

## SUNDAY OF THE MYRRH-BEARERS



*Icon of the Myrrh-Bearing Women*



**April 10, 2016**

**THIRD SUNDAY OF PASCHA – SUNDAY OF THE MYRRH BEARING WOMEN**

*THE HOLY MARTYRS TERENCE, POMPEIUS AND THOSE WITH THEM*

**ХРИСТОС ВОСКРЕС!  
ВОІСТИНЬ ВОСКРЕС!**

**CHRIST IS RISEN!  
TRULY HE IS RISEN!**

**SCHEDULE OF SERVICES FOR THE WEEK OF APRIL 11 – APRIL 17**

TUESDAY, APRIL 12 – *OUR VENERABLE FATHER AND CONFESSOR BASIL, BISHOP OF PARIUM*

9:30 AM – Divine Liturgy & Panakhya

✙ Roman Tymchii; Req: Olga Fedunyak

SATURDAY, APRIL 16 – *THE HOLY VIRGIN MARTYR AGAPIA, IRENE AND CHIONIA*

**Please Note: No Vespers this evening**

SUNDAY, APRIL 17 – *FOURTH SUNDAY OF PASCHA - SUNDAY OF THE PARALYTIC; OUR VENERABLE FATHER SIMEON OF PERSIA; OUR VENERABLE FATHER ACACIUS, BISHOP OF MELITENE*

9:30 AM – Divine Liturgy

For All Parishioners

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*If you are reading the bulletin during the Liturgy (including the homily),  
please **stop** and be attentive – будьмо уважні!*

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**ABOUT THE PASCHAL TROPARION – CHRIST IS RISEN!**

*Christ is risen from the dead, trampling down death by death, and upon those in the tombs, bestowing life!*

Upon those in the tombs... has at the very same time two meanings, for the Resurrection of Christ destroys both sin and death. If we be in the tombs of sin, we are brought out; if we be in the tomb of death, we will be brought out.

This is made manifest in the Gospel of John (5:25) when the Lord says, "the hour is coming and now is, when the dead (those in sin) will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live." This is a reference to the "first resurrection", which is the **resurrection of the soul from sin**. "Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all those who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth..." (verses 28-29). This refers to the future or "second resurrection," that of the body.

The immediate resurrection we experience, and the first benefit of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, is that of **the soul being raised from the deadness of sin**. The nature of the "second resurrection", whether it will be for "the resurrection of life" or "the resurrection of condemnation" (5:29), is dependent upon whether or not we experience our rising from the deadness of sin, now in this life.

So, when we sing the hymn, "Christ is risen from the dead, trampling down death by death, and upon those in the tombs, bestowing life!" – we acknowledge that the living are being raised from sin and the biologically dead, will be raised; the fruitfulness of the Resurrection of Christ is beneficial for both the living and the dead; and for the present age and the age to come.

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**April Birthdays**

Vladimir Bachynsky	–	April 10
Stephen Hojsan	–	April 16
Dorothy Smith	–	April 21
Ray Delarosa	–	April 22
Yurij Ivasyk	–	April 24

**Last Sunday's Bulletin**

If you haven't yet picked up last Sunday's bulletin, it is available in the church hall, or on our website, [stjohnthebaptizer.org](http://stjohnthebaptizer.org).

## A HARMONIZATION OF THE GOSPEL ACCOUNTS OF THE VISITS OF THE MYRRH-BEARERS TO THE TOMB

*By St. Theophan the Recluse (+1894)*

After examining all the accounts of the movements, visions and testimonies of the Myrrh-bearing women, the following conclusions present themselves:

1. The Myrrh-bearers did not go all together to the tomb, but in separate groups and at different times. The first visit was of Mary Magdalene (Gospel of St. John); the second visit was of Joanna with other women (Gospel of St. Luke); the third visit was of Mary, the mother of James and Salome (Gospels of Ss. Matthew and Mark). All of this is evident and clearly apparent from the details of the Gospel accounts.
2. The time sequence of the holy women's visits to the tomb unfolds itself as follows: Mary Magdalene, while it was still dark; Joanna, with the others, very early in the morning; Mary the mother of James and Salome, when the sun was rising. This is thus a series of non-simultaneous events. And all these events embrace a time span of several hours – from the dark before the dawn to the rising of the sun.
3. **First Visit:** Mary Magdalene alone goes to the tomb while it was yet dark. She saw the stone rolled away, her first thought is, "They have taken the Lord away." She runs to tell the Apostles Peter and John, who set out for the tomb.

