

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, 19 May 2013,
we commemorate 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

Archbishopric of Good Hope,
Patriarchate of Alexandria and All Africa

19 May 2013

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
Martyr Thalleleus; Mark the Hermit

Tuesday: John 10:9-16; Acts 26:1, 12-20; John 10:1-9
Constantine & Helen, Equal-to-the Apostles; Pachomios the Righteous New Martyr

Wednesday: Acts 8:18-25; John 6:35-39
Hieromartyr Basiliscus; New Martyrs Demetrius and Paul

Thursday: Acts 8:26-39; John 6:40-44
Michael, Bp. Of Synnada; Mary the Myrrhbearer & wife of Cleopas

Friday: Acts 8:40; 9:1-19; John 6:48-54
Symeon the Stylite; Saint Vincent of Lerins

Saturday: Luke 7:17-30; 2 Corinthians 4:6-15; Matthew 11:2-15
3rd Finding of the Precious Head of St. John the Baptist; Therapon the Hieromartyr, Bp of Cyprus

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

We continue our series looking at the Divine Liturgy, or the Eucharist, which is the central expression of our worship as Christians. As Orthodox Christians we understand the Eucharist to be a Sacrament of the Church and it may help to consider what we mean by this.

The Sacraments, or Mysteries of the Church

One of the best known prayers of the Orthodox Church speaks of God being “everywhere present and filling all things.” This belief that God is truly with us is basic to the Orthodox understanding to God’s relationship to the world. God is not an absent deity, but through the Risen Christ and the Holy Spirit, He is present in every aspect of our lives and in the world around us.



We believe that the material world was created by God as something good and that it can be an important means of leading us to God. Moreover, through becoming human, Jesus Christ has further sanctified matter, making it an appropriate means of our salvation. Therefore the Church uses material elements such as water, wine, oil and bread, and normal human actions such as washing and eating, and through their liturgical use enables them to become revealers of a new reality.

There are particular moments in the life of the Church where our perception of God’s presence and action is heightened. The Orthodox Church has traditionally spoken of these as Mysteries, for through the actions of worshipping community of the Church we are led into the experience of the Mystery of God and of what He has brought

about for our salvation. The Mysteries (or Sacraments, which is the western name) reveal the life of God to us through the prayers and actions of His Church.

These Mysteries also make us receptive to God and affect our personal relationship to Him and to one another. The Holy Spirit works through the sacraments, leading us to Christ who unites us to the Father. Participation in them is therefore crucial to our salvation, for the process whereby we come to participate in God’s life does not occur in isolation from others, but takes place within the context of a believing community.

Through a Cross you took prisoner the belly of hell, you raised the dead with you and overthrew the tyranny of death. Therefore we, Adam’s descendants, falling down in worship sing the praise of your burial and your Rising, O Christ....

Having risen from the tomb, O Good One, you greeted the Myrrhbearers with the cry, ‘Rejoice’, and commanded the Apostles, ‘Proclaim my Rising’; release the bonds of my many offences, for you can accomplish whatever you will.

From Matins for Holy Myrrhbearers’ Sunday

The Holy Myrrhbearers

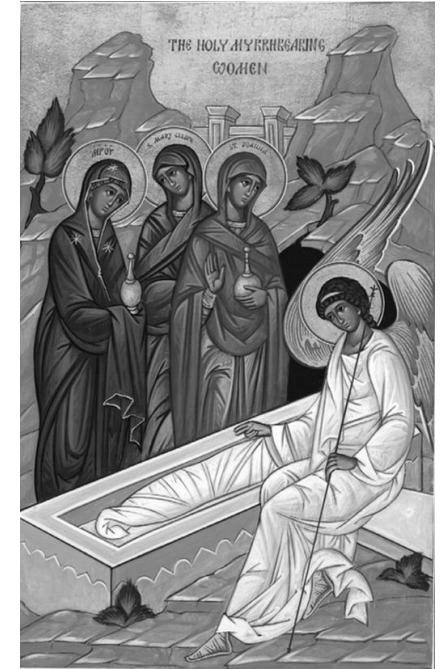
Today the Church commemorates the Myrrh-bearing women, who came to the Christ’s tomb early in the morning in order to anoint His body, and to whom His resurrection was first announced.

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.



The Myrrhbearers rose at dawn and came to your tomb with haste. They were seeking you, O Christ, that they might anoint your spotless body, and instructed by the words of the Angel, they proclaimed the joyful signs to the Apostles, ‘The author of our salvation has risen, despoiling death but granting the world eternal life and his great mercy’.

From the Stichera of the Myrrhbearers

When at dawn, the women with Mary came and found the stone rolled away from the sepulcher, they heard from the angel: Why seek among the dead (as if He were a mortal man) Him Who lives in everlasting light? Behold the grave-clothes. Run and tell the world that the Lord is risen, and has slain death. For He is the Son of God Who saves mankind.

Paschal Canon of Saint John of Damascus