

**CHRIST IS RISEN!
HE IS RISEN INDEED!**



Fire & Light

St. Symeon Orthodox Church

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✠ **May 19, 2013** ✠

The Holy Myrrhbearing Women

Sts. Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus

St. Patrick of Prusa (362) St. Nina of Georgia, Equal-to-the-Apostles (335)

St. Dunstan of Canterbury (988) St. Dimitri Donskoy, Grand Prince of Moscow (1389)



Christ is Risen! Indeed He is Risen!

⇒ **Our 2013 Graduates ~ College- Adam Rivers and Maria Sarris!**
Many Years! ~ **High School – Nicholas Rivers and Constantine Sarris!**

⇒ **New Inquirer's Class – Tuesday, June 11 6:30pm**

The Risen Christ - The Test of Logic

by Photios Kontoglou, Iconographer

The faith of a Christian is tested by the Resurrection of Christ like gold in a furnace. Out of the entire Gospel, the Resurrection of Christ is the most unbelievable thing, totally inadmissible by our logic and a true cause of its suffering. Because it is something totally unbelievable, for this reason it requires all of our faith to believe in it. We people often say we have faith, but we only have it for those things that are believable to our minds. But then faith is not needed, since logic is enough. Faith is required for the unbelievable.

Many people are unbelievers. The same Disciples of Christ did not have faith in the teachings of their Teacher who had told them He would be raised, despite all the respect and loyalty they had for Him and the trust they had in His words. And when the Myrrh-bearers went at dawn to the sepulcher of Christ, and beheld the two angels who spoke with them, who told them that He had risen, they ran to tell the joyful news to the disciples, but the disciples did not believe their words, having the idea that it was just a fantasy: "But they did not believe the women, because their words seemed to them like nonsense" (Luke 24:11).

Do you see with how much unbelief Christ Himself struggled? And from His own Disciples. Do you see with how much long-suffering He endured everything? And with all this, the majority of us are separated from Christ by a wall of ice, the wall of unbelief. He opens His arms to us and calls us, but we deny Him. He shows us His pierced hands and feet, and we say that we do not see them.

We try to find support for our unbelief to satisfy our ego, and we call these Philosophy and Science. The word *Resurrection* does not have a place in our books of knowledge. Because "the knowledge of this world cannot know anything except the multitude of their thoughts, not however with the simplicity of ones mind." Yes, those who have this mind of blessed simplicity, the Lord blessed, saying: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." And to Thomas, who sought to touch Him in order to believe, He said: "Because you have seen Me Thomas, you have believed? Blessed are those who have not seen, yet believe."

Let us ask the Lord to give us this rich poverty, this pure heart, so that we can see Him being raised and be raised with Him. "This ignorance is higher than knowledge" (St. Isaac the Syrian). Most fortunate and thrice-fortunate are they who have it. **Christ is Risen!** ✠ ✠ ✠

This and That

In the 19th century, the phrase was "root, hog or die." Raise crops, farm animals or starve. From the Jamestown colony to the 20th century, America was a self-sufficient society in which all understand St. Paul's epistle to the Thessalonians, "*He who does not work, neither shall he eat.*"

During Depression days and World War II up through the 1950s, the necessities of life were provided by the individual himself or herself or by the family. Today, however, government provides for almost all of the needs of those who claim they cannot provide for themselves...

...If you can live a comfortable life with your food, shelter, health care, education and income paid for or subsidized, why work when you don't have to? ... How long can one-half of America carry the other? With the Baby Boomers going on Social Security and Medicare at a rate of 300,000 a month, and scores or hundreds of thousands going on disability rolls and quitting the labor force every month, what kind of future are we looking at?

- Patrick Buchanan

"Need" now means wanting someone else's money. "Greed" now means wanting to keep your own. "Compassion" is when a politician arranges the transfer.

~ Joseph Sobran

Modernists have no belief in anything except the content of their own brains and are superstitiously afraid of anything they can't see, touch, smell or taste... It is the product of the secularization of our culture which views anything to do with traditional faith as anathema and wishes to destroy it.

....The secularist, utilitarian denial of the sacred is all around us and cuts across all ideological boundaries. It permeates most of what passes for thought and public policy these days. It is the essence of the nihilist doctrine of the elite controlling the herd.

- Michael Baumann

This instance of Chechen terrorism in the United States falls into a familiar pattern. Bosnian Muslims, Kosovo Albanians, and now Chechens, far from being grateful for American support for their cause--Bosnia and Kosova would not exist except for US military intervention--see Americans through the single lens of Islam. We could give each group trillions of American dollars, and they would still hate us.

