

SUNDAY OF THE MYRRH-BEARING WOMEN



Icon of the Myrrh-bearing Women

April 15, 2018

3RD SUNDAY OF PASCHA – OF THE MYRRH-BEARING WOMEN

THE HOLY APOSTLES ARISTARCHUS, PUDENS AND TROPHIMUS

**ХРИСТОС ВОСКРЕС!
ВОІСТИНУ ВОСКРЕС!**

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

SCHEDULE OF SERVICES FOR APRIL 16 – APRIL 22

FRIDAY, APRIL 20 – *OUR VENERABLE FATHER THEODORE TRICHINAS*

10:30 AM – Divine Liturgy at St. Paul Manor

SATURDAY, APRIL 21 – *THE HOLY HIEROMARTYR JANNUARIUS, BISHOP AND HIS COMPANIONS: DEACONS PROCULUS, SOSIUS AND FAUSTUS, READER DESIDERIUS, EUTYCHES AND AUCTIONUS; THE HOLY HIEROMARTYR THEODORE OF PERGIA, HIS MOTHER PHILIPPIA, DIOSCORUS, SOCRATES AND DIONYSIUS; VITALIS BAIRAK, PRIEST AND MARTYR*

6:30 PM – Great Vespers

SUNDAY, APRIL 22 – *4TH SUNDAY OF PASCHA - SUNDAY OF THE PARALYTIC;*

OUR VENERABLE FATHER THEODORE OF SYCEUM, BISHOP OF ANASTASIOPOLIS

9:30 AM – Divine Liturgy

For All Parishioners

**A Prayer for the
Construction of our New Church**

O Lord Jesus Christ our God, Cornerstone of Your holy Church, Giver of every good gift, the One who first loved us, look down upon us Your people who desire to build a new church unto Your glory and grant us the wisdom, strength, and resources to accomplish this task in accordance with Your will. Remember the friends and benefactors of this parish who support the construction of this holy church and bless them with Your good things. And as You did proclaim that even if Your disciples were silent, the very stones would cry out, so also grant that this holy church may proclaim You and draw all who dwell in the surrounding area to worship You in spirit and in truth. Inflammé our hearts with love for You that we may offer to You ourselves and all You have given us to the glory of Your holy Name. For You are the true Philanthropist—the Lover of Mankind—and to You do we send up glory, together with Your eternal Father, and Your most holy, good, and life-creating Spirit, always, now and ever, and unto the ages of ages. Amen.

Looking ahead:

Our annual rummage sale will take place on Saturday, June 23rd. We will be accepting donations beginning in June. Volunteers are needed. Please contact Olena Bankston at (619) 905-5279.

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Sunday offering for April 8

Amount	Number
\$5.00	1
\$20.00	4
\$25.00	1
\$30.00	1
\$35.00	1 (loose)
\$40.00	2
\$50.00	1
\$105.00	1
\$120.00	1
\$160.00	1
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\$690.00	

Parishioner Total: \$690.00

Average / parish household (43): \$13.53

Weekly Stewardship Goal: \$2200.00

Deficit: <\$1510.00>

Неділя мироносиць

Сьогодні Церква знову доручає нам читати Євангеліє про велику й радісну подію Христового воскресіння. Євангелист Марко розказує, що зранку, коли ще було темно, три жінки, поспішною ходою йшли вузькими, крутими вулицями Єрусалиму. Провідницею була Марія Магдалина, котра вмивала сльозами Христові ноги й витирала їх волоссям, і яка потім на горі Голгофі, стояла під хрестом. Другою жінкою була Марія, мати апостолів Якова й Івана, а третьою — Соломія, що належала до Христових учениць, далека своячка Марії, Матері Христа.

Євангелист Іван розказує про зворушливу подію появи воскреслого Христа Марії Магдалині. Правдоподібно, що тоді, коли її подруги побігли до апостолів, Марія Магдалина залишилася біля гробу. Йї з'явився Христос. Спершу вона Його не впізнала, але щойно як Христос назвав її по імені, кажучи: „Маріє”, її очі відкрилися, і вона, припавши до Христових ніг, крикнула: „Учителю!”. Тоді Христос дав їй доручення: *„Йди до моїх братів і скажи їм, що Я йду до Мого Отця і вашого Отця, Бога вашого і Мого”*.

