

Fire & Light

St. Symeon Orthodox Church

3101 Clairmont Ave. Birmingham, AL 35205

Church Tel. 930-9681 / 854-4235

Visit stsymeon.com &
birminghamorthodox.com

✠ May 20, 2012 ✠

The Sixth Sunday of Pascha

The Blind Man

Martyr Thalelaeus of Cilicia (284) St. Thalassios of Libya 668)

St. Alexis, Metropolitan of Moscow (Relics – 1378)



Christ is Risen! Indeed He is Risen!

⇒ Many Years! *Newly-Illumined Child Mary!* * Wednesday is the Leavetaking of Pascha

✠ Wed. May 23, 6:30pm Great Vespers – Feast of the Ascension

✠ Thurs. May 24 10:00am Divine Liturgy – Feast of the Ascension

⇒ Baptisms Saturdays, May 26 at 3:00pm - The Batton's : Aimee (Mary), James, Tristan (Michael) , Baby Mary& Ailene Keeton

⇒ PEPPER PLACE BOOTH – Saturday, May 26 7:00am – 12Noon

⇒ Yard Sale – Friday and Saturday ~ June 8 & 9

Start bringing in items from next Sunday. Jackie Eastman & Elaine Michaels are in charge.

A Love without Demand

✠ Only the experience of love, a love without demand, can awaken repentance in us. Repentance, in the face of Christ, is our love for Him. And the more strongly our love for Him takes hold of us, the more also grows the repentance. And, the two as one, are our confession that he shall have the whole of our life, good and bad, all.

--Blessed Mother Maria of Paris

The Only Difference

✠ That which is required of monks and nuns is also required of lay people. Even the Holy Fathers say that the only difference between monastics and lay people is that lay people are married. It is easier for monastics, for they do not bear the burdens of married life; they do not have to strive to raise children to be good Christians and lead them onto the right path. A monk strives for himself only...But a layperson can achieve a much higher level of spirituality in meekness and humility than one who has lived as a monk in celibacy all his life, yet has not striven to achieve perfection. He who does not pray has no use for a holy place or holy things.

~ Elder Thaddeus of Serbia (+2003)

We too must not grumble...

✠ Jesus Christ voluntarily suffered and died for us. Therefore we too must not grumble when some unpleasantness befalls us but be ready to make sacrifices with humility and devotion to God. Jesus Christ not only forgave His enemies their ingratitude and animosity but wished them well. So we also must forgive our enemies, repaying them with good for their evil while blessing those who revile us. ~ St. Innocent of Alaska, *The Indication of the Way into the Kingdom of Heaven*

FROM THE FATHERS - On Lying

"FORASMUCH as all sins arise through a love of pleasure or avarice or vainglory, we can say that lying has its roots in these three vices: a man has to avoid blame and humiliation, to fulfill his own desires, or to gain something; and he never stops turning this way and that, using every trick of speech until he accomplishes his purpose."

St. Dorotheos of Gaza (6th C)

"LET NO ONE who thinks rightly suppose that the sin of lying is a small matter, for the All-Holy Spirit pronounced the most awful sentence of all against it, above all sins. If Thou wilt destroy all that speak a lie (Ps. 5:4), as David says to God, what will they suffer who stitch an oath to a lie?"

St. John of the Ladder (7th C)

"WFIENEVER the evil one speaks falsehood, he speaks from what is his own; when men use falsehood, they use what belongs to another. The devil is the originator of falsehood, and himself the chief liar."

Blessed Theophylact of Ochrid (1105)

"NEVER LIE, but always tell the truth, for all falsehood and deceit are the most harmful of all vices, the customary work only of the devil."

St. Tikhon of Zadonsk (+ 1783)

The False Thought

✕ The means whereby the fallen angel brought ruin upon the human race was falsehood (Gen. 3:13). For this reason did the Lord call the devil "a liar, and the father of lies.., a murderer from the beginning" (John 8:44). We see that the Lord closely associated the notion of falsehood with the notion of murder; for the latter is the inevitable consequence of the former. The words "from the beginning" indicate that from the very start the devil has used falsehood as a weapon in murdering men, for the ruination of men. The beginning of evil is in the false thought....

