

A Voice in the Wilderness

The Newsletter of St. George Orthodox Christian Church



Rev. Matthew P. Binkewicz, Pastor

Christ is Risen! Indeed He is Risen! Al Masih Kham! Hakken Kham



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Holy Pascha-The Resurrection of Our Lord

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What is the reason for defining the event of the Resurrection of Christ as “Radiant”? And what makes the faithful exclaim in the words of Saint John Damascene: “*This is the day of resurrection, let us be radiant O people: Pascha, the Lord’s Pascha. For Christ our God has passed us from death to life, and from earth to heaven, we who sing the song of victory*” (Katavasia of Pascha)?

It is undoubtedly, the conviction of the Orthodox the world over, but also of all Christians, that fear of death was vanquished: “*Christ is risen from the dead, trampling down death by death, and to those in the tombs, He has granted life,*” triumphantly exclaims one of the oldest, together with the (O Gladsome light), hymns of the Christian Church.

However, the true fact of death, the result of man’s fall, and of his free choice to disobey God and thus break communion with Him, was not abolished. Death, as human being’s ultimate enemy, “*will be the last enemy to be destroyed*” in the words of Apostle Paul (1 Cor. 15:26). By means of their faith in the Resurrection of the Son and Word of God, the faithful will be able to live true life, “*in abundance of life*” according to John the Evangelist: (continued p.3)

+Easter Sunday-Feast of Feasts+

+ Saints of the Kiev Caves Lavra +

Epistle: Acts 1: 1-8

Gospel: John 1:1-17

St. George Orthodox Christian Church is a community of believers who strive to live a life according to the Gospel of Christ and teachings of the Church.

We worship God in Trinity - Father+Son+Holy Spirit.

We are dedicated to Christ’s commandment, *Love the Lord your God with all your heart, ad with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself.*

The Paschal Homily of St. John Chrysostom

If any man be devout and love God, let him enjoy this fair and radiant triumphal feast. If any man be a wise servant, let him rejoicing enter into the joy of his Lord. If any have labored long in fasting, let him now receive his recompense. If any have wrought from the first hour, let him today receive his just reward.

If any have come at the third hour, let him with thankfulness keep the feast. If any have arrived at the sixth hour, let him have no misgivings; because he shall in nowise

be deprived thereof. If any have delayed until the ninth hour, let him draw near, fearing nothing.

If any have tarried even until the eleventh hour, let him, also, be not alarmed at his tardiness; for the Lord, who is jealous of his honor, will accept the last even as the first; He gives rest unto him who comes at the eleventh hour, even as unto him who has wrought from the first hour.

And He shows mercy upon the last, and cares

for the first; and to the one He gives, and upon the other He bestows gifts. And He both accepts the deeds, and welcomes the intention, and honors the acts and praises the offering.

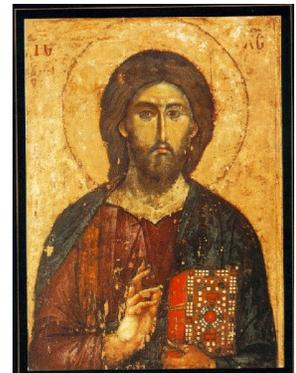
Wherefore, enter you all into the joy of your Lord; and receive your reward, both the first, and likewise the second. You rich and poor together, hold high festival. You sober and you heedless, honor the day. Rejoice today, both you who have fasted and you who have not.

(continued on p.2)

We invite all to worship in our services. Sunday Divine Liturgy begins at 9:30 AM

If you have any questions about the church or would like to speak with our pastor, please call Fr. Matthew at 607-280-1586

Glory be to Jesus Christ.
Glory be Forever.





As the deliverer
of captives
and defender
of the poor,
healer of the infirm
and champion of kings,
victorious great
martyr George
intercede with Christ
our God that our souls
may be saved.

