

## *Fire & Light*

### **St. Symeon Orthodox Church**

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✠ **April 27, 2014** ✠

### **St. Thomas Sunday**

St. Simeon, Kinsman of the Lord,

Apostle of the 70 and Bishop of Jerusalem (102 AD)

➤ **Blessing of Graves ~ Forest Crest – Today - 3:00pm**

The wounds which Thou  
didst suffer for our sake,  
Thou didst show to Thy  
disciples, O Christ!  
They have shown  
the world the glad tidings  
of Thy Resurrection!

# *Christ is Risen! Indeed He is Risen!*

## **On the Resurrection of the Lord - St. Leo the Great, Pope of Rome**

"After the Resurrection of the Lord - which was in truth the Resurrection of a real body, for no other person was raised again than He who had been crucified and died - what else was accomplished during the interval of forty days than to make our faith entire and clear of all darkness? For a while He conversed with His disciples, and dwelt with them, and ate with them, and allowed Himself to be handled with careful and inquisitive touch by those who were under the influence of doubt; and this was His purpose in entering in to them when the doors were shut, and by His breath giving them the Holy Spirit and opening the secrets of Holy Scripture after bestowing on them the light of intelligence, and again in His selfsame person showing to them the wound in the side, the prints of the nails and all the fresh tokens of the Passion, saying, 'Behold My hands and feet, that it is I Myself; handle Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones, as you see that I have' (Luke 24:39); that the properties of the divine and the human nature might be acknowledged to remain in Him without causing a division, and that we might in this way know that the Word is not what the flesh is as to confess that the one Son of God is both Word and flesh? 'Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh (that dissolves Jesus) is not of God. And this is the spirit of Antichrist' (1 John 4:2-3).

Now what is to dissolve Jesus, but to separate human nature from Him, and to make void by shameless inventions that mystery by which alone we have been saved?... For if a man does not think the Lord's crucifixion to be unreal... let him acknowledge His flesh also, and not doubt that He who he recognizes as having been capable of suffering is also man... since to deny His true flesh is also to deny His bodily sufferings."

## **REFLECTION – On Good Works**

**"No good works are accomplished by our efforts alone but by the power and will of God.**

**Nevertheless, God demands effort on our part in conforming to His will."** These are the words of Saints Barsanuphius and John (6<sup>th</sup> C Egypt). Few words but much said. We are obliged to labor, to cultivate and to prepare every good thing, and if some good will take root, grow and bring forth fruit, that is up to the power and will of God. **We plow the furrows and God sows, if He wills it. We cleanse the vessels of the Spirit and God pours the Spirit into these vessels, if He wills it.** He can do anything if He wills it. And He will do everything that responds to the highest wisdom and suitability, that is, to His plan of man's salvation. In interpreting the words of our Lord, "So be shrewd as serpents and simple as doves" (St. Matthew 10:16), St. John Chrysostom writes that our Lord gave this commandment to His disciples that "they themselves should cooperate in some way, so that it will not appear that all effort is of Grace alone and for them not to think that they received the wreaths of glory for nothing." **And so, both of them are indispensable for our salvation: our effort and the power of God's Grace.**



## HOMILY

### Christ Will Change Our Lowly Body

St. Anastasius the Sinaite, Patriarch of Antioch (†599 A.D.)

“To this end Christ died and rose to life that He might be Lord both of the dead and of the living.” But “God is not God of the dead, but of the living.” That is why the dead, now under the dominion of One who has risen to life, are no longer dead but alive. Therefore life has dominion over them and, just as “Christ, having been raised from the dead, will never die again,” so too they will live and never fear death again. When they have been thus raised from the dead and freed from decay, they shall never again see death, for they will share in Christ’s Resurrection just as He Himself shared in their death.

This is why Christ descended into the underworld, with its imperishable prison-bars, “to shatter the doors of bronze and break the bars of iron” and, from decay, to raise our life to Himself by giving us freedom in place of servitude.

