

# A Voice in the Wilderness

The Newsletter of St. George Orthodox Christian Church



Rev. Matthew P. Binkewicz, Pastor



*Christ is Risen! Christos Voskrese! Al'masir Qam! Christos Anesti!*

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Holy Pascha+The Resurrection of Christ+Easter Sunday

Sunday April 19, 2020



*Homily by St. Epiphanius of Cyprus*

Something strange is happening—there is a great silence on earth today, a great silence and stillness. The whole earth keeps silence because the King is asleep. The earth trembled and is still because God has fallen asleep in the flesh and he has raised up all who have slept ever since the world began.

God has died in the flesh and Hell trembles with fear.

He has gone to search for our first parent, as for a lost sheep. Greatly desiring to visit those who live in darkness and in the shadow of death, he has gone to free from sorrow the captives Adam and Eve, He who is both God and the Son of Eve. The Lord approached them bearing the Cross, the weapon that had won him the victory.

At the sight of him Adam, the first man he had created, struck his breast in terror and cried out to everyone, 'My Lord be with you all.' Christ answered him: 'And with your spirit.' He took him by the hand and raised him up, saying: 'Awake, O sleeper, and rise from the dead, and Christ will give you light. 'I am your God, who for your sake have become your son.

Out of love for you and your those  
*(continued p. 3)*

\*\*\* Pascha-Easter Sunday \*\*\*

\* Christ's Resurrection \*

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 living out Christ's commandment to, *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.*

*Holy on Holy Pascha by St. John Chrysostom*

If anyone is devout and a lover of God, let him enjoy this beautiful and radiant festival.

If anyone is a wise servant, let him, rejoicing, enter into the joy of his Lord.

If anyone has wearied himself in fasting, let him now receive his recompense.

If anyone has labored from the first hour, let him today receive his just reward.

If anyone has come at the third hour, with thanksgiving let him

keep the feast.

If anyone has arrived at the sixth hour, let him have no misgivings; for he shall suffer no loss.

If anyone has delayed until the ninth hour, let him draw near without hesitation.

If anyone has arrived even at the eleventh hour, let him not fear on account of his delay.

For the Master is gracious and receives the last, even as the first; he gives rest to him that comes at the eleventh hour, just as to him who

has labored from the first.

He has mercy upon the last and cares for the first; to the one he gives, and to the other he is gracious. He both honors the work and praises the intention.

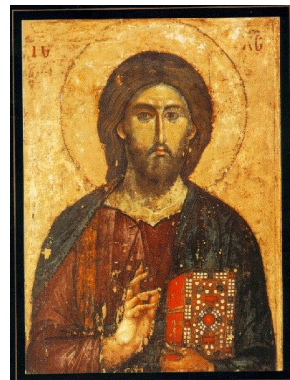
Enter all of you, therefore, into the joy of our Lord, and, whether first or last, receive your reward. O rich and poor, one with another, dance for joy! O you ascetics and you negligent, celebrate the day!

*(continued 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.





*Troparion to St. George*

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  
for our souls  
salvation.

**News and Notes**

We welcome all who are worshipping with us today and invite you down to the church hall for our social hour.

**Pray without ceasing (1 Thess. 5.17)**

We ask that you keep the following in your prayers: Esther, Clement John, Mother Onufria, Olga, Lillian, Meg, Larissa, Stephen, Louise, Marcia, George, Lorraine, Evan, Ryan, Kathleen, Sandy, Samuel, Anatoly, Alexey, Abraham, Susan, Jenny, Deb, Dan, Bob, Catherine, Skip, Doug, Heidi, Bonnalee, Vicky, the homeless, the hungry, victims of abuse and violence, & the persecuted for their faith in Christ.

**Words of Wisdom by Bishop Alexis**

During these days, let us never forget that our Gracious Lord Jesus Christ is always with us and for us. Let us also remember that we have to seek Him out if we are to be aware of His holy presence. Our approach has to be active, not passive, our focus single-minded, not dispersed, and our dedication consistent, not unrelia-

ble. Even spending only fifteen minutes a day at prayer alone with God can begin a blessed change in the way we understand ourselves and look at the world around us.

The example of the Elder Callinicus and countless others shows us that this need not be the worst Holy Week or Pascha of our lives. If we manage to find the Jerusalem in our heart, we can truly ascend to the Jerusalem with our Lord going to his voluntary Passion. We may even be granted a small taste of those peaceful Paschas celebrated on the cliffs of Athos, those inward looking Paschas full of the quiet radiance of our risen Lord.

