



The Voice In The Wilderness

*"A voice crying in the wilderness:
Prepare ye the way of the LORD..."
Matthew 3:3*

The Newsletter of St. John the Forerunner Antiochian Orthodox Christian Church, an Orthodox Christian witness to Cedar Park and Central Texas. Saint John the Forerunner Antiochian Orthodox Church is a local parish of the Self-Ruled Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America and is in the Diocese of Wichita and Mid-America.

The Most Reverend
Metropolitan PHILIP

The Right Reverend
BASIL



Archbishop of New York and
Metropolitan of All North
America

Bishop of Wichita and the
Diocese of Mid-America

The Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese
OF NORTH AMERICA
Diocese of Wichita and Mid-America

1559 N. Woodlawn, Wichita, KS 67208-2429
Telephone (316) 687-3169 * Fax (316) 687-3327
Website: www.antiochian.org * Email: bpbasil@aol.com

P A S C H A 2 0 0 9

Beloved and Christ-loving Clergy, Monastics and Laity of the Diocese of Wichita and Mid-America:

I embrace and greet you with a holy kiss in the Name of the Resurrected Theanthropos Jesus Christ, and, together with you and Orthodox Christians throughout the world, I joyfully proclaim that Christ is risen! *Χριστὸς ἀνέστη!* *المسيح قام!* *Христос Воскресе!* *Hristos a înviat!* *Cristo ha resucitado!*

On this radiant Feast of feasts I share with you, my dearly beloved spiritual children, the following soul-profiting words excerpted from a Paschal homily of our father among the saints Gregory the Theologian (330-390):

This is the Day of Resurrection! Let us all be united in heart, and let us give glory to God on this solemn festival. Let us address as brothers even those who hate us, as also those who love us, and have helped us, and have suffered anything on our behalf. Let us forgive all things in the Resurrection ... Yesterday I was crucified with Christ; today I am glorified with Him. Yesterday I died with Him; today I am given life with Him. Yesterday I was buried with Him; today I rise again with Him. Today let us offer unto Him, Who has suffered and Who has risen for us, ourselves, which to God is the most precious and becoming of gifts.

Wishing you and your families a glorious Paschal season perfumed with the sweet fragrance of good works and holiness, looking forward to being with you all at our Diocesan Family Reunion in Wichita this June 10th - 13th, and assuring you of my continued love, prayers and blessings, I remain

Your Father in the Risen Christ,



+ Bishop Basil

From the Pastor's Desk

Brothers and Sisters
Christ is Risen!

We can't think of anywhere--short of the Kingdom--where we would prefer to celebrate the Feast of Feasts than in the community of St John. May the blessings of Pascha fill all our days with joy and peace and love.

Every Blessing,
Father Aidan +
Kfouria Cynthia
Brendan, and Katie



Father's Special Reminders for Pascha

1. During the Paschal Services on Saturday night/Sunday morning, if young children need to sleep, then they must be
 - A) in the nursery or the bookstore with a family member
 - B) held in the arms or on the lap of a family member in the nave.

Please do not, under any circumstances, allow your children to sleep on the floor in the nave. This is not safe, and our ushers have been instructed to remind parents and grandparents that children are not allowed to sleep on the floor of the nave. Also, please remember that if your children are going to sleep in the nursery or bookstore, there must be a family member with them at all times; they are not to be left alone for any reason.

2. Pre-school children should not be given lighted candles. Parents and grandparents should use their best judgment when it comes to allowing elementary-age children to hold a lighted candle. This is not only a safety issue (hot wax can cause bad burns; hair can blaze up quickly and unexpectedly); it also takes a great deal of work to remove wax from the carpet. Again, our ushers have been instructed to remind parents that very young children should not be given lighted candles. To keep a candle from dripping hold it vertically; tilting it will make it drip.

3. Please remember to bring extra food for the Paschal Feast which will occur early Sunday morning after the Paschal Liturgy. Godparents, if this is your godchild's first Pascha, please teach them about the feast and encourage them to bring food and join in. If you have friends who have been visiting the parish but aren't yet catechumens, please let them know about the feast so they can participate.

4. Please do not bring food that requires cooking or warming up or extensive preparation; there simply isn't room for that in our small kitchen. Also, if you bring food that requires refrigeration, you also need to bring an ice chest; there simply isn't room in our refrigerators.

5. Please leave your food in your vehicle until after the Pascha services have ended. Once we have all revered the cross and received our red eggs, there will be plenty of time to get the food and get organized; however, we simply won't have room for all the food during the services.

6. Please plan on cleaning up after yourself and your children or grandchildren--even if your children or grandchildren aren't actually sitting with you during the Paschal Feast. Also, if your schedule will allow, please plan on helping clean up after the feast: we will need to put up all the tables and chairs, clean up the kitchen, take out the trash, wipe down the bathrooms and vacuum before Agape Vespers that afternoon.