The source of self-delusion and demonic deception is the false thought. By means of falsehood, the devil infected mankind at its very root, our first parents, with eternal death. For our first parents were deceived, i.e., they acknowledged falsehood as the truth, and having accepted falsehood in the guise of truth, they wounded themselves incurably with mortal sin, as is attested by our ancestor Eve, when she said: "The serpent deceived me, and I ate" (Gen. 3:13). Thenceforth, our nature, infected with the poison of evil, has, voluntarily or involuntarily, inclined toward evil which, to our perverted will, distorted reason, and debauched heart, presents itself as good. I say voluntarily because there still remains within us a remnant of the freedom to choose between good and evil.

St. Ignatius Brianchaninov

REFLECTION - Why do some people fall away?

Why do some people, well educated and baptized as Christians, fall away from Christianity and give themselves over to philosophy and to learned theories, pretending these to be something more truthful than Christianity? They do so for two principal reasons: either out of a totally superficial understanding of Christianity or because of sin. A superficial understanding of Christ rejects Him and flees from Christ as does a criminal from a judge.

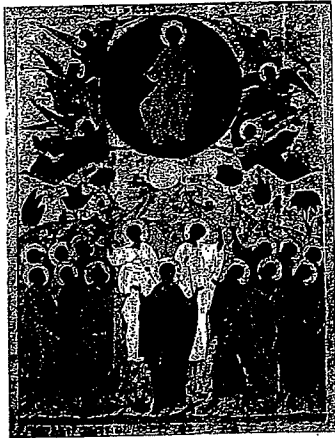
Superficial and sinful Christians were as often enraged and infuriated with Christianity as were the pagans. To the superficial and culpable, it was more comfortable for them to bathe in the shallow swamp of human thoughts than in the perilous depth of Christ.

For those who sincerely follow Christ, He constantly calls them to a greater and greater depth; as He once said to the Apostle Peter, "Put out into deep water" (St. Luke 5:4). St. Mark the Ascetic writes that the law of God is understood in accordance with the fulfillment of the commandments of God: "Ignorance compels a person to speak in opposition to that which is beneficial and insolence multiplies vice."

- St. Nikolai of Serbia

THE ASCENSION OF OUR LORD

By Fr. Victor Potapov, St. John the Baptist Russian Orthodox Cathedral, Washington, DC.



Throughout the 40 days following the Feast of the Resurrection of Christ, Paschal chants sound within our churches and in the hearts of the faithful. The Risen Christ spent that period of time on earth, demonstrating to His disciples the reality of His Resurrection. But lo, that 40-day period draws to a close, and, the "leave-taking," as it were, of

the Feast of Pascha approaches.

In the vocabulary of the Church, the day of leave-taking is known as the *Apodosis of Pascha*. The service for the *Apodosis of Pascha* is celebrated in the brilliant white of Paschal vestments, illuminated by the light of the Paschal sun, with that same fullness of joy as on the first day of Pascha. And the Feast of the Ascension approaches; that day enters our lives as a spiritual reality: the day on which the Apostles and the Mother of God gathered around the Risen Savior for the last time, on the Mount of Olives; the day on which, while blessing them, He began his departure from the earth, and as St. Luke the Apostle tells us in the Acts of the Apostles, *and a cloud received Him out of their sight*.

Ordinary human consciousness, drawing only on the experience of earthly existence and its physical laws, can no more comprehend Christ's Ascension than it could His Incarnation or His Glorious Resurrection from the dead. Even the disciples who saw the empty Tomb, who saw the Risen Christ, who witnessed His Ascension, had mixed feelings about everything they had seen. They vacillated between exaltation over the miracles they had witnessed and misunderstanding and doubt. Toward the end of the Gospel according to Matthew, we read that the 11 Disciples saw the Risen One in Galilee, *and when they saw Him, they worshipped Him: but some doubted*. The laconic words of the Gospel say nothing about the nature of their doubts. But the Apostles' doubt makes their state close to that feeling familiar to anyone striving to find a conscious and faith grounded in understanding.