Отже, ангел Господній, а потім і Сам Христос посилає жінок до Своїх учнів, перед тим, як їм явиться. Це важливий факт, що Христос вибирає жінок, щоби вони несли радісну вістку апостолам, мужчинам. Жінки сповіщають апостолів про воскресіння Христа і, що Христове перебування на землі не буде вічне, що воно закінчиться Його вознесінням на небо. Марія Магдалина і її подруги мали, отже, розвіяти усі сумніви щодо Христового воскресіння, які могли в них бути.

Беручи до уваги цей факт, нехай буде відомо всім нам, що Святе Письмо Нового Завіту виразно підкреслює, що в ділі спасіння жінки відіграють важливу роль. Нехай буде всім нам відомо, що Христос, який жив в патріархальному суспільстві, виявив пошану до жінок. Він, правдивий Бог і правдивий Чоловік, родився як дитина від жінки, хоча міг був явитися нам дорослою людиною. Він, обороняючи жінок, підніс подружжя до гідності Святої Тайни і виключає з подружжя розлучення, які дуже часто принижують і роблять нещасною жінку. Ми не знаходимо в Святому Євангелії ні одного слова, яке б обезцінювало жінку, або ставило її нижче від чоловіка. Навпаки, Христове навчання голосить, що жінка є Божим створінням, рівним чоловікові.

Жінки сьогодні повинні рятувати чоловіків від повені новітнього поганства, релігійної байдужості, неморальності, погоні за матеріальними, земними достатками. Жінки повинні докласти всіх зусиль, щоби колись, як прийде час стати їм перед всемогучим Богом, вони прийшли з батьками, синами, чоловіками, яких врятували своїми чеснотами та святістю. Це – жіноча справа перемогти світ не фізичною силою, але апостольськими ділами. Така Божа Воля і бажання нашої Церкви, щоби через добрих і святих жінок врятувався світ.

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."

SUNDAY OF THE MYRRH-BEARING WOMEN

Today's Gospel reading relates the great and joyful event of Christ's Resurrection. The Evangelist Mark tells us that early in the morning, just before sunrise, three women quickly walked down the narrow, crooked streets of Jerusalem. Mary Magdalena, who had washed Christ's feet with her tears and dried them with her hair and, later, had stood at the foot of His cross, led the way. Mary, the mother of James and John, followed her and Solome, one of Christ's students and a distant relation of Mary, Christ's Mother, brought up the rear.

The Evangelist John tells how the Resurrected Christ appeared to Mary Magdalene. While her companions had gone to tell the apostles that they had found Christ's tomb empty, Mary Magdalene stayed behind. Christ appeared to her. At first she did not recognize Him, but when He called her by name, she fell to her knees and said: "*Master!*" Then Christ told her: "*Go to my brothers and tell them I am ascended to My Father and your Father, to My God and your God.*"

First the angel of God sent the women to the apostles. Then Christ, Himself, sent Mary Magdalene with a message to His disciples, before He appeared to them. This is very significant, that Christ chose women to carry the joyful news of His Resurrection to the apostles, to the men. Women tell the apostles of Christ's Resurrection and that His time on earth is short, that soon He will ascend to His Heavenly Father. Mary Magdalene and her companions were to dispel any doubts the apostles had about Christ's Resurrection.

We should all be aware that the New Testament clearly emphasizes that women play an important part in salvation. Christ, Who lived in a patriarchal society, showed great respect to women. He, true God and true Man, was born of a woman even though He could have appeared on this earth as a grown adult. He defended women, raising marriage to a Holy Sacrament and denying the concept of divorce, which often left women in dire circumstances. Nowhere in the New Testament do we find any disrespect towards women or anything that would suggest that they were inferior to men. Rather, Christ's teaching tells us that women are also created by God and are equal to men.

Women today should save men from the clutches of the new paganism, religious indifference, immorality, pursuit of material possessions. Women have the power to change the world, not through brute force but with apostolic actions. It is the Will of God and the desire of the Church that these good and holy women save the world.

