

The godly wise women came to Thee with myrrh. But Him Whom they sought with tears as dead, they joyfully adored as the living God. And they told to Thy disciples, O Christ, the glad tidings of the mystical Pascha.

We celebrate the death of death, the destruction of hell, the beginning of eternal life. And leaping for joy, we celebrate the Cause, the only blessed and most glorious God of our fathers.

For a truly holy and a supreme feast is this saving night radiant with Light, the harbinger of the bright day of Resurrection, on which the Eternal Light shone bodily from the grave upon all.

This is the chosen and Holy Day, the first of Sabbaths, the Sovereign and Queen, the Feast of Feasts, and Triumph of Triumphs, on which let us bless Christ forever.

O come, let us partake of the fruit of the new vine of divine joy on the auspicious Day of the Resurrection and Kingdom of Christ, praising Him as God forever.

Saint John of Damascus

**On Sunday 4 May 2014 is the
Sunday of the Holy Myrrhbearers**

Matins Gospel: Luke 24:1-12

Epistle: Acts 6:1-7

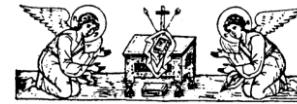
Gospel: Mark 15:43-47; 16:1-8

Apolytikion:

When Thou didst descend unto death, O Life Immortal, then didst Thou slay Hades with the lightning of Thy Divinity. And when Thou didst also raise the dead out of the nethermost depths, all the powers in the Heavens cried out: O Life-giver, Christ our God, glory be to Thee.

The noble Joseph, taking Thine immaculate Body down from the Tree, and having wrapped It in pure linen and spices, laid It for burial in a new tomb. But on the third day Thou didst arise, O Lord, granting great mercy to the world.

Unto the myrrh-bearing women did the Angel cry out as he stood by the grave: Myrrh oils are meet for the dead, but Christ hath proved to be a stranger to corruption. But cry out: The Lord is risen, granting great mercy to the world.



Evangelion

A Bulletin of Orthodox Christian Faith

4 May 2014

He is not here, He is Risen!

Today, on the Sunday of the Holy Myrrhbearers, we hear Saint Mark's account of how the holy women had gone to the tomb of Christ to anoint His body, only to be met by an angel with the news that He was Risen.

We have been hearing and celebrating the news of Christ's Resurrection for the past two weeks, and we know that the Resurrection is at the centre of our faith. Yet it must have been rather a shock for these women, who were already traumatized by the Crucifixion, to be met with the news that Christ's body was no longer in the tomb. They can hardly be blamed for being frightened and it is not surprising that it took a while for them to grasp what had happened. However, it was these women who were to be the first to announce the good news that Christ is Risen.

We are used to celebrating the Resurrection of Christ at Pascha, yet this Gospel may help to remind us of the newness of the Resurrection. In the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, we see the power of God breaking into our world in a quite dramatic way. This can be rather unsettling, for it turns our normal expectations on their head. Like the holy women at the tomb, we may not know what to expect when we allow God into our lives.

The angel tells the women not to be afraid for Christ is Risen. He has not left them, but has rather gone ahead of them to Galilee, and they are given the task to tell the apostles of His Resurrection. In the same way, Jesus Christ goes ahead of us. He breaks through our closed doors in order to call us follow Him in His Risen Life. This can be unsettling because it leads us into the unknown. Yet we know that He goes before us and will always lead us and guide us.



Readings and saints for this week:

Monday: Acts 6:8-15; 7:1-5, 47-60; John 4:46-54
Great Martyr Irene; Martyrs Neophytus, Gaius and Gianus

Tuesday: Acts 8:5-17; John 6:27-33
Prophet Job; Seraphim the Struggler

Wednesday: Acts 26:1, 12-20; John 6:35-39
Appearance of the Sign of the Cross; Cyril, Abp. Of Jerusalem

Thursday: John 21:15-25; 1 John 1:1-7; John 19:25-28, 21:24-25
John the Theologian; Arsenios the Great

Friday: Acts 8:40; 9:1-19; John 6:48-54
Prophet Isaiah; Martyr Christopher

Saturday: 1 Corinthians 4:9-16; Luke 6:12-19
Apostle Simon; Laurence of Egypt

Let us arise in the early dawn, and instead of myrrh, offer praises to the Master; and we shall see Christ, the Sun of Justice, who causes life to dawn for all.