News and Notes

We welcome all who are with us today and invite you to join us for the blessing of Easter foods and breaking the fast following the Divine Liturgy.

Pray without ceasing (1 Thess. 5.17)

Please keep the following in your prayers: Mother Onufria, Larissa, Jack, Evan, Ryan, Anatoly, Alexey, Heidi, Mackenzie, Lisa, Jeff, Bonnalee, David, Carol, Norris, Debbie, Linda, Daniel, Michael, Abraham, Katrina, George, Rochelle, Brianna, Tamam, Catherine, Chuck, Theresa, Sally Lou the homeless, the hungry, victims of abuse and violence, & those persecuted for their faith in Christ

Pascha Homily-St Gregory the Theologian

Yesterday I was crucified with Him; today I am glorified with Him. Yesterday I died with Him; today I am made alive with Him. Yesterday I was buried with Him; today I am raised up with Him.

Let us offer to Him Who suffered and rose again for us ... ourselves, the possession most precious to God and most prop-

er. Let us become like Christ, since Christ became like us. Let us become Divine for His sake, since for us He became Man.

He assumed the worse that He might give us the better. He became poor that by His poverty we might become rich. He accepted the form of a servant that we might win back our freedom. He came down that we might be lifted up.

He was tempted that through Him we might conquer. He was dishonored that He might glorify us. He died that He might save us. He ascended that He might draw to Himself us, who were thrown down through the fall of sin.

Let us give all, offer all, to Him who gave Himself a Ransom and 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!

Christ is Risen. Indeed He is Risen.

Paschal Homily, cont'd from p.1

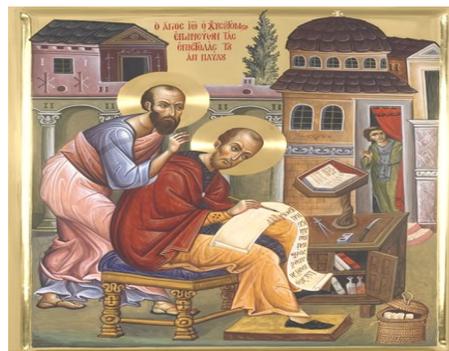
The table is full-laden; feast ye all sumptuously. The calf is fatted; let no one go hungry away.

Enjoy ye all the feast of faith: Receive ye all the riches of loving-kindness. let no one bewail his poverty, for the universal kingdom has been revealed. Let no one weep for his iniquities, for pardon has shown forth from the grave. Let no one fear death, for the Savior's death has set us free. He that was held prisoner of it has annihilated it. By descending into Hell, He made Hell captive. He embittered it when it tasted of His flesh.

And Isaiah, foretelling this, did cry: Hell, said he, was embittered, when it encountered Thee in the lower regions. It was embittered, for it was abolished. It was embittered, for it was mocked. It was embittered, for it was slain. It was embittered, for it was overthrown. It was embittered, for it was fettered in chains. It took a body, and met God face to face. It took earth, and encountered Heaven. It took that which was seen, and fell

upon the unseen.

O Death, where is your sting? O Hell, where is your victory? Christ is risen, and you are overthrown. Christ is risen, and the demons are fallen. Christ is risen, and the angels rejoice. Christ is risen, and life reigns. Christ



is risen, and not one dead remains in the grave. For Christ, being risen from the dead, is become the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep. To Him be glory unto ages of ages.

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Indicating that He endured death for us, and that without doubt the general resurrection will be through Him, the Conqueror of death says: "I was dead,

and behold, I am alive for, evermore, amen;" and you also will be alive forever. This is the meaning of the words of Him Who arose: "I am the first and the last; I am He that lives and was dead" for you, for your redemption from death, and I; that is: I conquered your death by My innocent death for your sake, and behold, I am also forever and will sit with My Father on His throne; I was not separated from Him, even though I was on earth accomplishing My great work for you who are subject to sin and death. Therefore, do you also, My followers, work and struggle against sin and do righteous deeds, and where I am, there shall My servant be also--that is, in the eternal Kingdom. Remarkable also are the Lord's words: "I have the keys of hell and of death;" and, in another place in the same book: "these things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that opens, and no man shuts; and shuts and no man opens." (from the Paschal Homily, St. John of Kronstadt)

Homily on Easter Sunday, (cont'd from p.1)

(I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly, John 10:10). This is the life, rid of the catalytic influence of the devil, that God gave to humanity by the Resurrection of Christ, who “did trample down death and did abolish the devil” (the correct wording of the euchologion in the funeral service).