The true, religious order, beyond wisdom, reveals itself to us in response to our effort to touch it, but only with the assistance of the grace of God, which heals the infirmities and fills what is growing scant. Only with the miracle of Pentecost, the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles that took place ten days after the Savior's Ascension, were the Apostles

completely freed from their doubts. We see them as fearless and untiring witnesses to, and preachers of, the Word, fearless even in the face of persecution and martyrdom. From a human perspective, they could have been expected to mourn upon their being parted from the Lord. Yet, in the Gospels it says that they *returned to Jerusalem with joy*.

Why did Christ, the Miracle Worker Who had conquered death, not remain on earth to lead and rule over His people? The reply is found in the Gospel according to John, which records for us Christ's talk with His disciples before His Passion, and His High-priestly prayer to His Father. In speaking to his disciples about his coming departure from them, he had in mind not only His Passion and death on the Cross, but His Ascension to Heaven that was to follow.

As long as Christ was still on earth, the work of the salvation of man and all creation had not been accomplished. For Christ came so that those who are on earth might be united to the heavens and that end of that *podvig* (spiritual struggle, Ed.), which is for us unto salvation, is His Ascension. In it our human existence, having gone through the crucible of suffering, and shown that it is more powerful than death, is brought into the fullness of divine life; in His Ascension, Christ did not become dis-Embodied, dis-Incarnate. He remains forever, perfect God and perfect Man. By His earthly path in obedience to that Truth He had revealed to us, we can unite our life with His perfect and eternal existence, and thereby enter into the Kingdom of Glory which He revealed to us.

In His Ascension, Christ left the world different from what it was when the miracle of His entry into the world, His birth of the Most-pure Virgin Mary, took place. Most of the human race then remained in darkness, and only individual select prophets lived in hope and anticipation of the coming of the Savior and Messiah into the world. Now it was a different world, and a new people of God. That earth had witnessed the miracle of the birth in Bethlehem, had seen Christ's Transfiguration, and had been illumined by the light of His Resurrection from the dead. It was for that reason that Christ ascended, blessing that earth which He was leaving for a time, but from which He was henceforth to be eternally inseparable. Parting from Christ at His Ascension is at the same time a joyous anticipation of His victorious Second Coming!



Everything is beautiful in a person when he turns toward God, and everything is ugly when it is turned away from God.

Fr. Pavel Florensky (†1937)

In Defense of the Russian Orthodox Church, in the time of Communism: Hieromartyr Hermogenes, Bishop of Tobolsk (+ 1918)

In January, 1918, the Bolsheviks passed a decree on the separation of Church and State which placed believers outside the law, and which gave excuse for all kinds of excesses against the Church and Christians. Patriarch Tikhon blessed the undertaking of cross processions throughout Russia, and Vladyka Hermogenes blessed one in Tobolsk for Palm Sunday, April 15/28 and composed a leaflet to be distributed in his diocese (excerpt):

"The anti-Christian decree declares that 'religion is a private matter' - the personal matter of each separate person, but not of society or the State. In these words is contained the greatest untruth and the greatest harm for every religion in general, and especially for the universal religion of Christianity and for the Universal Church of Christ. In actual fact, the Christian faith is a public, conciliar, universal faith.

"The Christian cannot be saved on his own, in separation from others. 'Where two or three are gathered together in My name,' said Christ, 'there am I in the midst of them.' The Christian is saved in the Church - in the society of believers: it is to this society of the Church that the grace of the Holy Spirit is given, which acts and is bestowed upon believing people only in the Church, for the sake of the common Church faith and love, for the sake of the common good.

"The society of the Church is like the body of a man: in the body all the members are linked together, they live and act together. If the link between the separate members is broken, the body is destroyed and perishes. A man perishes in exactly the same way if he departs from the society of the Church, if he does not want to be saved together with the others, if he wishes to be an autonomous person, not subject to the spirit and rules of the lawful Church union of all the believers.

"Christians cannot be saved without common prayer, without the carrying out of public services, without the participation of the whole people in the sacraments, without doing good works with the participation of all: pan-ecclesiastical charity, education, and care for each other, etc.