The Icon Tells the Story : The Harrowing of Hell



The Resurrection Icon of Holy Saturday and Pascha Day is called "the Harrowing" (or Harvesting) of Hell. The word "Harrowing" is by interpretation a statement of the fact that Christ comes to harvest the righteous souls who have been awaiting him in Hell (Hebrew -Sheol the place of the dead or Greek- Hades).

In traditional iconography, the actual moment of the Resurrection of Christ was never depicted. The Gospels and Church Tradition are silent about that moment and do not say how Christ arose. As both the Church and the Gospels are silent, the icon does not show the moment of resurrection.

In the center of the icon is the figure of the Saviour. He appears in hell not as its captive, but as its Conqueror and Deliverer, as the Master of life. He is surrounded by a radiant mandorla with rays issuing from the centre of the mandorla. His garments are not those in which He is portrayed during his lifetime. They are brilliant white.



Christ, the central figure of the icon, is robed in white to show His divinity. The aureole (elongated halo) is called a mandorla and has rays coming from him that symbolizes this brilliant Light sometimes called the shinekah or uncreated light indicative of divinity.



Jesus is surrounded by various righteous figures from the Old Testament. To our right we see the Prophets Daniel, Abraham, and Iasiah. To our left we see the Prophet-Kings David and Solomon, as well as St John the Forerunner. Seeing Him, they at once recognize Him as the One whom they had foretold.



Jesus is holding Adam and pulling him up out of Hades. Traditionally, He is not shown holding Adan by the hands, but by his wrists, to illustrate the theological teaching that man could not pull himself out of his ancestral sin, but that it could come about only by the work (energia) of God.



The icon shows Jesus standing on the brazen gates of Hades (also called the "Doors of Death"), which are broken and have fallen in the form of a cross, illustrating the belief that by his death on the cross, Jesus trampled down death as noted in the Paschal Troparion.



Jesus is holding Eve and pulling her up out of Hades. He is seen taking her by wrists, to illustrate the theological teaching that woman could not pull herself out of her ancestral sin but that it could come about only by the work (energia) of God.



In many icons, below the doors, in the black abyss, the cast down figure of the prince of darkness, Satan or Death personified is seen.

The bottom of the icon depicts Hades as a chasm of darkness, often with various pieces of broken locks and chains strewn about. As in this icon, one or two figures are shown in the darkness, bound in chains, who are generally identified as personifications of Death or Satan. .



The power of hell is destroyed. This is symbolized by the keys, nails, and locks



In the upper section of the icon, the two peaks of rock remind us that "the earth shook and the rocks were split" (Mt. 27:51) after the death of Christ. The dividing of the rocks also reminds us of the dividing of the waters of the Red Sea as the Israelites traveled from the slavery of Egypt to the freedom of the Promised Land.



The Icon presents the Truth to the observer that by freeing the old Adam, and with him, the whole of humankind, Our Lord and Savior laid the foundation of a new life for all humankind. The spiritual raising of Adam is a symbol of the coming resurrection of the body, the first-fruit of which was the resurrection of Christ.

Paschal Greetings

English greeting "Christ is Risen!" Response "He is Truly Risen!"

Greek greeting "Christos Anesti!" Response "Alithos Anesti!"

Arabic greeting "Al Meseeh Kam!" Response "Hak'an Kam!"

Slavonic greeting "Christos Voskrese! Vaistinu Voskrese!"

Romanian greeting "Hristus A Inviat!" Response "Adevarat A Inviat!"

Spanish greeting "Christo Ha Resucitado!" Response "En Verdad Ha Resucitado"

Pascha

The word *Pascha* ("Fesakh" in Arabic) refers to the Passover - the greatest feast of the Old Testament. That feast referred to the time when God delivered the Hebrew people from slavery and bondage. He commanded them to offer the sacrifice of a spotless lamb and to sprinkle its blood upon their gateposts that the Angel of Death would pass over their houses.

The Christians, seeing the true fulfillment of the Old Law in the New Testament, realized that this ancient feast was but a foreshadowing of the destruction of death by Christ in His burial and Resurrection. The beautiful hymns of Resurrection Matins (sung on Saturday after the procession) frequently refer to Christ as the spotless Lamb, the true Savior, the Victor over sin and death, the Deliverer from bondage, and as the Author of the New creation.

Generally, Orthodox Christians do not use the word "Easter" when describing the Feast of the Resurrection of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. One of the reasons for this is that the word "Easter" comes from Old English and refers to the Norse Goddess of Fertility celebrated in the spring, "Istra" - who was symbolized by a rabbit.

Pascha Customs

Many popular customs originated in the Christian East.