May such a Pascha indeed be ours, for if it is, even this Pascha can be beautiful, preparing us to be the Christians we were always meant to be, Christians who have discovered what “eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him” (1 Corinthians 2:9). Amen.

**Paschal Homily of St. John Chrysostom, (cont'd from p. 1)**

You that have fasted and you that have disregarded the fast, rejoice today!

The table is rich-laden; feast royally, all of you! The calf is fatted; let no one go forth hungry! Let all partake of the feast of faith. Let all receive the riches of goodness.

Let no one lament his poverty, for the universal kingdom has been revealed.

Let no one mourn his transgressions, for pardon has dawned from the grave.

Let no one fear death, for the Savior's death has set us free.

He that was taken by death has annihilated it! He descended into hades and took hades captive! He embittered it when it tasted his flesh!

And anticipating this Isaiah exclaimed, “Hades 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 purged!



It was embittered, for it was despoiled!

It was embittered, for it was bound

in chains!

It took a body and, face to face, met God! It took earth and encountered heaven! It took what it saw but crumbled before what it had not seen!

“O death, where is thy sting? O hades, where is thy 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 a tomb!

For Christ, being raised from the dead, has become the First-fruits of them that slept.

To him be glory and might unto ages of ages. Amen.

+ + +

**Tropar for Pascha**

Christ is Risen from the dead,  
Trampling down death by death,  
And upon those in the tombs,  
Bestowing life!



*(Homily on the Descent into Hades, cont'd from p.1)*

Of your descendants I now by my own authority command all who are held in bondage to come forth, all who are in darkness to be enlightened, all who are sleeping to arise. I order you, O sleeper, to awake. I did not create you to be held a prisoner in Hell. Rise from the dead, for I am the life of the dead. Rise up, work of my hands, you who were created in my image. Rise, let us leave this place, for you are in Me and I in you; together we form one person and cannot be separated.

‘For your sake I, your God, became your son; I, the Lord, took the form of a slave; I, Whose home is above the heavens, descended to the earth and beneath the earth. For your sake, for the sake of man, I became like a man without help, free among the dead. For the sake of you, who left a garden, I was betrayed to the Authorities in a garden, and I was crucified in a garden.

‘See on My Face the spittle I received in order to restore to you the life I once breathed into you. See there the marks of the blows I received in order to re-fashion your warped nature in my image. On My back see the marks of the scourging I endured to remove the burden of sin that weighs upon your back. See My hands, nailed firmly to a tree, for you who once wickedly stretched out your hand to a tree.

‘I slept on the Cross and a sword pierced My side for you who slept in Paradise and brought forth Eve from your side. My side has healed the pain in yours. My sleep will rouse you from your sleep in Hell. The sword that pierced Me has sheathed the sword that was turned against you.

‘Rise, let us leave this place. The enemy led you out of the earthly Paradise. I will not restore you to that Paradise, but will enthrone you in heaven. I forbade you the tree that was only a symbol of life, but see, I who am life myself am now one with you. I appointed cherubim to guard you as slaves are guarded, but now I make them worship you as God. The throne formed by cherubim awaits you, its bearers swift and eager. The Bridal Chamber is adorned, the banquet is ready, the eternal dwelling places are prepared, the treasure houses of all good things lie open. The Kingdom of Heaven has been prepared for you from all eternity.’

***Homily on Pascha by St. Gregory the Theologian***

It is the Day of Resurrection, and my beginning has good auspices. Let us then keep the Festival with splendor, and let us embrace one another. Let us say “Brethren” even to those who hate us; much more to those who have done or suffered aught out of love for

us. Let us forgive all offences for the Resurrection’s sake: let us give one another pardon . . . ; that He Who today rose again from the dead may renew (us) also by His Spirit; and clothing (us) with the New Man, may give me to His New Creation, to those who are begotten after God, as a good modeler and teacher for Christ, willingly both dying with Him and rising again with Him.

Yesterday the Lamb was slain and the door-posts were anointed, and Egypt bewailed her firstborn, and the Destroyer passed up over, and the Seal was dreadful and reverend, and we were walled in with the Precious Blood. Today we have clean escaped from Egypt and from Pharaoh; and there is none to hinder us from keeping a Feast to the Lord our God -- the Feast of our Departure; or from celebrating that Feast, not in the old leaven of malice and wickedness, but in the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth, and carrying with us nothing of ungodly and Egyptian leaven.

Yesterday I was crucified 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 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 honor our Archetype; let us know the power of the Mystery, and for what Christ died.

