He might save us;
He ascended, That He might draw Himself to us, who were lying low in the Fall of sin.

Let us give all, offer all,
To Him who gave Himself as Ransom and a Reconciliation for us.

We needed an incarnate God, a God put to death, that we might live.
We were put to death together with Him that we might be cleansed.
We rose again with Him because we were put to death with Him.
We were glorified with Him because we rose again with Him.

A few drops of Blood recreate the whole of creation!