The coloring of "Easter eggs" originated from the pious legend that Saint Mary Magdalene following the death and resurrection of Jesus, she used her position to gain an invitation to a banquet given by [Emperor Tiberius](#). When she met him, she held a plain egg in her hand and exclaimed "Christ is risen!" Caesar laughed, and said that Christ rising from the dead was as likely as the egg in her hand turning red while she held it. Before he finished speaking, the egg in her hand turned a bright red, and she continued proclaiming the Gospel to the entire imperial house. Another version of this story can be found in popular belief, mostly in Greece. It is believed that after the Crucifixion, Mary Magdalene and the Virgin Mary put a basket full of eggs at the foot of the cross. There, the eggs were painted red by the blood of the Christ. Then, Mary Magdalene brought them to Tiberius Caesar. Another tradition held by the Greek Orthodox is that St, Mary Magdalene was bringing cooked eggs to share with the other women at the tomb of Christ - This remains the tradition among observant Jews even in our own time - When St. Mary saw the Lord, the eggs in her basket turned brilliant red. Thus, the true meaning of dyeing Easter eggs is to show forth the miraculous transformation and re-creation of the whole world by the victorious resurrection of Christ.

The origin of the "Easter basket" The faithful, having fasted and abstained from meats, eggs, and dairy products throughout all of Great Lent, would bring baskets of these festive foods to church on Easter Sunday. There the priests would bless the baskets after Divine liturgy and the people would share their foods with one another and the poor in a true "break-fast."

Even Spring cleaning is found in the tradition of the Eastern Churches. During the great week before Pascha the faithful would clean their homes with special care and attention so that no imperfection however slight would mar the purity of the Resurrection. In Eastern Europe all the contents of the house would be brought outside and the building would be scrubbed from top to bottom inside and out.



Did you Know?

Pascha Eggs given at the End of The Paschal Liturgy are dyed red in memory of the blood of Christ.

Ukranian Orthodox Christians give specially decorated eggs at Pascha called Psanki as a gift to friends and family





The Centrality of the Resurrection in the Orthodox Church

By Father Anthony M. Coniaris

Someone said, "Easter is the one day in the year when anyone may attend church without incurring any suspicion that he is deeply committed to Christian faith and life."

And yet Easter is the highest holy day of our Orthodox Christian faith. Without the resurrection of Jesus, life has no meaning. Referring to the burial of our body after we die, Pascal said, "The last act is bloody, however fine the rest of the play. They throw dirt over your head and it is finished forever." Without the resurrection, the ultimate end of man is nothing more than a shovel full of dirt over a dead body. Without the resurrection of Jesus, to use the words of Eric Hoffer, "We are condemned to death at birth, and life is a bus ride to the place of execution. All of our struggling and vying is about seats on the bus, and the ride is over before we know it."

Death surrounds us. Daily we hear of war. The globe is overloaded with nuclear arsenals of death and destruction. Diseases old and new stalk our land, leaving death in their wake. Oppression and injustice rob human life of its fullness. Death is present in so many forms we could despair.

If we are indeed part and parcel of a meaningless universe, the kind in which Jesus could be murdered on a cross with no resurrection, then being depressed only makes good sense. For, indeed, we have something to be depressed about.

Father Dimitrii Dudko said, "What sense is there if everything ends in death? A person dies and that is it. One can only really speak of life if life is eternal." And that is why Easter is the festival of festivals for Orthodox Christianity. It is the festival of the most radical, decisive and ultimate deliverance and joy this universe has ever seen.

Meliton of Sardis in a memorable Paschal letter written in the second century explains the reason for this Paschal joy by placing these words in the mouth of the Resurrected Christ: *Come to me all-you families of mankind, sullied with sin, and receive the remission of sins. For I am your forgiveness. I am the Pascha of salvation. I am the Lamb sacrificed for you. I am your redemption. I am your life. I am your resurrection. I am your light. I am your salvation. I am your king. I lead you to the heights of heaven. I will show you the Father eternal. I will raise you by my right hand.*

Father John Meyendorff explained what the centrality of Pascha in the Orthodox Church means:

- that in the midst of a world dominated by death, there is one single and unique hope: the Risen Christ;
- that in the midst of a world conscious of its mortality and therefore determined by fear of death, there is a solution: life
- that in the midst of a world which continually offers man false securities, such as power, money, illusions of "social" or "scientific" progress, there is also an offer made by God Himself: that of eternity and joy in Christ.

There are those who say, "I believe only in the *spiritual* resurrection of Jesus," to which we reply, "There is no such thing as a spiritual resurrection. The Spirit of Jesus did not go into the tomb. It was His body that was laid in that sepulcher. His Spirit was alive as He descended into Hades to bring salvation to the Old Testament saints."