But if this plan does not yet appear to be perfectly realized — for men still die and bodies still decay in death — this should not occasion any loss of faith. For, in receiving the firstfruits, we have already received the pledge of all the blessings we have mentioned; with them we have reached the heights of Heaven, and we have taken our place beside Him who has raised us up with Himself, as St. Paul says, “In Christ, God has raised us up with Him, and has made us sit with Him in the Heavenly places.”

And the fulfillment will be ours on the day predetermined by the Father, when we shall put off our childish ways and come to “perfect manhood.” For this is the decree of the Father of the ages: the gift, once given, is to be secure and no more to be rejected by a return to childish attitudes.

There is no need to recall that the Lord rose from the dead with a spiritual body, since St. Paul in speaking of our bodies bears witness that they are “sown as animal bodies and raised as spiritual bodies”; that is, they are transformed in accordance with the glorious transfiguration of Christ who goes before us as our Leader.

The Apostle, affirming something he clearly knew, also said that this would happen to all mankind through Christ, “who will change our lowly body to make it like His glorious body.”

If this transformation is a change into a spiritual body and one, furthermore, like the glorious body of Christ, then Christ rose with a spiritual body, a body that “was sown in dishonor,” but the very body that was transformed in glory.

Having brought this body to the Father as the firstfruits of our nature, He will also bring the whole body to fulfillment. For He promised this when He said, “I, when I am lifted up, will draw all men to Myself.”



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# **The Resurrection of Christ** + Bishop Alexander Mileant of Buenos Aires

**T**he Resurrection of Christ is the basis of our faith. It is the first, the most important, the greatest and most inspiring Truth. With the proclamation of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, the Apostles began their sermons. As with the death of Christ on the Cross we have been freed from our sins, so through His Resurrection we have been given eternal life. Therefore the Resurrection of Christ is a source of permanent gladness, continuous joy, which culminates with the Feast of Feasts — Holy Pascha.

Probably, there is not a single person in the whole world who has not heard of the death and the Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. But simultaneously with the historical events of His death and Resurrection being so widely known, their spiritual essence and their inner meaning are a deep mystery of God's wisdom, righteousness, and infinite love. The greatest human minds have hopelessly yielded to this inconceivable mystery of salvation. Despite this, the spiritual fruits of the Savior's death and Resurrection are accessible to our faith and are heartfelt. And through this ability of our soul to accept spiritual light, we are convinced that the incarnate Son of God has voluntarily died on the Cross to free us from our sins and has resurrected to give us eternal life. Our entire religious belief and perception of life are based on this conviction.

Now let us briefly convey the main events related to the Resurrection of our Savior. As the evangelists narrate, the Lord Jesus Christ died on the Cross on a Friday, about three hours past noon, on the eve of Passover. On that particular night Joseph of Arimathea, a very rich and honorable person, with Nicodemus, took Christ's body from the Cross, anointed Him with sweet-smelling ointments, wrapped Him in a shroud, according to Jewish traditions, and buried Christ in a cave carved in rock. That cave was cut by Joseph for his own interment, but he transferred it for Jesus' burial out of his love for Him. The cave was located in Joseph's garden, near Golgotha, where Christ had been crucified. Joseph and Nicodemus were members of the Sanhedrin (the supreme Judaic court) and simultaneously were secret disciples of Christ. They placed a great stone at the entrance of the cave in which Christ was buried. The burial was accomplished hurriedly and not according to all the rules because the Passover celebration was going to begin that evening.

Despite the celebration, on Saturday morning the high priests and scribes came to Pilate and asked his permission to place Roman warriors as a guard at the tomb. They also put a seal on the stone covering the tomb's entrance. All this was done as a precaution, since they remembered a prediction of Christ that He would arise on the third day after His death. In this way the Judaic authorities, without knowing it, prepared strong proofs of Christ's Resurrection, which followed the next day. Where did the soul of our Lord go after He died? According to Church belief, He descended into Hell with His sermon on deliverance and led from there the souls of those who believed in Him (I Peter 3:19).