**Second Visit:** While the Apostles Peter and John are on their way to the tomb, Joanna and the other women arrive at the open tomb. Angels explain to them the mystery of the absence of the Lord's body. They leave and go tell the Apostles. Meanwhile, Apostles Peter and John with Mary Magdalene reach the tomb without having met Joanna and her companions. After the Apostles leave, Mary Magdalene remains at the tomb and is blessed with an appearance of the Lord. She then sets out again to the Apostles.

**Third Visit:** After Mary Magdalene's departure, Mary the mother of James and Salome comes to the tomb, with companions. An angel reassures them that the Lord is risen. They enter the tomb and another angel repeats what the first had told them. The angel tells them to go and tell the Apostles everything related to them. As they were running, the Lord Himself appears to them.

In the meantime, the following events took place among the Apostles: After Peter and John returned from the tomb, Joanna with some other women came and told them what they had experienced at the tomb. Mary Magdalene came back from her second visit to the tomb and related her joy. Finally, Mary the mother of James and Salome arrived and confirmed what the others had seen. By now, all the Myrrh-bearing women had gathered with their glad tidings: Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Salome, Joanna and the others whose names are not mentioned.

Yet to the Apostles, "their words seem to them as idle talk and they believed them not" (Luke 24:11). Apostle Peter again goes to the tomb, seeking for some decisive evidence. He found none. Most probably he was very dejected spiritually. Was it not, then, at this moment, that the Lord appeared to him, to comfort and pacify his heart? Any vision must have taken place between this time and the return of Luke and Cleopas from Emmaus. Because, when they came back to the other Apostles, they were met with the joyful tidings: "The Lord is risen, indeed! He has appeared to Simon (Peter)" (Luke 24:34).

In this way, all the accounts of the Gospel turn out to be in full harmony with one another and all the individual events and details find a proper place.



NOW UPON THE FIRST DAY OF  
THE WEEK, VERY EARLY IN THE  
MORNING, THEY CAME UNTO THE  
SEPULCHRE, BRINGING THE SPICES  
WHICH THEY HAD PREPARED, AND  
CERTAIN OTHERS WITH THEM.





# YOU ARE NOT YOUR SIN

Fr. Stephen Freeman

Shame is powerful. Having begun writing on the topic, it is important to say more. The Tradition, particularly in the texts that discuss the spiritual life, contains many references to shame. In recent times, it has become a topic within the field of psychology and in the community surrounding recovery from drugs and alcohol. Strangely, it has been largely neglected in spiritual writing, even among the Orthodox. I am not surprised at this neglect. The centuries-long use of the legal/forensic model of the Christian spiritual life, not actually native to the Christian East, has a history of using shame as a means of moral engagement. The assumption has been that, if an individual feels sufficiently bad about something, they will be motivated to change. It seems to make sense. However, it's not a true assumption, and the damage such an understanding can do is enormous. Thus, it is not surprising that many Christians in our contemporary world shy away from dealing with shame, assuming it to be nothing more than an artifact of a moralistic, censoring Christianity.

An added problem is that the legal/forensic worldview has so dominated the spiritual landscape (including several centuries within Orthodoxy itself) that many people assume a text to be using that worldview when it speaks of shame and the like. The criticism I have received from some Orthodox writers for my dismissal of the moralistic framework is a testimony to how prevalent this worldview remains. But it would be tragic to let several centuries of error destroy our ability to appropriate and understand the riches of our spiritual inheritance. Shame has not disappeared (and will not) even when moralistic thinking does. The sexual revolution and moral relativism within our culture have done nothing to remove shame. There are certainly public behaviors that appear "shameless" by earlier standards, but the existential and psychological problems of shame have not been altered in the least. Shame is not a cultural phenomenon – it is human and it is universal.