It was not a ghost that walked out of that tomb. It was the whole person of Jesus Christ - body, soul, and divinity. Following the resurrection, Jesus ate and drank with His disciples even allowing them to touch Him to see that He was not a ghost. ... *for a spirit has not flesh and bones as you see that I have*, he said in Luke 224:39.

We live in the dark labyrinth of death. We seek desperately to discover the fabled lost thread of Ariadne, that will lead us to the way out, to the exit. That precious thread of Ariadne that leads us out of the dark labyrinth of death is none other

than the Risen Christ. He is the exit from the dark tomb of death to life. This is expressed so well in the Orthodox icon of the Resurrection which shows the Risen Lord reaching down into the labyrinth of Hades to lift Adam and Eve and with them the rest of mankind from death to life.

I believe in the resurrection of the dead and the life of the ages to come, we proclaim in the Nicene Creed. Pascha involved the raising of the body of Jesus and it will involve our bodies when He comes again to raise us from the dead at the General Resurrection.

Father [Anthony M. Coniaris](#) is a priest of the [Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America](#). He has served the [Church](#) for over fifty years mostly at St. Mary's Greek Orthodox Church in Minneapolis. He is a prolific [Orthodox](#) writer ([books](#)), and also President of [Light and Life Publishing](#) house.

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!"

This article appeared on www.FeastofFeasts.org, a selection of Paschal thoughts and memories the Feasts of Feasts an Internet collaboration between the Antiochian Archdiocese and the Orthodox Church in America in celebration of the risen Christ. The author of this article is Khouria Frederica Mathewes-Green, noted Antiochian Orthodox Christian commentator.





The icon of "The Belief of Thomas"

Then the high priest rose up, and all those who were with him (which is the sect of the Sadducees), and **they were filled with indignation**, and laid their hands on the apostles and put them in the common prison. But at night an angel of the Lord opened the prison doors and brought them out, and said, *Go, stand in the temple and speak to the people all the words of this life.*

John 20:19-31 (Gospel)

Then, the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the midst, and said to them, "Peace be with you." When He had said this, He showed them His hands and His side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. So Jesus said to them again, "Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you." And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. **If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.** Now Thomas, called the Twin, one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. The other disciples therefore said to him, "We have seen the Lord." So he said to them, "Unless I see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe." And after eight days His disciples were again inside, and Thomas with them. Jesus came, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, "Peace to you!" Then He said to Thomas, "Reach your finger here, and look at My hands; and reach your hand here, and put it into My side. Do not be unbelieving, but believing." And Thomas answered and said to Him, "My Lord and my God!" Jesus said to him, "Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. **Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.**" And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, **which are not written in this book;** but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.

Christ is Risen! Indeed He is Risen!

We have two parts of our history being described here: the first involves the interaction between the Risen Lord Jesus Christ and his disciples; the second, the continuing witness and power of the Orthodox Church. There are two connections

The Power of the Message of The Sunday of Thomas for the Orthodox Christian

Coming the Sunday after Pascha, the story and message we receive from the Church on Thomas Sunday is a very powerful one. From the Epistle and Gospel readings we gain an insight of what it was like in those days immediately following the Resurrection and its impact upon us as Orthodox Christians today.

Acts 5:12-20 (Epistle)

And through the hands of the apostles **many signs and wonders** were done among the people. And they were all with **one accord** in Solomon's Porch. Yet none of the rest dared join them, but the people esteemed them highly. And believers were increasingly added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women, so that they brought the sick out into the streets and laid them on beds and couches, **that at least the shadow of Peter passing by might fall on some of them.** Also a multitude gathered from the surrounding cities to Jerusalem, bringing sick people and those who were tormented by unclean spirits, **and they were all healed.**

that can be made here between the things that happened and are recorded in the Epistle and Gospel and our Holy Orthodox Church.

Christ and His Disciples

Christ empowers His Disciples to continue His work. Up until then, the ministry had largely been conducted through His physical body. He taught with His mouth, healed with His hands, and generally witnessed to His Power and the Truth of Orthodoxy with His flesh and blood. This culminated in the witness of His Passion and the fact of His bodily Resurrection from the dead. This Resurrection was the purpose and fulfillment of His Incarnation. Throughout this earthly ministry, Christ had been carefully and intentionally grooming his disciples in the orthodox Faith and Orthodox ministry; grooming them not simply for their own salvation, but so that the Good News of His salvific work would continue through them. We see the fulfillment of this plan in the Sunday of Thomas' Gospel, when He assuaged any lingering doubts among the disciples, empowered them with the Holy Spirit through His breath and delegated His authority to forgive (and retain) sins to them.