On the third day after His death, early Sunday morning, while it was still dark and the guards were at their post by the sealed tomb, the Lord Jesus Christ arose from the dead. The mystery of His Resurrection, as the mystery of His incarnation, is inconceivable to us. Through our weak human minds we understand the event in this way: during Resurrection the soul of the Son of God re-entered His Body, which transfigured and became imperishable, enlivened and spiritualized. Our resurrected Christ left the tomb without removing the stone or touching the seal. The guards, having seen nothing, kept watch over the empty tomb. Later an earthquake occurred when an angel of the Lord, coming from Heaven, removed the stone from the tomb's entrance and sat upon it. His appearance resembled lightning, and his clothes were white as snow. The guards, frightened by the angel, ran away.

Neither the myrrh-bearing women nor the disciples of Christ knew what had happened. Since the burial of Jesus Christ was accomplished in a hurry, the myrrh-bearers agreed that on the next day after the Passover, that is on Sunday, they would go to the tomb and finish anointing the Savior's body with sweet-smelling ointments. They did not know, however, about the Roman guards watching the tomb or about the seal. At daybreak, Mary Magdalene, "the other" Mary, Salome, and other honorable women, came to the tomb with sweet-smelling myrrh. On their way they deliberated: "Who

*will roll away the stone from the tomb for us?"* — because this stone was very heavy. Mary Magdalene was the first one to come to the tomb. When she saw that it was empty, she ran back to the disciples Peter and John and told them about the disappearance of the Teacher's body. Later other myrrh-bearers came to the tomb. They saw a youth dressed in white clothing sitting on the right side of the tomb who told them: *"Do not be afraid, for I know you are looking for the crucified Christ. He is risen. Go and tell the disciples that they will see Him in Galilee."* Being elated by the unexpected news, they hurried to the disciples.

Peter and John, having heard from Mary what had happened, ran up to the cave and, having found only a shroud and a cloth that had been placed on the head of Jesus, became distraught and returned home. Later Mary Magdalene went back to the place at which Christ was buried and began to cry. Then she saw in the tomb two angels in white clothing sitting where the body of Christ had lain, one at the head and the other at the feet. The angels asked her: *"Why are you crying?"* Having answered them, Mary turned around and saw Jesus Christ but did not recognize Him. Taking Him as a gardener, she asked: *"Mister, if you have taken Him (Jesus Christ) away, then tell me where you have put Him, and I shall take Him."* Then the Lord said to her: *"Mary!"* Having heard a familiar voice, she turned toward Him and recognized Jesus. Crying out, *"Teacher!"* she fell at His feet. But the Lord did not allow her to touch Him and ordered her to go to the disciples and tell them about the miracle of His Resurrection.

That same morning the guards came to the high priests and told them about the appearance of the angel and about the empty tomb. This news greatly troubled the Judaic authorities, for their fearful expectations had come true. Now they had to make sure that the people would not believe in the Resurrection of Christ. Having gathered a council, they gave the guards a great deal of money and ordered them to spread rumors that the disciples of Christ, at night while the guards were sleeping, had stolen His body. The guards did so, and for a long time the people believed that the body of our Savior was stolen.

On the first day of His Resurrection, the Lord appeared several times to His disciples, who were hiding alone and in small groups in different parts of Jerusalem. According to church tradition, Jesus first appeared to His Mother and comforted Her grief. Then the Lord appeared also to the other women, the myrrh-bearers, saying to them: *"Rejoice!"* They rushed to share their joyful news with the other disciples and the Apostles. This day the Lord appeared to the Apostle Peter and two other disciples, Luke and Cleophas, who were going to Emmaus.