By His death, Christ did abolish the devil that until then had the power of death, thus liberating humanity that used to be enslaved by their fear of death. In the words of the author of the epistle to the Hebrews: “*That through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage* (Hebrews 2: 14-15. See also “*putting an end to the agony of death...because you will not abandon my soul to Hades*“ in the book of the Acts of the Apostles 2:24 and 27).

This conviction was preserved unchanged in the century long tradition of the Eastern Orthodox Church, where, Easter, that is the Resurrection, is re-enacted not only every Sunday. The Resurrection of our Lord remains the element that represents more than any other the Orthodox Christian self-awareness. The first theologian to have developed and established the determining importance of the Resurrection of Christ was St. Paul, the great Apostle to the nations.

In his first, and, according to many, oldest written text, the first epistle to the Thessalonians, Paul refers, for the first time, to the significance of the Resurrection for the future of the Christians: “*For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep*” (4:14). In other words, faith in the resurrection of Christ, leads to the partaking of the faithful to the eschatological Kingdom of God, a state by far more glorious than even that of Paradise. For this reason, and after quoting an apocalyptic text, using a language that all his readers would be able to understand, he concludes his argumentation by the phrase “*and so we will be with the Lord for ever*” (4:17).

Addressing the community of Corinth, Paul further developed his teaching on the subject of the resurrection of the dead, especially in chapter 15 of his first epistle to

the Corinthians that was going to act as a catalyst in determining the Christian faith. In it we find the well-known quote of the apostle: “*If Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless*” (15:17). For Paul, the Resurrection of Christ was not an isolated past event, a wonderful intervention of God in the created world that lifted at once fear of death and its domination. It was rather the beginning of humanity’s salvation, which will be completed at the “*eschaton*.”

In this chapter, the apostle invokes the sermon of the first church about the cross, the resurrection and the apparitions of the risen Christ, as this message was delivered by eye witnesses, men and women apostles of Christ, and was recorded in the early Christian sources (15:3ff). One of the basic reasons for the extensive development, in this epistle, of the Christian teachings on Resurrection, was the conviction of certain Christians in Corinth, that there was no resurrection of the dead (“*some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead,*” 15:12). This conviction maybe due to a misinterpretation of many traditions of early Christian, New Testament, but also extra biblical Christian sources (such as the Q source, the most ancient source of the Synoptic Gospel tradition, the Epistle of James, St. Thomas Apocryphal Gospel etc.), that put at the heart of their teachings not the Cross and Resurrection of Christ, but the eschatological, moral and prophetic teachings of the Historical Christ.

The apostle makes it clear that the resurrection of Christ ensures the *resurrection of the dead*. To illustrate his point, he uses two theological motifs. First of all, the Adam–Christ, first man–second man: “*For since by a man came death, by a man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive*” (15:21-22). The second motif he uses is the *psychic–pneumatic* body that is the natural, earthy body of this life and the heavenly body after death. He describes how the new body will replace the old one, at the resurrection of the dead: “*So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown a perishable body, it is raised an imperishable body; it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body*” (15:42-44).

(continued on p.4)



Easter Sunday-Holy Pascha-The Resurrection of Our Lord

Finally, he describes the future resurrection of the dead, using, as he did in 1 Thessalonians, the widely known apocalyptic themes of the Old Testament and of the intertestamental sources, the last trumpet that will sound. This is the real “mystery” of immortality in Christ: *“Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality”* (15:51-53).