-Thomas Fleming

A proper debate of public issues requires the ability to state your opponent's position fairly. This requires intelligence, but, even more, it requires integrity, fairness, and good will. An overwhelming majority of American journalists and professoriate are utterly incapable of this intellectual and moral exercise. Wittingly or not, they practice Lenin's dictate: "We must write in language which sews among the masses hate, revulsion and scorn toward those who disagree with us." - Clyde Wilson

"To be modern is to believe in one's individual desires as the locus of authority and self-definition (Rod Dreher)," Yes, and sadly this is quite naive because in this very "modern" world someone more powerful than you will always come along to tell you who you are (identity) and what you will do next (authority). We've seen this movie before. It's quite pre-modern. It was the pagan world Jesus Christ was born into. The real "locus of authority and self-definition" is whoever is more powerful than you. This glove fits the Left hand.

- Internet Comment

In the modern era, we have inverted the role of culture. Instead of teaching us what we must deprive ourselves of to be civilized, we have a society that tells us we find meaning and purpose in releasing ourselves from the old prohibitions.

- Internet comment

G.K. Chesterton said, "The thing once called *free thought* has come finally to threaten everything that is free."

As Flannery O'Connor observed, "One shall know the truth and the truth shall make one odd..."

THE SEVEN MYRRH-BEARING WOMEN

The Second Sunday after ^{Pascha} ~~Easter~~ is dedicated to the memory of seven of the most dedicated and courageous women of the New Testament. We know a great deal about the Twelve Apostles of Christ, but we know very little about the Myrrh-Bearing Women who were devoted to Christ equally as much as the Apostles themselves. They were with Jesus as He preached the message of Salvation. They were with Him when He was taken down from Calvary. It was these women who came to anoint His Sacred Body and prepare it for burial. This is why the Church refers to them as the "Myrrh-Bearing Women." Who were they?

1. *Mary Magdalene* (Her feast day is celebrated on July 22nd). This remarkable woman is the most famous of the seven Myrrh-Bearing Women of the New Testament. If you remember, it was she whom our Blessed Lord healed of a terrible illness which Holy Scripture describes as "being possessed by seven demons." Holy Tradition tells us that after the Resurrection and Ascension of Christ, Mary Magdalene journeyed to Rome and convinced Emperor Tiberius that both Pontius Pilate and the Archpriests of Jerusalem should be punished for their participation in the Crucifixion of Christ. She later lived on the Greek island of Ephesus in the Christian community founded by St. John the Evangelist. Although she died on this island, her remains were eventually taken to the ancient city of Constantinople.
2. *Salome*, the Mother of James and John, the sons of Zebedee (her feast day is celebrated on August 3rd). Salome was a very saintly woman who loved Jesus very much. Her great love was shared by her two famous sons, James and John, two of the original Twelve Apostles of Christ. Tradition tells us that Salome enjoyed a very close relationship with the family of the Blessed Virgin Mary. She remained devoted to Mary after the Ascension of Christ.
3. *Mary*—the Mother of James and Joses, the wife of Cleophas—(her feast day is celebrated on May 23rd). Very little is recorded concerning her life; however, she devoted many years in the service of our Lord.
4. *Joanna*—the wife of Chuza, Herod Antipas' steward—(her feast day is celebrated on June 27th). Joanna first heard of the coming of Christ during His first visit to the temple in Jerusalem. She became a true believer and assisted the Apostles during their first years as leaders of the new Faith. She was a woman of great courage.
5. *Susanna*—(her feast day is celebrated on the Sunday of the Church Forefathers which falls before Christmas). Susanna was a close friend of Mary Magdalene and was constantly by her side during her affliction. Susanna remained with the Apostles of Christ and shared in the work of spreading the message of Salvation. She assisted with the serving of the "Communion Suppers" and administering to the sick and the aged.
- 6 & 7. *Mary and Martha*—the sisters of Lazarus—(feast day, June 4th). Our Blessed Lord was very fond of Lazarus, and on many occasions He visited his home in Bethany. The sisters of Lazarus, Mary and Martha, became followers of Christ and dedicated their lives to Him. After the miracle of the "Resurrection of Lazarus" by Jesus Christ, Mary and Martha returned with Jesus and His Apostles. They devoted their lives to the spreading of the new Faith.

These are the famous "Seven Myrrh-Bearing Woman" of the New Testament. These glorious ladies of the Church remained steadfast in their Faith and brought glory to the Church of Christ. The Fathers of the Church consider them "equal to the Apostles."