"The decree declares religion to be a private matter, because its composers do not want to recognize the Orthodox Church as a Divine institution; they are striving to disunite and disperse the Christians; they even want to place all of them under suspicion and subject them to house arrest, forbidding them to go to the churches for common Church prayers; they want to kill faith in their hearts and make them atheists!

"Knowing that the Orthodox Church cannot teach and save believers without churches, and that the faith of the Russian people is closely bound up with the veneration of the holy things of the Church, the decree removes from the Orthodox Church the right to acquire property and dispose of it, and thereby deprives the Church of the possibility of building and maintaining churches, and keeping them in a beautiful condition. If the decree is carried out, the Russian land will soon be deprived of the churches by which she was formerly adorned and glorified amidst the other peoples: her churches will be turned by the hands of the atheists into places of entertainment or will come into a state of complete poverty and dilapidation: in their place, according to the word of the Scripture, will be 'the abomination of desolation'! Did our forefathers build the holy churches with great labor and at great expense so that we, their unworthy descendants, should turn them from the beautiful habitation of God into a den of thieves, and so that instead of the Divine services they should arrange various spectacles and games in them to the shame and corruption of the Russian people, so that Russia should be mocked and laughed at in the eyes of all the people of the world?!" (his words were sadly fulfilled)

A Society that Persecutes Christ is Heading for Terrible Trouble

Politicians in the West - and atheists - ignore at their peril the benefits and power of organized religion.

Ever since, in 312, the Emperor Constantine saw a cross in the sky and heard a mysterious voice say, 'In this sign, conquer,' all prudent leaders have needed the mandate of heaven.

By Charles Moore, London Telegraph, April 6, 2012

This week before Easter, I chanced upon the following two quotations. The first says: "Not for 2,000 years has it been possible for society to exclude or eliminate Christ from its social or political life without a terrible social or political consequence." The second says: "Religion taught by a prophet or by a preacher of the truth is the only foundation on which to build a great and powerful empire."

The first is by Margaret Thatcher, opening her foreword to a book called Christianity and Conservatism, which appeared in 1990. The second appears in Tom Holland's outstanding new book *In the Shadow of the Sword* (Little, Brown), which traces the rise of Islam from the ruins of the Roman and Persian empires. It comes from Ibn Khaldun, the great Muslim historian and political counsellor of the 14th century.

The grocer's daughter from Grantham and the sage from Tunis seem, despite their differences of faith and time, to be saying something comparable. I found myself asking a simple question about both statements: are they, factually, right?

Note that neither is insisting – though they probably believe that it is – that what the religious leader preaches is necessarily true. Note, too, that neither is saying that a religion, let alone a religious organization such as a church, should hold political power. But what they are saying is something like the message of the parable of the house built on rock and the house built on sand. They have seen a good bit

of how the world works: they recommend building on rock.

Both remarks would probably not be made by secular public figures in the West today. Mrs Thatcher's words were written only 22 years ago, when she was still prime minister, but her successors – though all four of them have been highly favourable to Christianity – would shy away from the toughness of her claim. They prefer to confine themselves to saying nice things about Jesus (He had "incomparable compassion, generosity, grace, humility and love", said David Cameron this week), rather than to suggest that anything bad might happen if His teaching is ignored. As for old Mr Khaldun, well, we're not supposed to be in favour of great and powerful empires anyway, so let's not go there.

A view has now grown up in the West that religion in the public sphere is either irrelevant or positively harmful. Its good bits, such as loving your neighbour, say people like Richard Dawkins, have nothing intrinsically to do with religion. Its bad bits very much do, and they must be stamped out, or at least relegated to a completely private sphere in which people can mutter their weird incantations only behind closed doors.

It is believed that universal doctrines of human rights, enforced by the United Nations and by international courts, can settle all the moral stuff necessary to the running of society. All the rest is seen as superstition and bigotry. Despite a bit of bleating from Catholics, God was left out of the Constitution of the European Union. He had a lucky escape, one might think, but nevertheless it is significant that those planning Utopia for our continent felt they could dispense with Him.

At least two things are missed in this God-is-dead political order. One is that it ignores the basis of so many of the ideas it advocates. These ideas are not the result of intellectual virgin births in modern times. They have parentage. They could not have been conceived without Christian thought about the intrinsic dignity of each human person.