Let us become like Christ, since Christ became like us. Let us become God’s for His sake, since He for our sake became Man. He assumed the worse that He might give us the better; He became poor that we through His poverty might be rich, He took upon Him the form of a servant that we might receive back our liberty; He came down that we might be exalted; He was tempted that 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 lying low in the Fall of sin. Let us give *all*, offer *all*, to Him Who gave Himself a Ransom and a Reconciliation for us. But one can give nothing like oneself, understanding the Mystery and becoming for His sake all that He became for ours.

***Christ is Risen. Al’masir Qam. Christos Voskrese.***



## Homily on Holy Pascha and The Good Thief by St. Maximos the Confessor

Most fittingly does the world rejoice, with great gladness, upon this day; for with Christ returning from the dead the hope of resurrection has everywhere been awakened in the hearts of men. For it is but right that when the Lord of creation triumphs, the creatures He has made should also rejoice. This day the heavens rejoice, for now at length they see the earth, defiled by sin, made clean in the Blood of the Lord. The multitudes of the hosts of heaven rejoice, for their king has overthrown in battle the hosts of the prince of evil. The sun rejoices, and now with unceasing thankfulness holds back by its joyful beams that woeful darkness that overshadowed it as Christ was dying.

And together with them we too above all others must rejoice, for whom the Only-Begotten Son of God, Who also is True God, clothed Himself in our flesh, that through that flesh He might come to the Cross, by the Cross suffer death, and through death despoil the kingdom of hades. Should we not rejoice: we whose sins the Mystery of this new Mystery has taken away, to whom heaven is given, paradise restored? And as He drew near His end, the Lord Himself says to the Thief then hanging on his cross: he whose faith, neither Christ's torment, nor his own, had weakened: Amen, I say to you, this day thou shalt be with me in paradise. For the Thief had said to Him: Lord, remember me when Thou shalt come into Thy kingdom (Luke 27).

How admirable this faith, Brethren: that a thief who had been judged unworthy of this life, should amid his torments nourish the hope of life eternal, and believe, that this could be given to him by One Who also was being crucified? And how justly does the believing Thief receive the favor of such a promise: he who, in that hour when the Apostles scattered in fear, had confessed the Kingdom of God? And the merit of this one confession wipes away all his past sins; in that brief moment whatever crimes he had committed, throughout all the years of his life, were now forgiven. Nor did the blood he shed in his robberies condemn him before God for he believed that the Blood of Christ was shed for a Kingdom, not for a punishment.

And that this death was a gain for all men, there can, Beloved Brethren, be no possible doubt. For who can despair of God's grace, when the Thief was forgiven; should he unite the faith of the Thief with his own humble prayer for pardon?

We have yet another shining example of the Lord's most loving kindness, and because of it, let us, putting away all fear, and all deadly despair, place our trust in the unspeakable generosity of Our Redeemer. For when, condemned by the Godless, Christ hung upon the Cross, and the Jews in their evil rage mocked at Him they had crucified, in the midst of His agony, this kind Petitioner prayed to His Almighty Father for His executioners, and said: Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do (Lk. 23:34).

And though in His hands was the judgement of both the living and the dead, He implored pardon for those who were then perishing in sin; and this, I believe, that He might show us beyond any manner of doubt, that He forgave them their awful crime, and that His Father would also spare them, if they, putting away their unbelief, would come together in Christ's Name. For who can doubt the effect of that prayer, where He Who is Goodness asks help for those in misery? They know not, He says, what they do. The Authorities knew well that they were shedding the blood of an innocent Man; but they did not know that the guilt of all men was being washed away in that Blood. They knew they were punishing Christ by this most bitter torment of the Cross; but they did not know that it was through this Cross the Son of God would triumph. They knew He would die; but they did not know He would rise again. So, well might the Lord declare: They know not what they do.

For they knew not, the Authorities of what immense goodness their very wickedness was the instrument. But the Lord, in the knowledge of His own majesty, has compassion on their human errors, and knowing how great the joy that would follow these torments, while He yet endured them, forgives the crime of those who were crucifying Him: willing that His death would give life to His slayers, and be the condemnation of those who willed to perish. Returning from hades, He seeks His Apostles, so that He might show them that within Him there was both the power of divinity and the reality of our flesh. Because of this, Brethren, let us rejoice in Christ, now risen from the dead. Let us hold firmly, that He has recalled this flesh from the tomb that we may merit to have part in that wondrous common heritage: namely, the grace of the Apostles and the Resurrection of the Lord, by the help of this Same Lord Who with the Father and the Holy Ghost lives and reigns unto the ages of ages. Amen.