This last scene from the Gospel of St. John (a witness to and participant in these events) shows the passing of earthly ministry from Christ to His disciples. But this was not like a military change of command, where the departing officer retires or moves on to another assignment. The disciples were given Christ's authority to act as His Apostles, but Christ remained with them as the Head of the Church. He remains the Vicar of the Holy Orthodox Church because there is real sense in which His earthly ministry continues mystically through His Apostles, His Church, and the continuing healing and teaching ministry of His Flesh and Blood in the Holy Eucharist.

The Continuing Witness and Power of the Orthodox Church

The readings describes how the apostles continued "in one accord" the ministry of Jesus Christ, empowered by the Holy Spirit. Through them "many signs and wonders" were performed. Christ had told them that their deeds would surpass even His own - the fathers teach us that the deeds are greater because they are done not by the God-man Himself, but by those He empowered to continue His work. What the historian St. Luke (another witness and participant of the events He is describing) is describing is the authority and Truth of the Orthodox Church.

Just as Christ's miracles witnessed to His legitimacy and the truth of His teaching, so the miracles performed through the leaders of the early Orthodox Church witness to their authority (in Christ) and the truth of their teaching. It is important to note here is that there is no break between the work of Christ on earth, and that of the Orthodox Church., Christ had been grooming His disciples long before His death, even empowering them to heal in His name. After His death and resurrection, His ministry continued unabated through these disciples, who were now acting as the Apostles of His Church (the Church of which He is the head).

This Ministry Continues to This Very Day

Christ has continued to vest authority in His Church to this very day: a power that is incarnate most visibly through the office of the Bishop. The lineage/spiritual geneology of every bishop extends back to Apostles themselves. The apostles ordained the first bishops to minister to the communities they founded, then to lead the Church in *sobornost* as the apostles themselves went on to their reward. Two thousand years ago, Our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, ministered in flesh and blood. Since the time that Christ took His body up to heaven, He has continued to minister through the physical institution of the Church, and through the Eucharistic sharing of His Body and Blood through the sacraments that the Holy Orthodox Church preserves. This is the same ministry being carried out here in our midst at St. John the Forerunner Antiochian Orthodox Church here in Cedar Park. We are not simply part of the Church - for Christ cannot be divided - we are in a real sense the Church in its fullness. Christ truly is in our midst.

The Faith of St. Thomas

Do you doubt the truth of Christ in His Church? Then have the faith of St. Thomas who believed enough to touch and learn from the Lord and His physical body. Do you doubt the truth of Christ in His Church? Open your eyes to the miracles that bear it witness. Touch the Church and its Mysteries. Some rejected the divinity of Christ because of His human form. Some still reject Him in His Church because of its institutional form. Do not be like them. Be like Thomas and embrace Christ, so

that He can say of you: " Jesus said to him, "Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. **Blessed are those who have not seen [my Resurrected Body] and yet have believed.**"



Tsourekia- Greek Easter Bread

Food for the Kingdom

As always we try to present new recipes for the traditional foods of Pascha to help you to celebrate the Feast of Feasts. Here are this years offerings:



(Russian Style Paskha Cheese)

:

Tsourekia- Greek Easter Bread

INGREDIENTS:

- 2 cup yogurt
- 2 cup milk
- 12 eggs; (reserve 3 yolks)
- 5 lb flour
- 1 tablespoon salt
- 3 pkg yeast
- 3 cup sugar
- 1 lb butter; sweet
- 2 cup warm water
- 1 seseme seeds or almonds
- hard cooked colored eggs (traditional)

DIRECTIONS:

1. Dissolve yeast in the warm water and add enough flour to make a thick batter and cover and let rise double. this is called the " sponge '.
2. In a large bowl, beat butter and sugar very light and fluffy, about 20 minutes. Beat in the eggs (except for 3 yolks) alternate adding flour and yoghurt and milk to egg/ sugar mixture and stir in the yeast mixture. Enough flour should be added to make a non sticky dough.
3. Knead smooth and elastic.
4. Cover dough in a large greased bowl and let rise double. Punch down and let rise double again.
5. Shape as desired in pans in braided rings or as a braided single loaf.
6. Let rise double and brush loaves with the reserved egg yolks. Sprinkle with seseme seeds or almonds.
7. Traditionally for Pascha, red colored hard cooked eggs may be pressed into the braided ring before the 3rd rising.
8. Bake in a 350 oven until golden, about 30minutes. loaves are light, sweet and delicious.

Yield: 4 (Note: recipe may be easily halved.)

SIMPLE PASHKA (Russian Style Paskha Cheese)

INGREDIENTS:

4 - 8 oz. pkgs cream cheese
1 cup (2 sticks) butter
3 egg yolks
2 cup sifted powdered sugar
2 tsp vanilla extract or brandy
1 cup toasted, slivered almonds

DIRECTIONS:

1. Let cream cheese, butter and egg yolks stand at room temperature at least 2 hours.
2. Beat cheese in a mixing bowl with a wooden spoon or blend at low speed in electric mixer.
3. Add butter and continue beating.
4. When well blended, add sugar, then egg yolks, one at a time.
5. Add vanilla or the brandy and fold in almonds.