One of the main reasons that slavery was abolished in the Christian world (though it took a shamefully long time to happen) is that St Paul taught that no slavery could be approved by the faith because "we are all one in Christ Jesus". Unfortunately, it is not naturally obvious to humanity that slavery is wrong. People like enslaving one another. The wrongness has to be re-taught in each generation. Post-God, it is not clear on what basis to teach it.

The secularists also do not stop to contemplate Mrs Thatcher's warning about what happens when people cut Jesus out of the life of society. She was thinking, I suspect, not so much of nations where other faiths predominate, but of that area which people used to call Christendom, now loosely known as "the West".

The Nazis repudiated Christianity. The French and Russian revolutions did so too, and denied God also. All three persecuted believers. Some of the revolutionaries had been right about the abuses of power by the Church, but all were proved wrong about what human beings do when a political and social order underpinned by Christianity is destroyed. It was indeed, to use Mrs Thatcher's word, "terrible": it produced the rule of terror.

Some might object that the United States of America is also a God-free political order, and it maintains freedom perfectly well. But it is not. The constitution insists that there shall be no "establishment of religion" ie no state-protected church, but that is not at all the same as rejecting Christianity. Indeed, it gives permission for Christianity to flourish in a modern form. "In God We Trust", it says on dollar bills, wisely implying that society must depend on a higher power even than the Fed.

Seen from a Christian perspective, this strong relationship between faith and political authority is by no means unambiguously good. "My kingdom is not of this world," said Jesus at his trial, and appalling things have happened when this teaching has been forgotten.

But my point is the factual one: is it true that Christ cannot successfully be taken out of the life of society? Yes. And was Ibn Khaldun right that no nation can prosper and be powerful without religion taught by a great preacher? Certainly in the era of monotheism, he would seem to be more right than wrong. Ever since, in 312, the Emperor Constantine saw a cross in the sky and heard a mysterious voice say, "In this sign, conquer", all prudent leaders have needed the mandate of heaven.

Secularists in this country should recognise how lucky they are. They live in a nation which, until recently at least, has treated the institutions of Christianity kindly – on the condition, which the Church of England has faithfully fulfilled, that they do not throw their weight around. The Queen hands out Maundy money, for instance, providing a touching reminder that our society defers to Jesus's commandment to love one another. But the Church has little temporal power.

This, from a skeptic's point of view, is about as good as it is likely to get. If you start extirpating Christianity, it will start fighting back. And even if – highly unlikely – you beat it down, behind it will come the more implacable, much more shamelessly political adherents of Islam.

Presumably, secularists and atheists do not read the Bible as much as Christians do, so I draw their attention, this Easter, to the behaviour of Pontius Pilate, as recorded in John's Gospel. He had no belief in Jesus, perhaps no faith at all, but he was troubled at having to let him be crucified. He wrote on the cross that Jesus was "the King of the Jews". The chief priests told him that he should have written only that Jesus claimed to be the King of the Jews. Pilate refused, and stuck by what he wrote. Perhaps he meant that, whether we like it or not, the power of religion is primary in the life of society, and we must accept this. Perhaps he was wise.

THE SECOND COMING AND THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE RESURRECTED BODIES

From the book "Saint Symeon, the New Theologian" by Niketas Stethatos.

One day, while he (Saint Symeon) was saying his prayers with a pure heart and conversing with God, he noticed that the air began to illuminate his mind; although he remained in his cell, he began to feel as though he was somehow transported within an open space. It was dark outside, the night was already at hand, when a radiance suddenly began to glow from up high, just like the morning light at dawn. What a truly scary vision befell the poor man! And his living quarters—along with everything in them—vanished completely from sight; making him believe that he was not inside his cell.

He was absolutely overwhelmed by a divine ecstasy, and was fully aware of that light with his mind, as it approached him. The light grew steadily stronger, and made the air seem even brighter than before, and he felt that his entire self—along with his body—had now gone beyond all worldly things.

