

## PROGRAMME MAY 2016

***Every Thursday Evening the program is as follows:***

*6pm: The St Ignatius children's group and choir (primary school age and up)*

*7pm: Paraklesis service to the Theotokos (in English)*

*7.45: Bible study group (for all ages), led by Fr Demosthenis*

- SUNDAY 1<sup>st</sup> MAY: **GREAT AND HOLY PASCHA!**
- MONDAY 2<sup>nd</sup> MAY: **ST GEORGE THE TROPHY-BEARER**, Matins and Divine Liturgy, 7.30-10.00 am
- TUESDAY 3<sup>rd</sup> MAY: **SAINTS RAPHAEL, NICHOLAS AND IRENE**, Matins and Divine Liturgy, 7.30-10.00am
- THURSDAY 5<sup>th</sup> MAY: **SAINTS IRENE AND EPHRAIM THE GREAT MARTYRS**, Matins and Divine Liturgy, 7.30-10.00am
- FRIDAY 6<sup>th</sup> MAY: **THE LIFE-GIVING SPRING (THEOTOKOS)**, Matins, Divine Liturgy and blessing of the waters, 7.30-10.00 am
- SUNDAY 8<sup>th</sup> MAY: **SUNDAY OF THOMAS**, Matins and Divine Liturgy, 7.30-11.00 am
- SUNDAY 15<sup>th</sup> MAY: **SUNDAY OF THE MYRH-BEARING WOMEN**, Matins and Divine Liturgy, 7.30-11.00 am
- SATURDAY 21<sup>st</sup> MAY: **SAINTS CONSTANTINE AND HELEN, EQUAL TO THE APOSTLES**, Matins and Divine Liturgy, 7.30-10.00am
- SUNDAY 22<sup>nd</sup> MAY: **SUNDAY OF THE PARALYTIC**, Matins and Divine Liturgy, 7.30-11.00am
- WEDNESDAY 25<sup>th</sup> MAY: **MID-PENTECOST**, Matins and Divine Liturgy, 7.30-10.00 am
- SATURDAY 28<sup>th</sup> MAY: **DIVINE LITURGY IN ENGLISH**, 9.00-10.00am
- SUNDAY 29<sup>th</sup> MAY: **SUNDAY OF THE SAMARITAN WOMAN**, Matins and Divine Liturgy, 7.30-11.00 am

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**CHRIST IS RISEN!!!**

## 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 no wise be deprived therefore.

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 disregarded the fast.

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 and dominion unto ages of ages. Amen.

### ***Doxastikon of the Praises (Resurrection Hymn)***

It is the day of Resurrection; let us be radiant for the festival, and let us embrace one another. Let us say, O brethren, even to those that hate us: Let us forgive all things on the Resurrection; and thus let us cry: Christ is risen from the dead, by death He has trampled down death, and on those in the tombs He has bestowed life.

## Rising Victorious

by Frederica Mathewes-Green

Jesus is standing on the broken doors of hell. The massive portals lie crossed under his feet, a reminder of the Cross that won this triumph. He stands braced and striding, like a superhero, using his mighty outstretched arms to lift a great weight. That weight is Adam and Eve themselves, our father and mother in the fallen flesh. Jesus grasps Adam's wrist with his right hand and Eve's with his left, as he pulls them forcibly up, out of the carved marble boxes that are their graves. Eve is shocked and appears almost to recoil in shame, long gray hair streaming. Adam gazes at Christ with a look of stunned awe, face lined with weary age, his long tangled beard awry. Their limp hands lie in Jesus' powerful grip as he hauls them up into the light.

Behind Christ, King David, King Solomon, the prophet Isaiah, and the prophet Jeremiah stand in gorgeous robes, clustered tightly like a standing-room-only crowd to see this marvelous event. There is an air of joy, even conviviality, among them. St. John the Baptist is in the throng, still clothed in camel skin, now in full repossession of his head. Behind them are ranks and ranks of the righteous dead who are dead no more, for Christ has set them free.

Beneath Christ's feet, there is a black receding pit with floating silver shards of metal, chains, locks, and ominous instruments of pain. These instruments are broken and shattered, and the locks are unhinged, except for one set, still intact and in use. These locks bind the body of that vicious old Satan, who grimaces in his captivity, bound hand and foot and cast into his own darkness.

When you think of images of the Resurrection, what do you think of? Probably not this traditional image used in the Eastern Orthodox Church. In the West, our first image is usually a graceful one: women who had been trudging toward the tomb on a misty Sunday dawn stand stock-still in astonishment. An angel is sitting on a round stone with one hand raised in the air.

The image conveys a sense of silence and the stillness of caught breath as the moment on which the whole world turns is revealed. Colors are muted. The dew wets the hem of the women's dresses, and, for a moment, all is still. This garden-tomb image answers the question at the end of the three days, "Who rolled away the stone?" But there is another question, "Where did he go?"