The Fullness of God's Love

Christ is risen! It is a proclamation; it is a greeting; it is the essence of our faith. St. Paul tells the Corinthians that "if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith" (1 Cor. 15:14). He continues, "But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the first-fruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. But each in his own turn: Christ, the first-fruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him" (1 Cor. 15:20-23).

From the Resurrection we draw strength for our lives. Again, St. Paul tells the Corinthians: "When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: 'Death has been swallowed up in victory. Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?' The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain" (1 Cor. 15: 54-58). For St. Paul the resurrection points to our final destination. The Kingdom of Heaven has been opened and we have been invited in. Christ has trampled upon death and we have been given life.

This is not a simplistic, triumphalistic statement. The day-to-day reality is still that of a fallen world, in which difficulties surround us, sin is present, and sadness can at times feel overwhelming. St. Paul knows all this: he is the one who asked God to remove the thorn (physical or spiritual we do not know) from his side and acceded to God's answer: "My power is made perfect in weakness" (2 Cor. 12:7). And knowing all that he does about our fallen world, about sin and weakness, he perseveres in running the race and fighting the good fight (2 Tim.

4:7), in teaching what it is to live a Christian life (2 Tim. 1), and in encouraging others to follow his example (1 Cor. 4:16).

St. Paul's strength comes from the crucified and risen Christ: "but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For the foolishness of God is wiser than man's wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than man's strength" (1 Cor. 1:23-25). It is to this same Christ that we turn for our strength. We should never forget that everything about Christ's life on earth, from the Incarnation to the Ascension, took place because of God's love for us (cf. John 3:16).

The prayer of St. Paul in his letter to the Ephesians is something each one of us can pray for those around us: "I pray that out of His glorious riches He may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God" (Eph. 3:16-19).

May we know the fullness of God's love; may we grow in love for God and one another, and may we not allow our troubles to divert us from our divine calling to become Saints! Christ tells in the Gospel according to John that we should have courage, as he has conquered the world (John 16:33). Let us always celebrate Pascha and the promise of the Resurrection and so keep our eyes on the crowns of life promised to the faithful (cf. Rev. 2:10, and as seen in the story of the 40 Holy Martyrs of Sebastia).

Fr. Peter Andronache, Holy Trinity Church, Clearwater, FL

When Men Forsake God, Tyranny Always Follows

Chris Banescu

The prophetic words of Aleksander Solzhenitsyn resonate like thunder across the history of man. **"Men have forgotten God; that's why all this has happened."** Thus summarized the Nobel laureate, Orthodox Christian author, and Russian dissident the main reason why the communist revolution was able to enslave, terrorize, and murder tens of millions of innocent people. An atheistic mentality and a long process of secularization gradually alienated the people from God and His moral laws. This led them away from truth and authentic liberty and facilitated the rise of tyranny.

Godlessness is always the first step to the concentration camp. Tragically, that same process is now at work in America and many other parts of the world. Too many refuse to see it or believe it.

America has long been a beacon of freedom for millions of souls who came here seeking liberty and opportunity. It achieved this unique place in history by recognizing the authority of God and his moral laws and declaring that men have the unalienable rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Founded by faithful and God-fearing men who despised government tyranny and sought religious freedom and individual liberty, America incorporated these universally true principles in its Declaration of Independence and Constitution. These ideals eventually became the bedrock upon which all our laws, government, and institutions were originally built.

America's Founding Fathers understood and proclaimed that all rights come from God alone, not governments. They insisted that government must always serve man and that man was created by God to be free. Their deep faith and reverence of the Almighty inspired and guided their actions and motivated their decisions. It is this belief and trust in God's authority and wisdom that ultimately transformed America from a tiny British colony with a handful of refugees to the mighty economic and military superpower and an oasis of freedom, opportunity, and prosperity for tens of millions of immigrants.

The Founding Fathers, like Solzhenitsyn, understood the dependence of freedom on morality. A virtuous and faithful people who placed God at the center of their lives and the foundations of their institutions helped America become that shining city on a hill "whose beacon light guides freedom-loving people everywhere," said President Ronald Reagan. "We've staked the whole future of American civilization not on the power of government," wrote James Madison, "far from it. We have staked the future of all our political institutions upon the capacity of each and all of us...to govern ourselves according to commandments of God. The future and success of America is not in this Constitution, but in the laws of God upon which the Constitution is founded."