But, because that light continued to shine more and more, making it seem like a sun shining at mid-day, he felt as though he were actually standing inside that light, and that his entire being, together with his body, was filled with joy and tears, that were generated by the sweetness of that light's presence. He also observed that the same light, in some wondrous kind of way, came in contact with his body, and gradually permeated its members. The surprise brought about by this vision drew him away from the previous state of theory and left him feeling only this exquisite sensation that was taking place inside him. He watched as that light slowly penetrated his entire body, his heart and his inner most depths, making his whole existence like a fire and light.

And just as with his living quarters, so did he now lose every sense of form, of place, of weight and of bodily shape, and his tears ceased to fall. Then he heard a voice from within the light, saying to him: *It has been decided, that in this same manner shall the Saints be transformed, who will be living and will still be here, during the hour of the final trumpet, and thus transformed, they will be taken up to the heavens, just as the Apostle Paul says.*

After remaining in this state for many hours, the blessed Symeon in his secret and incessant praise to the Lord, and fully comprehending the glory that had enfolded him, as well as the eternal bliss that was to be bestowed on the Saints, began to wonder and ask himself: "Will I ever return to the previous condition of my body, or shall I live like this continuously?" No sooner had he made this thought, than he immediately began to feel that he was moving

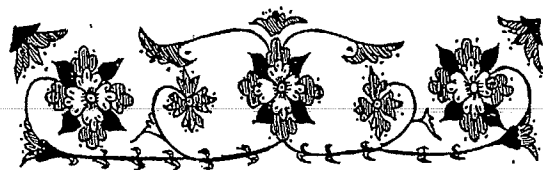
about with his body like a shadow or a spirit. He realized that he had become (as we said, with his body as well) a light without a form; something entirely incorporeal. He continued to feel that he possessed a body, yet without its material dimensions, and more like a spiritual one. In other words, he felt as though he lacked all weight or mass whatsoever, and was amazed, how he could have a body and yet seem bodiless.

And the light that spoke inside him, said to him once again: *Thus will all the Saints be enrobed without the flesh after the resurrection, in the future age, with spiritual bodies that are either lighter and finer and more ethereal, or, denser and heavier and more earthen, which will be the determining factor for each one with regard to their stance, their order and their closeness to God.*

After hearing these things, and having seen the inexpressible divine light, the God-sighting and God-possessed Symeon thanked God, Who glorified our species and made it to partake of divinity and His kingdom, and returned once again to his former state, and found himself again inside his cell, in his previous, human condition. However, he reassured with oaths all those whom he trusted to reveal his secrets, that "for many days after, I could still feel that lightness of body, without feeling any exertion, or hunger, or thirst."

Given that he partook of these things in the Spirit and was filled with the divine charismas of the Spirit (and of course having fully cleared his mind of all impurities), he was given to see such visions and breathtaking revelations by the Lord, as had the Prophets of old.

Thus, with his apostolic mindset (because his existence was guided and moved by the divine Spirit) he was also given the orator's charisma, hence whenever words came forth from his mouth—albeit illiterate—he also theologized. With his divinely inspired writings, he teaches the faithful the precision of the pious lifestyle. Having reached spiritual heights such as these, he began to compose ascetic essays, set out in chapters according to the various virtues and the vices that contravened them, by drawing from his own personal ascetic life and the divine knowledge that was bestowed on him, and describing in detail the monastic life for those who practice it, thus becoming to the Israelite nation of monkhood a river of God, full of spiritual waters.



Being slain for the sake of one's brethren is the best possible weapon for delivering them from servitude to the traducer, the devil, and preparing their souls to accept God, Who desires the salvation of all.

Righteous Elder Sophrony of Essex (+1993)

CHRIST IS RISEN!

Paschal Epistle of St. John Maximovitch, 1940, translated by Nun Cornelia (Rees).

Pascha, 1940, Shanghai: A large Russian diaspora, forced to leave behind their homeland; many had lost their dear ones, and everything they owned, and now lived in want, in a foreign land. But God gave them a saintly bishop to comfort them, and keep them in remembrance of the grace and strength of Holy Orthodoxy.