SYMBOLS OF THE RESURRECTION

From Orthodox America

Symbols are an important part of our faith and are very evident within our churches. The icons; the altar, the icon-screen, the candles, and even the vestments of our priests are all symbols of various types. Each holds a meaning that must be understood if the symbol is to touch our lives with more than its mere external appearance.

An ordinary egg, for example, is a symbol of the Resurrection of our Lord. On the Feast of Pascha, we bless baskets of food containing, among other things, eggs. Just as the egg appears to be lifeless, so too did the body of Christ appear to be a mere corpse. But just as the egg can contain life, so does Christ contain the life we receive through His Resurrection! This is the meaning for using the egg as a symbol of Resurrection.



Another common symbol of the Resurrection is the lily. It blossoms from a dry and lifeless-looking bulb into one of the most beautiful flowers of God's creation. Jesus Himself speaks of the lily in His Sermon on the Mount when He says that "not even Solomon, in all of his splendor, was attired like one of these." This is the beauty from lifelessness that no king on earth could ever hope to match.

An ancient bird from Greek mythology, the phoenix, has been incorporated as a symbolic form of the Resurrection in many Orthodox churches. Mythology describes how the bird fell to earth and burned, and yet from its ashes arose another bird. Christ's life in an earthly form was destroyed through the Crucifixion, but a new and more glorious life came about as a result of His Resurrection. The idea of resurrection, in analogy to the tale of the phoenix, is depicted visually in icons showing an eagle rising out of a flame.



The peacock is a symbol of antiquity often found upon the walls of the ancient catacombs of the early Church. The bird was used as a symbol because the peacock has an unusually beautiful tail. Each year, however, the bird loses its beauty during the molting season to such an extent that the apparent intrinsic worth of the bird is greatly diminished. Yet the value of the bird is enhanced as the molting season comes to an end and a new and more beautiful tail appears. In the eyes of men, the mystery, the

awe, the greatness of Christ is enhanced countless times over through the Resurrection.

An even more common and certainly much more familiar example of the Resurrection is the existence of the Orthodox Church itself. The community of the faithful would not exist at all had it not been for the miracle of the Resurrection. Thus the Church, the peacock; the phoenix bird, the lily and the egg are all reminders of the greatest event in history. We should seek to grow in awareness and appreciation of this event, being reminded of it again and again through the use of the symbol, a means of communication and understanding.



ON CHURCH GROWTH

The Church is not simply a building or edifice, nor is it an organization or institutional structure. It is essentially a community of people who are supposed to be of God and imbued with His Spirit. In the words of St. John Chrysostom, "The Church is a community made up of the souls of us men and cannot be built by stone and mortar, but must be built by the spiritual growth of its members into the full reality of Jesus Christ." This is what Church growth is all about and how we must understand it.



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

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The Myrrh-Bearing Women

The Sunday of the Myrrh-Bearing Women ... reminds us that the love and faithfulness of a few individuals shone brightly in the midst of hopeless darkness. It calls us to ensure that in this world love and faithfulness do not disappear or die out. It judges our lack of courage, our fear, our endless and servile rationalizations. The mysterious Joseph and Nicodemus, and these women who go to the grave at dawn, occupy so little space in the gospels. Precisely here, however, is where the eternal fate of each of us is decided.

Today, I think, we are especially in need of recovering this love and basic human loyalty. For we have entered a time when even these are being discredited by harmful concepts of the person and human life now prevailing in this world. For centuries, the world still had the weak, but still

flickering and shining, glow from that faithfulness, love and co-suffering which was silently present at the sufferings of the Man cast aside by all. And we need to cling, as if to a last thread, to everything in our world that still thrives on the warm light of simple, earthly, human love. Love does not ask about theories and ideologies, but speaks to the heart and soul. Human history has rumbled along, kingdoms have risen and fallen, cultures have been built and bloody wars fought, but what has remained unchanging on earth and in this troubled and tragic history is the bright image of the woman. An image of care, self-giving, love, compassion. Without this presence, without this light, our world, regardless of its successes and accomplishments, would be a world of terror.

Father Alexander Schmemmann