"Did you not know that I must be about my Father's business?" Jesus might ask us once again. In Orthodoxy, we believe that the central meaning of the Resurrection is victory. Thus our traditional image is more vibrant and noisy, and it rings with a victorious shout. The Resurrection is a victory over sin, death, and the devil, and a victory over the dark forces that enslave us, despise us, and wish to destroy us. Thus we cry hundreds of times between Pascha (Easter) and Pentecost, "Christ is risen from the dead, trampling down death by death, and upon those in the tomb bestowing life!"

For long millennia, the righteous were trapped in the lair of Satan. "And all these, though well attested by their faith, did not receive what was promised, since God had foreseen something better for us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect" (Heb. 11:39-40). Even those who were not righteous heard the ringing voice of Christ in the grave: "For Christ also died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit, in which he went and preached to the spirits in prison, who formerly did not obey, when God's patience waited in the days of Noah" (I Peter 3:18-20). It was to the spirits in prison that Jesus went and defeated that cruel jailer and set them free.

When we turn to the biblical story of the Resurrection we find that, in Matthew at least, it's not as silent as our imaginations suggest. As the women arrive at the tomb there is "a great earthquake" caused by the descent of an angel. "His appearance was like lightning," an image that succeeds in astonishing because we cannot visualize what it means. He is dressed in robes white as snow, whiter than any fabric could be in that era.

The angel rolls away the stone and, in a closing gesture of command, sits upon it. That settles that. The terror-stricken guards, whose training had not

covered this situation, are so frozen with fear that they "became as dead men." The women are not much less terrified, but they listen as the angel tells them not to be afraid. He gives them instructions: Go tell the disciples to meet Jesus in Galilee.

As they depart, "with fear and great joy," they meet the Lord himself, fresh from his triumph over Death. As the women fall at his feet, he repeats the angel's message: "Go and tell my brethren to go to Galilee."

This version of the story differs from that in the Gospel of Mark, and that perplexing version is even more intriguing. As Mark has it, the women go to anoint Jesus' body, but instead find in the tomb "a young man sitting on the right side, dressed in a long white robe." He tells them that Jesus is risen and instructs them to tell the disciples, as above. But here we are told that they are terrified and flee the tomb. "And said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid." The earliest versions of this, the earliest Gospel, end abruptly at this point.

It's an odd gap between that small vignette of fear and retreat, and all that came next: the Apostles' relentless courage unto death, not ascribable to mere fond memories of a really nice dead guy; the preaching of the gospel across the Mediterranean bowl, the persecutions and martyrdom, the establishment and rise of the church, and finally, the disintegration of Christendom in these times, perhaps a prelude to full-circle persecution and martyrdom.

But at one mesmerizing moment, the news of Christ's resurrection was held by a handful of women who were too scared to tell anyone. But tell they did, and the story went on unreeling, till half a world away and two thousand years later it rings out with loud joy. Hundreds of times in the season of Pascha we will sing: "Christ is risen from the dead, trampling down death by death, and upon those in the tombs bestowing life!"

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## **SERMON ON THE SUNDAY OF THE PARALYTIC** (an extract)

*Fr Philip LeMasters (From Ancient Faith Radio Website)*

"The paralyzing burden of our sins is lifted at confession; no, that does not mean that we are never tempted again or that we do not have to live with the consequences of our actions, but it does mean we hear the voice of Christ and feel the touch of His hand as He says, "Rise, take up your bed and walk." The sins which you have confessed are behind you. Do not return to them. Go forward with your life to the glory of God. Go and sin no more.

The point here is not legalism, but healing. For if we really want to be made well, we must open the paralysis of our souls on a regular basis to Christ the Great Physician, Who is present to us in His Body, the Church. And every time that we take confession, Christ in effect says to us, "See, you have been made well. Sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon you."

No one forces us to sin or to cower in fear before the difficult challenges of life; but it seems inevitable that we will at times be overcome by our passions and our problems. We are often like someone healed of paralysis who cannot escape the habit of staying in bed or cope very well with the challenges and struggles of his new life. So we lie down again in our bed of habitual sins and weaknesses. But fortunately for us, the Lord is merciful. He always asks us, "Do you want to be healed?" And if we respond with truthfulness and humility, He has compassion on us, and assures us of His forgiveness and strength.

So we rise, take up our bed, and walk. We may fall back into our paralysis, weakness, and fears more times than we can count. We may fall down ten thousand times, but Christ is always there to raise us up and give us a share in His eternal life. We probably do not see it in our own lives, but through this journey of humble repentance we do find healing. The course of our struggle is upward; the paralysis decreases; our souls are strengthened as we struggle to press forward in faithfulness; the light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it.

And this is a vital part of the good news of Pascha. Despite the setbacks, despite the temptations, despite the burdens and obstacles that we and others place on our path, the glorious new day of God's kingdom has dawned. Christ has raised all humanity, including us, from sin and death. No, our sharing in Christ's salvation is not something magical that happens in an instant; like everything in creation, it takes time. And that is not because of God, but because of us.

So let us not only say "Christ is Risen!" this Paschal season; let us rise with Him, getting up from whatever sins have weighed us down, finding the strength in His resurrection to overcome our paralysis and weakness, to refuse to be shackled by fear, and move step by step, day by day, into the joy of His Kingdom. Now is the time to take up our beds and walk in the brilliant light of the empty tomb, for Christ is Risen!"