A member of St. John's Shanghai flock, Nicholas Feodorovich Tsepitov, of Revda, Russia, preserved this Paschal Epistle all his life, even after his return to the Soviet Union in 1947. It gave him comfort there also, where more trials awaited him. He gave this epistle for publication to the Fund for the Canonization of St. John Maximovitch in Russia, and it is presented here, in English translation, as a comfort to all.

† † †

Let us arise in the deep dawn,

And instead of myrrh offer a hymn to the Lord.

We forestall the rising of the sun, and hasten in the depth of night to meet the Sun of Righteousness.

The present night is not an ordinary night! Brighter than day, it fills our souls with light! The rays of the Sun of the world illumine us and the whole universe, enlightening all who come to His light. The warmth poured out through His rays penetrates all our members, filling our souls with deep peace, even healing our bodily illnesses. This warmth melts away our sorrows, and our passions are burned away as by fire.

Enmity and hatred disappear from us, we forget our bitterness, and we do not feel our impoverishment. The whole world becomes different in this holy and only night!

All nature is changed, and everything is filled with warmth and light. Just as birds of prey hide at the rising of the sun, and wild beasts disappear into their dens, so does evil flee from every heart illumined today by the Light which radiates from the tomb.

Like the morning dew, now are our tears dried away! As blossoms unfold at the onset of day, enlivened by the sun's rays, so do virtues return to us as the Sun rises upon us this morning.

Let us strive to be wholly illumined by this wondrous light! When spring comes, we open all the windows and doors of our homes, that the warmth may enter and dry the dankness within. Now the Divine Light can also enter; but it cannot shine within souls that have closed themselves, and do not want to be illumined by that Light.

Let us open our souls and hearts! Let us hasten with the myrrh-bearers, *let us come bearing our lamps to Christ, Who has come forth from the tomb!* Even if you are burdened by sins, do not turn away; for today even *those in the bonds of hell hasten to the Light with joyful feet.* Even if you are poor

and haven't the means to buy candles and myrrh, do not turn away. Let our hearts and souls burn in place of candles. There is no impoverishment in the world!

In these past days, we were all called to bring our material offerings and bodily ascetic labors as myrrh. Now we all are called to partake of spiritual joy. *This is the day which the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad in it!*

Instead of myrrh and material offerings, *let us bring a hymn to the Lord.* Let us sing the praise of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, God!

Let us open now the doors and windows of our souls and hearts, that they might be warmed by the rays of the Sun of Righteousness!

From the outermost border of heaven is His going forth, and His goal is unto the outermost part of heaven, and there shall no man hide himself from His heat (Pss 18:6). Now all things are filled with light: heaven and earth and the nether regions (Ode 3 of the Paschal Canon). Only we are impenetrable if we do not want Him!

If you do not feel this radiant joy today, seek the reason within yourself only.

It would be insane for a man to claim that the sun does not exist, only because he does not see it from within his tightly closed and shuttered dwelling. Pitiable is the blind man who keeps telling everyone that there is no such thing as light, only because he does not see it! It would look very foolish for a man to insist that spring has not come, only because no warmth has penetrated into his locked cellar!

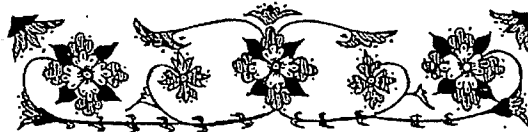
We praise the gentle light, the holy glory of the immortal Heavenly Father—the Resurrected Lord, crying out to Him from the depth of our souls, *meet it is for Thee at all times to be hymned!*

Then the light of Christ that enlightens all will enlighten even us, and we shall behold Christ the Sun of Righteousness, Who shines upon all life!

Christ is Risen!

The Bright Resurrection of Christ,

+ JOHN, Bishop of Shanghai



The perfect man will certainly become the equal of the angels, as the Lord affirms; but He will do so in the resurrection of the dead, and not in this present world. Even then the perfect will not be angels; but *equal to the angels* (Lk 20:36). This means that men cannot forsake their own nature, though like angels they can become changeless through grace and released from all necessity, free in everything they do, possessing ceaseless joy, love of God, and all that *the eye has not seen, and the ear has not heard.* (1 Cor 2:9)

St. Peter of Damaskos