To mold the Pashka:

1. Wash and dry the inside of a Pashka mold or a new 2 quart clay or plastic flowerpot with drain holes in the bottom.
2. Line the pot with a double thickness of cheesecloth wrung out in cold water.
3. Spoon cheese mixture into the pot to the brim.
4. Cover with plastic wrap and refrigerate several hours or overnight on a plate.
5. To unmold, trim around and discard top of the cheesecloth.
6. Invert a [dessert](#) plate over the opening of the flowerpot and quickly turn the whole thing upside down.
7. Place on table and gently lift off pot, tugging at the cheesecloth lining if necessary.
8. When the pot is clear, gently remove the cheesecloth.
9. Decorate if desired.

KULICH (Russian Easter Bread)

The bread forms a hat shape, since the dough swells above the mold and becomes wider. It is decorated with Candied Cherries or Colored Icing three bard cross or XB, representing the Cyrillic letters for "Christos voskres" -- "Christ is risen."

Russians often trim off the brim and place it in the centre of a serving plate. The cake is then cut in half horizontally and sliced. These slices are arranged around the brim. Kulich is traditionally served with Pashka Cheese.



INGREDIENTS:

5-6 cups white flour
2 cups confectioners sugar
1 1/3 cups warm milk
3 packets of active dry yeast
1/2 cup golden raisins or sultanas
1/2 cup blanched almonds
1/2 cup candied fruits (Fruitcake mix)
1/4 cup dark rum
1 cup softened butter + 5 tbsp.
10 egg yolks, lightly beaten
2 tsp. salt
1 tsp. vanilla
1/2 tsp. sugar

Icing

2 cups Confectioners sugar
tbsp. cold water
2 tsp. lemon juice

DIRECTIONS:

1. Soak the raisins in the rum for 10 minutes; drain; mix the saffron with the rum and set aside;
2. in a bowl, dissolve the yeast and 1 tbsp. sugar in 1/2 cup warm milk; let sit 10 minutes; add the vanilla, egg yolks, and rum
3. combine the flour, icing sugar and salt; make a well in the center and gradually pour the yeast and egg mixture into the well, gradually blending in the flour to form a dough
4. place on a floured work surface and knead for about 10 minutes until the dough is smooth and elastic, while gradually incorporating pieces of the butter
5. place into a lightly greased bowl; cover with a cloth and let rise until doubled in volume
6. in a bowl, toss the almonds, candied fruit and raisins with 1 tbsp. of flour until well coated
7. punch down the dough; mix in the fruits and almonds and knead for 2-3 minutes;
8. Butter a 2 lb coffee can that has been cleaned and washed then place the dough into the pan; cover with a cloth and let rise 30-45 minutes until well risen. If you fill the can $\frac{1}{2}$ way and still have dough use another coffee can prepared the same way to make a second loaf.
9. Place into a preheated 225° F oven for 15 minutes; increase the oven temperature to 350° F and bake for 1 hour longer.

Icing Directions:

1. Combine all the icing ingredients; pour slowly over the top of the cake so that it drizzles down in thin streams.
2. Decorate with Candied Cherries, Jelly beans, or Colored Icing three bar cross or XB, representing the Cyrillic letters for "Christos voskres" -- "Christ is risen."

KOULOURIA (Greek Easter Cookies)

Ingredients:

- $\frac{1}{2}$ lb sweet butter
- 1 lb confectioners sugar
- $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp of salt
- 7 eggs (whole)
- 1 shot glass of Greek Brandy (Metaxia) or cognac
- 3 tsp backing powder
- 6 cups flour
- $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp of vanilla

Directions:

1. Beat butter for 15-20 minutes ,adding confectioners sugar toward the end.
2. Beat and add the eggs. Continue beating adding the salt, cognac, baking powder, and sifted flour
3. knead well and shape cookies to a pretzel shape or twist.
4. brush glaze made from beaten egg yolk and sprinkle with sesame seeds.
5. bake at 350 degree oven for about 20 minutes until light brown

These cookies are very rich and go well with coffee or tea.