That evening He appeared also to all of the Apostles who gathered in a house in Jerusalem, probably in the Zion's Chamber where the Lord's Supper was accomplished and where, seven weeks after Pascha, the Holy Spirit came down onto the Apostles. Fearing the Jews, they confined themselves behind locked doors to discuss the rumors of His Resurrection.

A week later the Lord reappeared to the Apostles, including Thomas, who was not present at the first appearance of the Savior. To dispel Thomas' doubts concerning His Resurrection, the Lord allowed him to touch His wounds. Now Thomas believed and threw himself down at the Lord's feet crying: *"My Lord and My God!"* As the evangelists narrate, during the forty-day period after His Resurrection, the Lord appeared to the Apostles several more times, talked with them and gave them His last instructions. Not long before His ascension the Lord appeared to more than five hundred believers.

On the fortieth day after His Resurrection, in the presence of the Apostles, the Lord Jesus Christ ascended to Heaven and since then He "sitteth at the right hand of His Father." The Apostles, encouraged by the Savior's Resurrection and His glorious ascension, returned to Jerusalem to await the descent of the Holy Spirit.

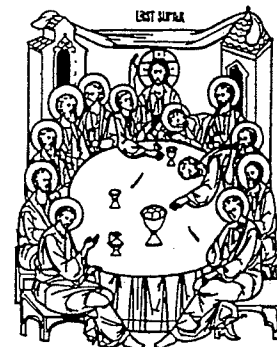
### **Relationship Between Passover and Pascha**

As we know, the time of the Old Testament was a period of preparation for the Jewish nation for the advent of the Messiah. Therefore, some events in the life of the Jewish people, and especially the predictions of the prophets, have a direct relation to the advent of Jesus Christ and the coming of the epoch of the New Testament. The law of the Old Testament, according to the words of the Apostle Paul, was *"a child-bearer to Jesus Christ" and "a shadow of future blessings"* (Gal. 3:24, Heb. 10:1).

The most significant occurrence in the history of the Jewish nation was its liberation from Egyptian slavery in the time of the prophet Moses, some fifteen hundred years before Christ. This liberation became commemorated in the feast of the Jewish Passover with other related events: the angel's slaying of the Egyptian first-born and the "passing over" of the Jewish infants, whose houses had signs made with the blood of a Paschal lamb; (The word "Pascha" means "to pass by." the miracle of the march through the Red Sea and the loss of the Egyptian army pursuing the Hebrews; and then the receiving of the Law (the Ten Commandments) on Mount Sinai by the Jewish people and the establishment of the Covenant with God, after which the Jewish nation was considered God's chosen people. Since then, in celebrating Passover and following their ancestors' traditions, the Hebrews symbolically make an offering of a Paschal lamb.

In the coincidence of the death and the Resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ with the celebration of Passover, one ought to see God's sign of a profound inner relationship between these two events. We now shall examine these two events side by side.

Passover Events	Pascha Events
The immolation of the chaste Paschal lamb and the salvation of the Jewish first-born by its blood.	The immolation on the Cross of the Lamb of God, by whose blood are saved the new first-born (Christians).
The miraculous march of the Hebrews across the Red Sea and their liberation from Egyptian slavery (Ex. 14:22).	The administration of the sacrament of Baptism by water and the freeing from the power of the devil (1 Cor. 10:1-2; see also Romans, chapters 6 and 7).
The legislation on Mount Sinai on the 50th day after the departure from Egypt and the establishment of the union (covenant) with God.	The descent of the Holy Spirit onto the Apostles on the 50th day after the Pascha feast and the institution of the New Testament (Acts 2).
The relishing of manna miraculously sent by God (Ex. 16:14).	The relishing of heavenly bread: the Body and Blood of Jesus at the Liturgy (John, ch. 6).
The 40-year-long wandering through the desert and different trials of the Jews.	The difficulties and trials of life which every Christian has to undergo.
The erection of the copper serpent, which saved bitten Hebrews from venom when they looked at it (Num. 21:9).	Freedom from the bite of the spiritual serpent-devil through the power of the Cross (John 3:14).
The entrance of the Hebrews into the land promised to their fathers.	The promise of a new heaven and a new earth where truth shall dwell (2 Peter 3:13).