There are vast numbers of people who experience shame about how they look, even though not being "beautiful" is beyond their control. The mega-business of modern cosmetic surgery (some \$10 billion annually in the US) is driven by shame. Many experience shame about things that have been done to them (sexual molestation, for example), when they were, in fact, helpless victims. Anything that touches our core experience of "who I am" is a candidate for producing shame.

Needless to say, any reflection on the sins we have committed will likely touch on places of shame. In an attempt to avoid this experience, we may reflect that the things we have done are "what everybody does." But this is simply a life lived at the shallow end of the pool, a place where we are least likely to encounter God. Doubtless, the foolish thief who railed at Jesus on the Cross simply thought of himself as having done some things that weren't really all that bad. He had hidden from his own heart and thus remained in the dark.

But what about those of us who carry a great burden of shame? Those whose experience of the toxic burden within them is almost unbearable? The nature of toxic shame is that it is involuntary. Any number of things can produce such an effect. Abuse, in all of its many forms, thrives on shame. To strike at a person's core sense of "who they are" can reduce them to a point of such weakness that control and other abusive measures become easy. There are also those who have been shamed, not by others, but through the simple accidents of life itself. Handicaps, flaws in appearance, every conceivable failing of nature or nurture can yield an experience of shame. And, again, this shame can be so strong as to become unbearable.

We can also experience, at a toxic level, shame that is self-inflicted. Any number of sinful actions can yield that result. And it is here that I want to intervene in this article and drive home a point: we are not our sin.

No human being is evil by nature. We are created fundamentally good (even “very good” in the language of Genesis). And though we may do many things, and many things may be done to us, none of them change “who we are.” Sin is not a constitutive part of our existence. It is extra-human, and external to our nature.

I recently cited St. Gregory of Nyssa in this regard:

*...In any and every case evil must be removed out of existence, so that, as we said above, the absolutely non-existent should cease to be at all. Since it is not in its nature that evil should exist outside the will, does it not follow that when it shall be that every will rests in God, evil will be reduced to complete annihilation, owing to no receptacle being left for it?*

Regardless of how one views St. Gregory's expectation of the final destruction of evil, his contention that evil exists only in an abuse of the will is a matter of dogma. Evil has no existence of its own. As such, evil does not constitute any part of our being.

Admittedly, the healing of the will can be extremely difficult. The efforts we bring – prayer, fasting, almsgiving, repentance and confession – are not without benefit. But we generally experience a persistence of sin. St. Gregory refers such persistent sin to a purgatorial fire (cf. 1 Cor. 3:13-15). Such fire should not be confused with the Roman Catholic doctrine of purgatory in which sinners undergo temporal punishment as a satisfaction for the damage caused by sin. St. Gregory sees this fire described by St. Paul as therapeutic – it is for our freedom and deliverance.

Within our conscience, it is important to make a distinction between sin and the self. The animus, anger, even hatred, that is properly directed toward sin becomes deeply destructive and harmful when directed towards the self. In many consciences, particularly among the young, these two are confused. The result becomes a very dark, toxic shame. Within that darkness, the good news of the gospel is easily perverted and taken to be nothing more than additional condemnation and shame.

Pascha (Christ's death, descent into Hades and Resurrection) should always hold the center point of all Christian thought. That is true on the historical and the cosmic level, but it is also true on the personal level, as well. My sin holds

the position of death and Hades within this personal understanding. It may even be likened to the devil himself. It is thus true that my sin crucifies Christ. But Christ descends into the depth of my sin (Hades), and acts to destroy it (trampling down death by death) and to rescue me from destruction. You are not your sin. Christ's Pascha is a personal deliverance from the bondage of sin and death. God is utterly and totally on your side. He is not your enemy.

*Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. (Heb 2:14-15)*

This image of bondage is consistent in St. Paul, used to describe the life under sin (and the life under the Law, as well). Sin is an oppressor. It is Pharaoh. It enslaves. But it does not adopt us and make us its own. It does not and cannot transform us into sin itself. We are not the enemy.

The modern concept of the Self has no room for these distinctions. The Self, with all of its actions and tendencies, is conceived as the product of choice. We are what we choose to be. It denies that there is such a thing as human nature, and therefore, unwittingly consigns us to an identity of our own making. In the modern world – you are your sin. It is little wonder that we have undergone persistent efforts to redefine various things as something other than sin. How else could we escape the burden of shame created by such a false consciousness?

This is the fundamental liberating message of Christ's Pascha. We are not the enemy. By nature, we are created good. We are in bondage to sin and death, manifest in the evil that infects our lives and our world. But Christ has come to trample down sin and death, by becoming sin and entering death, destroying them both by the resurrection. This is the liberty that is promised to the children of God, and to all of creation as well. (Romans 8:21)

This is the liberty proclaimed each year at Pascha in St. John Chrysostom's Paschal homily, read in all the Orthodox Churches of the world: “Christ is risen, and not one dead remains in the grave.”

## A Reminder about Standing on all Sundays and everyday from Pascha to Pentecost

This is not an innovation, rather it is the explicit reiteration of a long tradition and teaching of the early church about the nature of the celebration of the Lord's Day (i.e. Sunday.) This proscription of the church dates from the time of the Ecumenical Council of Nicaea (325 AD.) There was a divergence in practice in various places and the church identified the need to emphasize the resurrectional character of the Lord's Day. The fact that an Ecumenical Council discussed and eventually issued a Canon (rule) on this subject shows the importance in the eyes of the church fathers. Canon 20 of the Council (which has never been negated) states: Since there are some communities that still bend their knees on the Lord's Day (Sunday) and on the days of Pentecost, this Holy Council decrees that the common prayers (i.e., at Liturgy) are to be rendered to God standing.

To be very clear – This canon of the First Ecumenical Council applies to Every Sunday of the Year! **One should NOT kneel during Divine Services on ANY Sunday** (custom and the practice of the Latin Church notwithstanding).

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“The Cross had asked the questions; the Resurrection had answered them....The Cross had asked: why does God permit evil and sin to nail Justice to a tree? The Resurrection answered: That sin having done its worst might exhaust itself and thus be overcome by Love that is stronger than either sin or death. Thus there emerges the Easter lesson that the power of evil and the chaos of any one moment can be defied and conquered for the basis of our hope is not in any construct of human power but in the power of God who has given to the evil of this earth its one mortal wound – an open tomb, a gaping sepulcher, and empty grave.”

– Venerable Fulton Sheen (*Cross-Ways*)

## Пригадуємо що стоїмо підчас Служби Божої кожної Неділі року і кожного дня від Великодня до Неділі П'ятдесятниці

Це не є нова вигадка а виразне повторення стародавнього звичаю і повчання стародавньої Церкви про праведне додержування Господнього Дня (Неділя). Це повчання ще із Собору Нікеї (325р). Були різні звичаї в різних місцевостях і Церква рішила наголосити Христове Воскресення кожної Неділі. Ця справа була така важлива що Церковні Отці рішили надати закон. Канон 20 (яке ніколи небуло заперечене) каже: Тому що є деякі громади що ще клякають в Неділю і в дні П'ятдесятниці, цей Святий Собор проголошує що в спільній молитві (Служба Божа) молимося Богові стоячи.

Вияснюємо – Цей Канон Нікеї стосується кожної Неділі в році! **Не клякаємо під час неділішної Служби Божої** (не залежно від особистого звичаю ані Римо-Католицької традиції.)

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"Chastity is the most unpopular of the Christian virtues. There is no getting away from it: the old Christian rule is, 'Either marriage, with complete faithfulness to your partner, or else total abstinence.'"

– C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*

‘We do not know God from His essence. We know Him rather from the grandeur of His creation and from His providential care for all creatures. For through these, as though they were mirrors, we may attain insight into His infinite goodness, wisdom and power.’