St John's Community News

Special Services:

April 18 Great and Holy Saturday Vespers 9am Rush Service 11pm

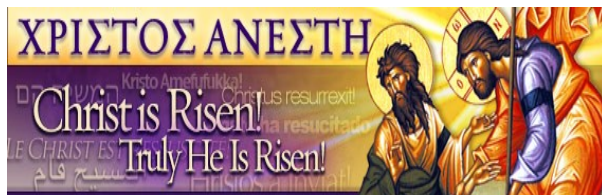
April 19 Great and Holy Pascha Agape Vespers 2pm followed by Parish Picnic

Parish News:

PASCHAL BASKETS



We want to encourage you, our parishioners, to bring a basket of your favorite desserts, meats and wines with you to the Paschal Liturgy, Saturday evening. This is a great opportunity for you and your families to prepare something special in anticipation for the greatest feast! Bringing baskets on Pascha is a Russian tradition and one that creates an atmosphere of wonderful fellowship, too! **As always, we will have a Pot-Luck dinner following the Pascha service, so come one and all.**



The Parish Council of Saint John the Forerunner Orthodox Church wishes you a Blessed and Holy Pascha!

Father Aidan Wilcoxson
Patty Lewis (Chair)
David Brown (Vice Chair)
Vickie Knight (Treasurer)
Sh. Josie Long (Choir)
Fr. Deacon Basil Long (Building Committee Chair)
Melinda Treckman (Youth)
Rob Thurner (Finance Committee Chair)
Gayla Easley (Church School Superintendent)
Tim Treckman (Facilities Committee Chair)
Anna Pitts
Maggie Benson
Gregg Easley
Rebekah Galloway

April 22 Pascha Book Study –The Pascha Book Study begins on the Wednesday after Pascha, April 22nd, and it runs for five Wednesdays, through May 20th. The group always gets started right at 7pm—and, of course, there is always tea and often folks brings snacks—but we also conclude promptly at 8:30pm. This year, the book that we will be reading is *Penthos* by Father Irene Hausherr. *Penthos* is a Greek word that means a deep, heart-felt compunction, and this book is an examination of the experience of compunction and the spiritual gift of tears through the writings of the holy fathers during early centuries of the Church's life. Father Hausherr is a Roman Catholic scholar, a beautiful writer, and one of the world's foremost authorities on Orthodox spirituality. The book is not light reading, but it will be well worth the effort.

PARISH PRAYER LIST:

Pray for the Catechuminate: Gregory Goecker, Cheryl Wallace, Alexei Kennedy, David Williams, the Juhnke Family (Charra, Claudia, John, and Lee), Brandon and Crystal Wilson, John and Lindsey Bell, and Linda. Pray especially for Cheryl Wallace who is preparing for Illumination.

Pray for the Health of Body and Soul of those who have requested your prayers: Arch Priest Michael, Arch Priest Stephen, Deacon Daniel, Subdeacon Thomas, Reader Mark, Reader Matthew, Reader Symeon, Reader Ishmael, Kh Angie, Kh Anne, Shamassy Mary Josephine, Priscilla Gail, Elena, Irina, Sally, Despina, Eleni, Charra, Albert, Nicholas, Linda, Alexandra, Walter, Vicki, Cheryl, Melinda, Rebekah, Dave, Mary Beth, Elizabeth, Amy, Elizabeth, Mary, Catherine, Greg, Bethany, John, Ron, Becca, Todd, Robyn, Beverly, Sheron, Hannah, Michal, Jacob, Aaron, George, Elizabeth, James, Lisa, Jared, Gabriel, Aurora, Tatiana, the infant Jacob, and those who serve in the Armed Forces (especially the Servants of God David and Savvas).

Congratulations! On Tuesday, March 31, Robbie and Monique Carlisle had a little girl, Sarah, 9 lbs., 21 inches long. Parents and daughter and all the other children are doing well. We wish to extend a big Thank you to everyone who prepared meals for the family following Monique coming home.

The Orthodox Kids Page

Christ Is Risen! Indeed He Is Risen!

From the very beginning,

our Lord Jesus Christ was with God, because He is God! He created everything. Look around you—all the people, animals, plants, even the Earth itself, He made! Life comes from Him.

Because of Adam and Eve's choice to disobey God (and all of our choices to do the same, since then), sin came into the world. This sin keeps people from God. But God's love for us is so great that He wanted to free us from sin through Jesus.

When Jesus was getting ready to come into the world, God sent John ahead of him. John came to help people see that Jesus was God's Son, and that they should follow Him.

When Jesus came into the world, even though He made the world, because of sin, the people of the world did not know Him. He was right with His own special people—the Jews—and they did not welcome Him. In fact, they killed Him.

But, just like light shining in darkness makes the darkness go away, so our Lord Jesus Christ shone in the darkness of our sinful world. He entered Hades, the place of the dead, and rescued people, even Adam and Eve, from death!