This same theme is found throughout the writings of the Founders. John Adams clearly understood that our "Constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other." "He who is void of virtuous attachments in private life is, or very soon will be, void of all regard for his country," observed Samuel Adams. Patrick Henry wrote that "virtue, morality, and religion ... is the armor that renders us invincible[.] ... [I]f we lose these, we are conquered, fallen indeed[.] ... [S]o long as our manners and principles remain sound, there is no danger."

Solzhenitsyn warned that by forgetting God, America and the West faced a "calamity of a despiritualized and irreligious humanistic consciousness" that would weaken their foundations and make them vulnerable to moral decay and internal collapse. Only by turning back to God from the self-centered and atheistic humanism where "man is the touchstone [measure] in judging and evaluating everything on earth" would the West have any hope of escaping the destruction toward which it inevitably moves.

Unfortunately, America did not heed Solzhenitsyn's warnings. In the last several decades, America has been rapidly transformed from a God-fearing and worshiping nation into a secularist and atheistic society, where communist and atheistic ideals are glorified and promoted, while Judeo-Christian values and morality are attacked, ridiculed, and increasingly eradicated from the public and social consciousness of our nation. Under the decades-long assault and militant radicalism of many so-called "liberal" and "progressive" elites, God and His moral laws have been progressively erased from our public and educational institutions, to be replaced with all manner of delusion, perversion, corruption, violence, decadence, and insanity.

"Those people who will not be governed by God will be ruled by tyrants," warned William Penn. Throughout history, the most serious threats to man's freedom always arise when men refuse to acknowledge that God is ultimately the source and protector of real and lasting liberty and freedom. When that timeless truth is erased from men's consciousness, when God's wisdom and laws are forgotten, when morality is no longer a virtue to be treasured and emulated, when human life is no longer sacred, and man becomes the only standard of all that is true, then genuine freedom will begin to vanish from any group, institution, community, or society. Carnality, greed, selfishness, and worldly pleasure and power become the main goals of human existence. The moral and ethical clarity, conviction, and courage required to defend freedom and protect genuine liberty ultimately disappear, to be replaced by the most cruel, unethical, tyrannical, and godless ideologies.

It is no coincidence that advocates and followers of Fascism, Nazism, and Communism — all secular, immoral, atheistic, and godless ideologies — enslaved and murdered the greatest number of people in the history of mankind. All produced some of the most cruel, violent, and evil tyrants this world has ever known — despots who persecuted their own citizens, slaughtered the innocent, destroyed their own people, and brought calamities to other nations. All subjugated the liberty and property of men to the absolute power and control of the state. All were enemies of God and blasphemers of His Holy Scriptures. All viciously persecuted the most devout and religious members of their societies, primarily the religious Christians and Jews who righteously and faithfully followed the Lord. This is the lesson the 20th century expended so much blood to teach us. It appears that without a marked change in course, the Western world is going to have to learn it again.

Chris Banescu is an Orthodox Christian attorney, conservative blogger, and university professor. He regularly blogs at www.orthodoxnet.com/blog and www.chrisbanescu.com.

Heretics

"If heretics no longer horrify us today, as they once did our forefathers, is it certain that it is because there is more charity in our hearts? Or would it not too often be, perhaps, without our daring to say so, because the bone of contention, that is to say, the very substance of our faith, no longer interests us? Men of too familiar and too passive a faith, perhaps for us dogmas are no longer the Mystery on which we live, the Mystery which is to be accomplished in us. Consequently then, heresy no longer shocks us; at least, it no longer convulses us like something trying to tear the soul of our souls away from us.... And that is why we have no trouble in being kind to heretics, and no repugnance in rubbing shoulders with them...It is not always charity, alas, which has grown greater, or which has become more enlightened: it is often faith, the taste for the things of eternity, which has grown less..."

- Henri de Lubac, *Further Paradoxes*

Western theology has been jammed within the culture of institutionalized secularism and cannot help those who are seeking the truth. And sometimes I feel that an Orthodox can speak more comfortably with a staunch atheist rather than a staunch believer of the western type.

- Metropolitan Hierotheos of Nafpaktos

Butchery in Philadelphia

Several commentators have decried the lack of media coverage of the trial of abortionist Kermit Gosnell in Philadelphia. Gosnell is charged with the deaths of one pregnant woman and seven children who were born after botched abortions; those children were killed by having their spinal cords severed. Witnesses have testified that many more babies were also killed that way.