Paschal Canon of Saint John of Damascus

A Mercy of Peace, a Sacrifice of Praise

An introduction to the Divine Liturgy (continued)

In our series on the Divine Liturgy, we have been discussing the Holy Anaphora, or Offering. We saw how, at the heart of this prayer, is the offering of the bread and wine in which Christ's words at the Last Supper are recalled, and the Epiclesis, in which we call upon the Holy Spirit to come upon the Gifts of bread and wine and to transform them into the Body and Blood of Christ.

The Epiclesis is followed by the commemoration of all those who have gone before us in the Faith as well as the remembrance of all those who need our prayers. As we said before, remembrance in the Liturgy is not simply the act of remembering something in the distant past. Rather, it is the making present of past events. It reminds us that our forebears in the Faith are truly present with us when we celebrate the Divine Liturgy. The Liturgy is "timeless" because God is beyond time and space, and in the Liturgy all things are brought together before God's altar.



In this prayer we therefore commemorate and

Offer to you this spiritual worship for those who have gone to their rest in faith, Forefathers, Fathers, Patriarchs, Apostles, Preachers, Evangelists, Martyrs, Confessors, Ascetics and every righteous spirit made perfect in faith;

Above all for our all-holy, pure, most blessed and glorious Lady, Mother of God and Ever-Virgin Mary.

However, in the Liturgy we also bring to God all the needs of the Church and of the world. In this prayer, we pray for the whole world, naming specifically:

- All who have fallen asleep in the hope of the resurrection to eternal life.
- All Orthodox bishops, priests, deacons and monastics.
- The whole world and its rulers.
- The Church.
- Our Bishop, that he may rightly divine the word of truth.
- Our city or town and every city or town.
- Those who travel.
- Those in captivity.
- Those who care for the beauty of the holy churches.
- Those who remember the poor.

We do not pray to God as isolated individuals, nor do we do we pray only for ourselves. The prayer that we offer is offered in unity with the whole Church throughout the ages. And we offer it on behalf of all people as an expression of our love for both God and our neighbour.

Whenever we enter the church and draw near to the heavenly mysteries, we ought to approach with all humility and fear, both because of the presence of the angelic powers and out of the reverence due to the sacred oblation; for as the Angels are said to have stood by the Lord's body when it lay in the tomb, so we must believe that they are present in the celebration of the Mysteries of His most sacred Body at the time of consecration.

Saint Bede the Venerable

Who were the Holy Myrrhbearers?

The gospels tell us that when Jesus began His ministry and went around Galilee, preaching and healing the sick, many women responded to His message. They followed Him and supported Him from their own means. They also remained faithful to Him when He was arrested and crucified.

It was these women who came seeking Christ's body early in the morning. The Church identifies them as including the holy Virgin Mary, the Mother of the Lord; Mary Magdalene; Mary, the wife of Cleopas; Joanna, the wife of Chouza; Salome, the Mother of James and John; Mary and Martha, the sisters of Lazarus, and Susanna.



The Holy Myrrhbearers present us with an example of faithfulness to Christ. They had not only followed Him in His earthly life, but they remained faithful to Him in His death. They showed considerable courage in coming to the tomb seeking to anoint His body. They did not know how they would get into the tomb, and yet did not let this deter them. They did not go empty handed, but took spices with which to anoint His body.

The faith of the Holy Myrrhbearers was not in vain, for they discovered that the stone had been rolled away from the tomb, and they were met by an angel who gave them the joyous news that Christ was not in the tomb, but that He had risen and had gone on ahead of them to Galilee.



In addition to the Myrrhbearing Women, we also commemorate Saint Joseph and Saint Nicodemus today.

Nicodemus was probably from Jerusalem and a prominent leader of the Jews. He was learned in the Law and instructed in the Holy Scriptures. He had believed in Christ when, at the beginning of our Saviour's preaching of salvation he came to Him by night. (John 3:1-15) At the time of Christ's burial, we are told that he brought some one hundred pounds of myrrh-oils and an aromatic mixture of aloes and spices with which to anoint the body of Christ. (John 19:39)

Joseph was from the city of Arimathea, a wealthy and noble man and one of the counsellors in Jerusalem. All four gospels tell us that after the Crucifixion, he asked Pilate for the body of Jesus and buried Him together with Nicodemus. Since there was not time to prepare another tomb, he placed the Lord's body in his own tomb which was hewn out of rock. (Matthew 27:60)