We see from this comparison of the two Paschal events how the ancient Passover anticipated the great spiritual changes which have taken place in the lives of men after the Resurrection of our Savior. That is why the Apostles, in celebrating the New Passover, affirmed: "For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us!" (1 Cor. 5:7). ✠ ✠ ✠

## **A Letter of Abbess Arsenia of Russia**

**To Peter Brianchaninov, brother of St. Ignatius Brianchaninov, September 10, 1871**

*from Orthodox Life, Vol. 62, No. 1*

On September 8, all my people gathered at my place and drank tea in the room near the guest room - it is very small - and I sat and lay on the bed. Some were on chairs, others on benches, others on crates, some simply on the floor - everyone was comfortable. We talked.

The general consensus demanded that I indicate **what is needed for salvation, and what the salvation of the soul is**. This request elicited my favorite topic, encouraging me to pass on to them that which alone is necessary, **the one thing needful**, that which alone can grant salvation and life to the spirit, the single goal of all souls and all Angelic spirits - that is, the Lord. In order that all might attain that single goal, however, it is necessary that everything in the soul be united by the One Who is sought; an all-encompassing labor is needed so that the soul works on all things, is involved in all things, and yet denies itself in everything. It needs to seek the Lord in everything, to seek the goodness that leads to Him, and to deny itself and turn away from that evil that causes it to grow cold towards the Lord and return to a state of selfishness.

At this point it was impossible for me not to speak of those snares that the enemy sets up for human souls, leading them astray and away from salvation. He, the former Lucifer, knows what glory and blessedness man is called to, and uses all his strength to interfere with the fulfillment of the will of God in the salvation of man. He mixes his own sweetness into evil in order to ensnare our souls, and we love this sweetness of the enemy and it replaces eternal blessedness. It is best for us to grow to love, I said, the bitterness of spiritual struggle, the malady of rejection, and through such bitterness and malady evade the captivity of the enemy thereby reaching the path that leads to the One goal, to the One Salvation, to which righteous souls and spirits seek in all eternity.

### **The Renunciation of One's Own Mind ... St. Theophan the Recluse**

"Sincere faith is the renunciation of one's own mind. One must strip the mind and present it like a clean board to faith, so that faith will inscribe itself on it as it is, without any admixture of extraneous utterances and propositions. When one's own propositions remain in the mind and then the propositions of faith are written in it, the result is a mixture of propositions: the consciousness will become confused, encountering both the actions of faith and the philosophizing of the mind. Such was Simon Magus, the image of all heretics; such, too, are all those who enter the realm of faith with their philosophizing, both previously and now. They are confused in faith, and nothing but harm comes from them: for themselves, when they remain silent; and for others, when they do not keep their confusion to themselves, and it bursts out in their thirst to be teachers. Hence always emerges a party official more or less transgressing in faith, with the unfortunate certainty of his own infallibility and the disastrous desire to remake everyone according to his own model.

### **Confirmed by the True Cross**

"The true birth of Christ is confirmed by the true Cross; since He is Himself born in our flesh, Who is crucified in our flesh, which, as no sin entered into it, could not have been mortal, unless it had been that of our race. But in order that He might restore life to all, He undertook the cause of all and rendered void the force of the old bond, by paying it for all, because He alone of us all did not owe it: that, as by one man's guilt all had become sinners, so by one man's innocence all might become innocent, righteousness being bestowed on men by Him Who had undertaken man's nature. For in no way is He outside our true bodily nature, of Whom the Evangelist in beginning his story says, 'the book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham' (Mt. 1:1), with which the blessed Apostle Paul's teaching agrees, when he says 'whose are the fathers and of whom is Christ according to the flesh, Who is above all God blessed forever' (Rom. 9:5), and so to Timothy 'remember', he says, 'that Jesus Christ has risen from the dead, of the seed of David' (II Tim. 2:8)."