– St. Maximos the Confessor

## *Stewardship Prayer*

Christ our True God, Lover of mankind,  
You call us to be Your disciples and good  
stewards of all Your many gifts.

Open our minds and hearts to a greater  
awareness and deeper appreciation of  
Your countless blessings.

Transform us through the power of the  
Most Holy Spirit to nurture a stewardship  
way of life marked by faith-filled prayer,  
service to our neighbor and generous  
sharing.

Teach us to be faithful servants of Your  
gifts. With Mary, your Mother's help, may  
we return ten-fold the gifts entrusted to  
us.

Bless our Parish with a deepening  
devotion to liturgy, a growing  
commitment for service, and increasing  
levels of generosity as we work to  
advance the mission of both our parish  
and eparchy.

For if not us, who? If not here, where?

If not now, when? If not for Your Kingdom,  
why?

O Lord, Jesus Christ, the only-begotten  
Son of the eternal Father, You have said  
that without You we can accomplish  
nothing. How true are Your words, O  
Lord. Thus we pray, good and loving  
Lord: if it be Your will, help us to complete  
this work. May it glorify You with Your  
Father who has no beginning and Your  
all-holy Spirit. Amen.

## Sunday offering for April 3

Amount	Number
\$5.00	1
\$15.00	2
\$20.00	1
\$25.00	2
\$26.00	1 (loose)
\$40.00	1
\$50.00	3
\$100.00	1
\$150.00	2
\$200.00	1
\$300.00	1
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\$1221.00	

Parishioner Total: \$1221.00

Average / parish household (42): \$15.65

Weekly Stewardship Goal: \$2200.00

**Deficit: (\$979.00)**

**Year-to-date deficit: (\$14,888.00)**

### PARISHIONERS THAT ARE HOME BOUND



If you or a loved one cannot  
make it to Church, Fr.  
James would be more than  
pleased visit at your home,  
in the hospital, at a nursing  
home, or any other place. It  
is no inconvenience at all.

Please be sure to schedule a visit.

### Pastor:

Fr. James Bankston: (619) 905-5278

### Pastoral Council:

Vladimir Bachynsky: (619) 865-1279

Mark Hartman: (619) 446-6357

Luke Miller: (858) 354-2008

### Social Committee Chair:

Megan Hartman (619) 540-4291

### Finance Committee:

Bohdan Kniahynyckyj: (619) 303-9698





**Українська Греко-Католицька Церква  
Святого Йоана Хрестителя  
St. John the Baptizer  
Ukrainian Greco-Catholic Church**

4400 Palm Avenue  
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Parish Office: (619) 697-5085

**Website:** [stjohnthebaptizer.org](http://stjohnthebaptizer.org)

**Pastor:** Fr. James Bankston  
[frjames@mac.com](mailto:frjames@mac.com)  
Fr. James' cell phone: (619) 905-5278

***The First Witness***

The Resurrection of the Lord is the renewal of human nature, and the renewal, re-creation, and return to immortality of the first Adam who was swallowed up by death because of sin, and through death went back to the earth from which he was formed. In the beginning nobody saw Adam being made and brought to life, for no one existed yet at that time. However, once he had received the breath of life breathed into him by God (Gn 2:7), a woman was the first to see him, for Eve was the first human being after him. In the same way, no one saw the second Adam, that is the Lord, rising from the dead, since none of His disciples were present and the soldiers keeping the tomb had been shaken with fear and became like dead men. But after the Resurrection it was a woman who saw him first of all.

There is something which the Evangelists tell us in a veiled way, but which I shall reveal to your charity. As was right and just, the Mother of God was the first person to receive from the Lord the Good News of the Resurrection, and she saw Him risen and had the joy of His divine words before anyone else. She not only beheld Him with her eyes and heard Him with her ears, but was the first and only person to touch with her hands His most pure feet. If the Evangelists do not say all this openly it is because they do not want to put forward his Mother as a witness, lest they give unbelievers grounds for suspicion.

*St. Gregory Palamas*

**For more information on Eastern spirituality, visit  
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