

There are two lives; one of which we knew, the other we did not know of.

The one is mortal, the other immortal; the one linked with human infirmity, the other to incorruption; one is marked for death, the other for resurrection.

The Mediator between God and man, the Man Jesus Christ, came, and took upon Himself the one, and revealed to us the other.

The one He endured by dying; the other He revealed when He rose from the dead.

Had He then foretold to us, who knew His mortal life, the Resurrection of His Body, and had not visibly shown it to us, who would believe in His promises?

So, becoming Man, He shows Himself in our flesh; of His own will He suffered death; by His own power He rose from the dead; and by this proof He showed us that which He promises as a reward.

Saint Gregory Dialogos

**26 April 2015 is
Holy Myrrhbearers' Sunday**

Matins Gospel: Luke 24:1-12

Epistle: Acts 6:1-7

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

Resurrectional 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

26 April 2015

Archbishopric of Good Hope
Patriarchate of Alexandria & All Africa

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.

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.



Yet 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
Hieromartyr Symeon; Eulogios the Innkeeper

Tuesday: Acts 8:5-17; John 6:27-33
9 Martyrs of Cyzicus; Theocharus & Apostolus

Wednesday: Acts 8:18-25; John 6:35-39
Jason & Sosipater of the 70; Martyr Cercyra

Thursday: Acts 12:1-11; Luke 9:1-6
Apostle James; New Martyr Agyre

Friday: Acts 8:40; 9:1-19; John 6:48-54
Prophet Jeremias; New Martyr Maria of Mirabella

Saturday: Hebrews 13:7-16; Matthew 5:14-19
Translation of the relics of Athanasius; Hesperos & Zoe the Righteous

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

The Seal of the Gift of the Holy Spirit

A series on the meaning of Chrismation

As we have seen in this series on Chrismation, this Mystery of the Church is usually administered to the newly baptized. Just as we die with Christ in Baptism, so we are filled with His Spirit when are chrismated.

However, there are also certain occasions when the Mystery of Chrismation is administered apart from Baptism. In addition to preparing and strengthening us for our Christian life, it is also a sacrament of healing and restoration. Understood in this way, it is used on two main occasions.

- Chrismation is used when Orthodox Christians who have apostatized, or departed from the faith, recognize their sin and desire to be reconciled to the Church once more. Because they had already been baptized, their baptism cannot be repeated. However, they need to return to the Church in repentance and are received back through the Mystery of Chrismation.
- Chrismation is sometimes also used for receiving converts from other Christian traditions into the Orthodox Church. Whether converts are received by baptism or chrismation depends on the judgment of the bishops and also on the tradition from which they came. When Chrismation is used in this way, it is understood as making up whatever was lacking in the candidate's original heterodox baptism and also reconciling them to the Orthodox Church.

However it is used, the Mystery of Chrismation is God's gift to us equip us for our Christian life. Moreover, while we are given the gift of the Holy Spirit in Chrismation, this is not a static gift, for we continue to pray that we may acquire this gift ever-more fully. As we pray repeatedly at the beginning of our prayers:

*O Heavenly King, Comforter, the Spirit of Truth, you are everywhere and fill all things,
Treasury of blessings and Giver of life: come and abide in us.
Cleanse us from every impurity and save our souls, O Good One.*



Saints Nicodemus and Joseph, the Secret Disciples of the Lord

Together with the Holy Myrrhbearers, we also commemorate the secret disciples of the Saviour today, who sought to minister to Christ's body after His crucifixion.

Nicodemus was probably a Jerusalemite, a prominent leader among the Jews. As a Pharisee 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. Furthermore, he brought some one hundred pounds of myrrh-oils and an aromatic mixture of aloes and spices out of reverence and love for the divine Teacher (John 19:39).

Joseph was from the city of Arimathea. He was a wealthy nobleman, and one of the counsellors who were in Jerusalem. He went boldly unto Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus, and together with Nicodemus he gave Him burial. Since time did not permit the preparation of another tomb, he placed the Lord's body in his own tomb which was hewn out of rock (Matthew 27:60).

The Sunday of the Myrrh-Bearing Women

Today the Church commemorates the Myrrh-bearing women, who came to the Christ's tomb early in the morning in order to anoint His body, and to whom His resurrection was first announced.

The gospels tell us of various women who followed Jesus as He went around Galilee, preaching and healing the sick. They supported Him from their own means, and 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.



Hear the voice of gladness, O women; for I have trodden down rebellious Hades, and raised the world from corruption. Wherefore, hasten ye and proclaim the glad tidings to My beloved; for I desire that joy shall break forth thence upon My creation, whence first came forth sorrow.

From Matins of the Sunday of the Holy Myrrhbearers

Just as wine mingles in all the members of the one who drinks it and is transformed in him and he in wine, so does the one who drinks the Blood of Christ quench his thirst with the divine spirit who comingles with his soul and the soul with Him. For, through the Eucharist, those who commune with dignity reach the ability to partake of the Holy Spirit, and in this manner souls can live eternally.

Saint Macarius the Great