**St. Leo the Great**

## 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 Reveda, 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.*

**W**e 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 illuminated 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!

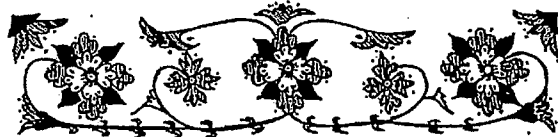
We praise the gentle light, the holy glory of the immortal Heavenly Father—the Resurrected Lord, crying out to Him from the depth of our souls, *meet it is for Thee at all times to be hymned!*

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



**T**he 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.* (I Cor 2:9).

St. Peter of Damaskos

## ***Rejoice! Preserving Paschal Joy***

The first word with which Christ greeted the Myrrhbearing Women on the morning of His Resurrection was "Rejoice!" (Mt. 28:9). Each year as the service of Holy Pascha begins, we are reminded of this commandment to rejoice: When the doors are opened, and we enter the temple shining with gleaming lights... our hearts are filled with an abundant joy, for Christ has risen from the dead. At that moment, a Paschal miracle occurs in our hearts. For we behold Christ's Resurrection; we look at the radiant Christ and approach Him, the Bridegroom, coming from the grave... our soul is smitten solely with the ineffable light of the resurrection" (S. Bulgakov, quoted in A. Schmemmann, *O Death, Where Is Thy Sting*, SVS Press, 2003, pp.58-9).

How easy it is in those luminous days of Bright Week to rejoice! The Church then helps carry us in this joy throughout the Paschal Season, singing "Christ is risen from the dead!" And we have the greeting "Christ is risen! Indeed He is risen!" as a constant reminder of Pascha. When it will be a few months or even a few weeks, later: in what state will our spirit be?

It is a common experience that the spirit of joy in us subsides, and the routines of daily life take over. The world, the flesh and the devil all conspire to steal our joy. To the world the empty tomb is at best nonsense, worthless. Perhaps we ourselves can be lazy or hard-hearted, or just too incredibly busy to pay attention to that flame lit in our hearts on Pascha. And the devil will certainly do all he can to get us to ignore, deny or forget the Truth about life and death that can save our souls. We can learn from this that rejoicing in the gift of the Resurrection is a spiritual *work*.

The late Fr. Schmemmann writes in the book quoted above, that Christianity is "not all about comfort or help, but about joy and victory" (p.51). Christ did not come among us as a man in order to make life on earth easier in the sense of painless—He came to destroy death. The opposite of death is life: "God created life. Always and everywhere God is Himself called the Life and the Giver of life" (p.31). The message of the Resurrection is that eternal life is with us already, here and now. Indeed, people continue dying as they did before, and the world continues to be filled with suffering. But within that world there has been ignited and continues to burn the light of faith...time itself has been filled with light" (p.86).

Integrating the reality of the Resurrection into our daily lives requires an act of will, it requires hard work on our part. "Faith itself is the acceptance not of this or that 'proposition' about Christ, but of *Christ Himself* as the Life and the light of life" (p. 110). We must make daily, conscious efforts to find ways to bring our lives to Christ, to bring Him into every aspect of our world. When we fall in love with someone, we seek to make the interests and experiences of the other our own. It is not different when we seek to know Christ. Fr. Schmemmann says that the starting point in a relationship with Christ is not belief, but love: "If to love someone means that I have my life in him or rather that he has become the 'content' of my life, to love Christ is to know and to possess Him as the Life of my life" (p. 111). To know and to live this is to make the joy of the Resurrection ours, filling each day with a foretaste of the Kingdom of Heaven.

*Life Transfigured, Holy Transfiguration Monastery, Summer 2003*