And he concludes, triumphantly exclaiming, in the way that we celebrate Christ’s Resurrection: *“O Death, where is your victory? O Death where is your sting?”* (15:55). The Resurrection of Christ, therefore, as *“The Feast of Feasts”* and is the fundamental truth and the ultimate event of Christian faith. It is the most decisive act of the liberation of humanity from the fear of death and devil’s power. It is the beginning of the new creation and the very assurance for the salvation of human beings affirmed by the certainty of the heavenly resurrection of the dead, which is a concept widely different from that of the Greek philosophical theory on immortality of the soul. It is precisely for this reason that we read in the later New Testament sources that Christ during the burial of his earthly body and his Resurrection *“He also went and preached to the spirits that were in prison”* (1 Peter 3:19).

This is the reason that the Byzantine painting tradition represents the fact of the Resurrection by the “Descent to Hades.” The descent to hades is also hinted at in another passage of this letter: *“For this is why the gospel was preached even to the dead,”* 4:6, and in the Acts of the Apostles (2:24. 27-31). Many researchers consider that the principal literary source is the apocryphal Gospel of Nicodemus, where we find the dialogue between hades and the devil.

The Resurrection, in other words, is not merely a fact of paramount historical importance, but it overarches history giving it a new sense, orientating it towards a new world, a new life, completely different from the conventional life of decay, strife and death. Amen.

Easter Greetings in Many Languages

It is the tradition in the Orthodox Church to greet one another with this greeting, Christ is Risen! Indeed He is Risen.” This comes down to us from the scriptural accounts of the Angel in the tomb saying to the Myrrh Bearing Women, “He is Risen.”

Albanian: Krishti Ungjall! – Vertete Ungjall!

Arabic: Al Maseeh Qam! – Haqqan Qam!

Armenian: Christos harjav i merelotz! – Orhniale harutjun Christosi!

Byelorussian: Khristos Uvoskros! – Zaprowdu Uvoskros!

Chinese: Helisituosi fuhuole! – Qeshi fuhuole!

Coptic: Pikhirstof aftonf! – Khen o methni aftonf!

Czech: Kristus vstal zmrtvy’ch! – Skutec ne vstal!

English: Christ is Risen! – Indeed, He is Risen!

Estonian: Kristus on surnuist ülestõusnud! – Tõesti ülestõusnud!

Finnish: Kristus nousi Kuolleista! – Totisesti Nousi!

French: Christ est Ressuscité! – En Vérité, Il est Ressuscité!

German: Christus ist auferstanden! Er ist wahrhaftig auferstanden!

Georgian: Kriste aghsdga! – Cheshmaritad aghsdga!

Greek: Christos Anesti! – Alithos Anesti!

Hebrew: Ha Mashiyach qam! – Ken hoo qam!

Hungarian: Krisztus feltámadt! – Valóban feltámadt!

Italian: Cristo è risorto! – È

veramente risorto!

Japanese: Harisutosu Fukkatsu! – Jitsu Ni Fukkatsu!

Latin: Christus resurrexit! – Vere resurrexit!

Polish: Khristus Zmartvikstau! – Zaiste Zmartvikstau!

Portugese: Christo Ressuscitou! – Em Verdade Ressuscitou!

Romanian: Hristos a Inviat! – Adevarat a Inviat!

Russian: Khristos voskres! – Voistinu voskres!

Serbian: Hristos Vaskrese! – Vaistinu Vaskrese!

Slavonic: Christos Voskrese! – Voistinu Voskrese!

Slovak: Kristus vstal zmrt’vych! – Skutoc ne vstal!

Spanish: Cristo ha resucitado! – Verdaderamente ha resucitado!

Sweedish: Kristus är upstånden! – Ja, Han är

Ukranian: Kristos Voskres! – Voistinu voskres!