The reason for the media silence is obvious. Shining a spotlight on Gosnell's butcheries might cause people to raise questions about abortion, something the media has long treated as a sacred right. As pro-lifers have argued, there is no logical difference between killing a child late in pregnancy and killing a child shortly after it emerges from the womb. Gosnell's grisly deeds drive that point home. Indeed, infanticide enjoys considerable support in the same elite circles that cherish abortion.

When the Reagan Administration sought to protect handicapped infants from being left to die in hospitals, the New York Times was outraged. Barack Obama, back when he was an Illinois state senator, opposed legislation to give legal protection to children born following a failed abortion. And just recently a Planned Parenthood representative, asked in the Florida legislature what should happen to a baby born after a failed abortion, replied that the doctor and the mother should be the ones who decide what happens to the baby they had tried to kill.

The blunt truth is that what went on in Gosnell's abortion mill differs only in degree, not in kind, from what goes on in all the "clinics" operated by people who enjoy the unqualified support of all the purveyors of respectable opinion in this country... What happened in Philadelphia is the inevitable result of viewing abortion as an inalienable right.

– Tom Piatek, Chronicles

Michael Vick's crimes (against dogs) received a lot more media coverage than Kermit Gosnell's crimes have. And the media didn't wait respectfully until Vick was convicted before leading the charge. It's a sad fact in America: Dead abused dogs sell a lot more newspapers than dead abused human babies.

- Richard Parker

Gay marriage is an utter novelty, with no historical precedent. Gay marriage seeks to enshrine homosexual acts, but those acts have always been condemned as immoral by Christianity, a condemnation echoed by most other religions and reflected in American law until only recently. Gay marriage also completely severs marriage from procreation, even though marriage and the families it naturally creates have been the means by which human culture is formed and transmitted. Gay marriage is not only antithetical to Christianity. It is antithetical to the natural law, to tradition, even to Darwin. Those arguing for it should at least have the decency to drop the pretense that they are conservatives.

- Tom Piatek, Chronicles

Much of modern sexual morality can be explained as the separation of sex from procreation. The primary means are contraception, abortion, and homosexuality. Whether advocates fully understand this, they feel it. Homosexuality--which is the real problem and not the disorder of homosexuality--is one phase of sexual liberation, and that is why it is promoted.

- Thomas Fleming

...The simple fact that it's impossible to discuss "same-sex marriage" without using the prefix is evidence enough that it is something other than a marriage.

- Internet comment

The immense power of the sodomy lobby is now on full display. Just look at the famous people jumping in with praise, eager to burnish their credentials as enlightened people on the right side of history.

- Harry Colin

Pearls of the Holy Fathers (10.3)

It is better to eat meat and drink wine and not to eat the flesh of one's brethren through slander.
Abba Hyperechius

'Wine makes glad the heart of man' (Ps. 104:15). But you who have professed sorrow and grief should turn away from such gladness and rejoice in spiritual gifts. If you rejoice in wine, you will live with shameful thoughts and distress will overwhelm you. St. Theodore of Edessa

Even a pious person is not immune to spiritual sickness if he does not have a wise guide — either a living person or a spiritual writer. This sickness is called *prelest*, or spiritual delusion, imagining oneself to be near to God and to the realm of the divine and supernatural. Even zealous ascetics in monasteries are sometimes subject to this delusion, but of course, laymen who are zealous in external struggles (podvigi) undergo it much more frequently. Surpassing their acquaintances in struggles of prayer and fasting, they imagine that they are seers of divine visions, or at least of dreams inspired by grace. In every event of their lives, they see special intentional directions from God or their guardian angel. And then they start imagining that they are God's elect, and often try to foretell the future. The Holy Fathers armed themselves against nothing so fiercely as against this sickness — *prelest*.
Metropolitan Anthony Khrapovitsky

Go and have pity on all, for through pity, one finds freedom of speech before God.
Abba Pambo

You have a book? Then read it, reflect on what it says, and apply the words to yourself. To apply the content to oneself is the purpose and fruit of reading. If you read without applying what is read to yourself, nothing good will come of it, and even harm may result.
St. Theophan the Recluse

Concern for one's soul means hardship and humility, for through these God forgives us all our sins.
St. Thalassius of Libya

Punishments are always harsh; but when accepted with humility, they bring us nearer God.
St. Macarius of Optina

As it is written, he who says that he believes in Christ ought also himself to walk even as Christ walked — that is, be both poor and humble and ever preaching truth under the persecution of mankind.
St. Columba of Ireland

Do not become despondent over your infirmities, and do not consider them your enemies. Quite the contrary: although ugly, they are our spiritual friends, our tax-collectors.

New Hieromartyr Archbishop Barlaam