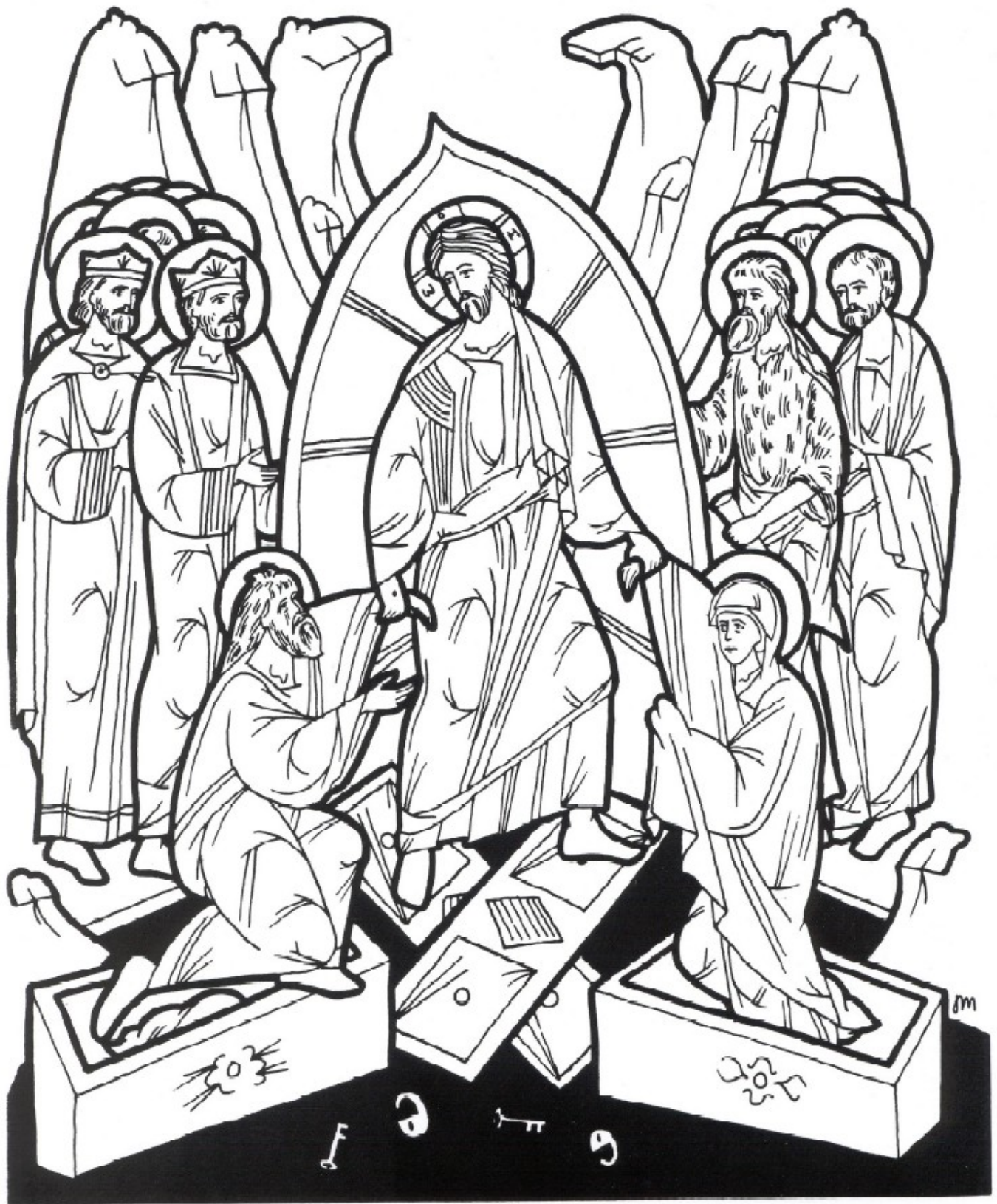
Jesus rose from the dead. He freed us from sin and death. He gave us power to become children of God.

Thinking About God's Word . . . John 1:1-17

1. Who does life come from? Name some living things He made.
2. Sin separated people from God. Who did God send into the world to free us from the darkness of sin?
3. What is the name of the person God sent right before He sent Jesus? What was He sent to do?
4. When Jesus came to the world, did everyone recognize Him? What did the people do to Him?
5. What does the Gospel story compare Jesus to?
6. Listen for when your priest invites you to "Come receive the light from the Light that is never overtaken by night..." Who is that?
7. When you receive Holy Communion this Pascha, be happy! Jesus the Light has won over the darkness of sin, and He will help you become a child of God! *Christ is risen. Indeed He is risen!*

Let Us Attend! The Antiochian Orthodox Archdiocese Children's Gospel Program is published by the Antiochian Orthodox Department of Christian Education (www.antiochian.org). If you would like information on our present programs and future initiatives, contact Mrs. Carole Buleza at aodce@antiochian.org.

Coloring page



Used by permission of Iconographics.