

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 1 May 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 for the Feast:

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

Seasonal Kontakion

Though You went down into the tomb, You destroyed Hades' power, and You rose the victor, Christ God, saying to the myrrh-bearing women, "Hail!" and granting peace to Your disciples, You who raise up the fallen.

Readings and saints for this week:

Bright Monday, 2 May: Luke 21:12-19; Acts 12:1-11; John 1:18-28
George the Great Martyr & Triumphant ; Relics of Athanasius

Bright Tuesday, 3 May: Acts 2:14-21; Luke 10:16-21
Mark the Apostle and Evangelist; Martyrs Timothy and Maura; Peter the Wonderworker

Bright Wednesday, 4 May: Hebrews 13:7-16; John 1:35-52
Removal of the Relics of St. Athanasius the Great; Martyr Pelagia

Bright Thursday, 5 May: Acts 2:38-43; John 3:1-15
Great Martyr Irene; Martyrs Neophytus, Gaius & Gianus

Bright Friday, 6 May: Acts 3:1-8; John 2:12-22
Theotokos of the Life-giving Spring; Prophet Job; Seraphim the Struggler

Bright Saturday, 7 May: Acts 3:11-16; John 3:22-33
Appearance of the Sign of the Cross; Cyril, Abp. Of Jerusalem



Evangelion

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Christ is Risen!

Today, on Easter Sunday, we celebrate the great event of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ and His victory over the powers of death. "Christ is risen, and the demons are fallen! Christ is risen, and the angels rejoice! Christ is risen, and life reigns!" as we hear Saint John Chrysostom proclaim in his Paschal Homily.

The Church refers to Easter as the Pascha of the Lord because it sees His Resurrection as a new Passover. The word "Pascha" comes from the Hebrew word "Pesach," which refers to the Jewish Passover from slavery in Egypt. Led by the prophet Moses, God delivered His people from slavery and led them into freedom in the Promised Land.

The early Christians understood the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ to be a new Passover, which frees us from the slavery to sin and leads us into true freedom. He is the true Lamb who has been sacrificed for us, and through His death He has conquered death forever.

This Passover of the Lord is one that we are invited to share in. The liturgical texts for Holy Week and Pascha speak not so much about historical events, but repeatedly refer to "today," reminding us that Christ's victory over death is a present reality and something that we need to enter into. For, through our baptism, we too have died with Him and have been given the promise of a new life in Him.



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

The Church Fathers on Pascha

...Now since you are celebrating the holy Pascha, you should know, brethren, what the Pascha is. Pascha means the crossing-over, and so the Festival is called by this name. For it was on this day that the Children of Israel crossed over out of Egypt, and the Son of God crossed over from this world to His Father. What gain is it to celebrate unless you imitate Him Whom you worship; that is, unless you cross over from Egypt, that is, from the darkness of evildoing to the light of virtue, from the love of this world to the love of your heavenly home?

Saint Ambrose of Milan

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 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 to the Image what 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.

Saint Gregory the Theologian

As, then, Jonah spent three days and as many nights in the whale's belly, and was delivered up sound again, so shall we all, who have passed through the three stages of our present life on earth -- I mean the beginning, the middle, and the end, of which all this present time consists -- rise again. For there are altogether three intervals of time, the past, the future, and the present. And for this reason the Lord spent so many days in the earth symbolically, thereby teaching clearly that when the fore-mentioned intervals of time have been fulfilled, then shall come our resurrection, which is the beginning of the future age, and the end of this.

Saint Methodius of Olympus

Those to whom Christ has given light as He has risen, to them He has appeared spiritually, He has been shown to their spiritual eyes. When this happens to us through the Spirit He raises us up from the dead and gives us life. He grants us to see Him, who is immortal and indestructible. More than that, He grants clearly to know Him who raises us up (Eph. 2:6) and glorifies us (Rom. 8:17) with Himself, as all the divine Scripture testifies. These, then, are the divine mysteries of Christians. This is the hidden power of our faith, which unbelievers, or those who believe with difficulty, or rather believe in part, do not see nor are able at all to see.

Saint Symeon the New Theologian

