

RESURRECTION



THE MYRRHBEARERS



Fire & Light

St. Symeon Orthodox Church

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Visit stsymeon.com

✠ April 26, 2015 ✠

The Holy Myrrhbearing Women

Hieromartyr Basil of Amasea (322)

Christ is Risen! Indeed He is Risen!

✠ Grave Blessings Today – Forest Crest Cemetery – 2:00pm

➤ Note: New Inquirer's Class – Tomorrow Night, April 27 – 6:30pm

➤ No Wednesday Service – But there is a Choir rehearsal.

✠ Next Sunday, May 3, 3:00pm Sacrament of Holy Matrimony ✠
Catherine Ritchey and Alexander Fecanin

➤ Father Phillip Reese of Christ the Savior Cathedral in Miami, FL, will concelebrate the wedding. He and Matushka Debra Reese are Alexander's Godparents.



Looking Ahead:

Sunday, May 10 – Mother's Day

Sunday, May 17 - Marriage Blessing – Thomas and Anastasia Taylor

Thurs. May 21 – Feast of the Ascension

Sunday, May 24 – Sacrament of Marriage – Kassiane Kirchner and Joseph Mabry

Sunday, May 31 - Feast of Pentecost

Sunday, June 7 - Sacrament of Marriage – Georgia Carter and Euphrosynus Briggs

➤ Note: Fr. Benedict Crawford will serve Liturgy and the Marriage



“Addressing One Another in Psalms and Hymns” (From *Life Transfigured*~

The Purpose and Joy of Church Music Holy Transfiguration Monastery)

“WHY is it that on a Feastday the whole of nature mysteriously smiles? ... A heavenly gladness fills our hearts, a gladness far beyond that of earth, and the very air in church and in the altar becomes luminous ... It is the breath of Your gracious love... heaven and earth sing Your praise: Alleluia!” (Ode 9, Akathist “Glory to God for All Things”)

How often have we known this heavenly gladness! Excitement builds in our hearts and souls until we burst forth with song. It may happen on a Feastday when we sing “As many as have been baptized into Christ. . . ,” or as we anticipate singing the Nativity Canon for the first time each year, “Christ is Born! Glorify Him!” or on Pascha night, singing the 9th ode of Nocturnes, “Do not lament me, O Mother. . . for I shall arise,” and then finally exclaiming “Christ is risen from the dead!” {Go to p. 3}

This and That

⇒ **If you look at evolution** from other than the perspective of an ideological warrior who believes that he is saving the world from the claws of snake-handling primitive Christians in North Carolina, difficulties arise. Chief among these is the sheer complexity of things. Living organisms are just too complicated to have come about by accident. This, it seems to me, is apparent to, though not provable by, anyone with an open mind.

...If in an unexplored region of the Amazon Basin you find a grass hut next to a dugout canoe, you may not know who made them, but you suppose that someone must have. This is the theory of Intelligent Design. When you find in nature systems of unfathomable complexity that nonetheless work flawlessly, it is not unreasonable to suspect that they were designed, and perhaps sustained, by someone, or something.

- Fred Reed

⇒ **Europe and its nations** were forged in the matrix of ideas, ideals, and beliefs of Christianity, which gives divine sanction to notions like human rights, the sanctity of the individual, political freedom and equality. Today across Europe Christian belief is a shadow of its former self.

...Christianity gave Europe its faith, identity, purpose and will to conquer and convert the world. Christianity created Europe. And the death of Christianity leaves the continent with no unifying principle save a watery commitment to democracy and La Dolce Vita. - Patrick Buchanan

⇒ **The new Sex-Gender Distinction**

A rejection of nature is manifest in the now typical distinction between sex, which is “merely biological,” and gender, defined as a construct either of oppressive social norms or of the free, self-defining subject—one often finds protagonists of this revolution oscillating back and forth between those polar extremes. And this sex-gender distinction, in turn, is premised upon a still more basic dualism, which bifurcates the human being into a mechanical body composed of meaningless material stuff subject to deterministic physical laws and of the free, spontaneous will that indifferently presides over it. This anthropology denies from the outset that nature and the body have any intrinsic form or finality beyond what the will gives itself in its freedom, and thus it fails to integrate human biology and sexual difference into the unity of the person. Indeed, the classical Aristotelian nature and the Christian idea of the human being as body and soul united as an indivisible and integrated whole are excluded from the outset. We cannot avoid the fact that this new philosophy, once it is fully instantiated, will in all likelihood deprive Christians of effective participation in the public square.

- Rod Dreher

⇒ “For in **its enforcement of the sexual revolution**, the state is effectively codifying ontological and anthropological presuppositions. In redefining marriage and the family, the state not only embarks on an unprecedented expansion of its powers into realms heretofore considered prior to or outside its reach, and not only does it usurp functions and prerogatives once performed by intermediary associations within civil society, it also exercises these powers by tacitly redefining what the human being is and committing the nation to a decidedly post-Christian (and ultimately post-human) anthropology and philosophy of nature.”

- Michael Hanby, *First Things*

⇒ Then there's Bryn Mawr College, founded in 1885, a private women's liberal arts college located in Philadelphia's wealthy Main Line suburbs. This year, Bryn Mawr will accept men, but it will remain a women's college. You might say, “Williams, that's impossible!” You'd be wrong. Bryn Mawr College will accept applications from men who identify as women. It will challenge what's become known as gender binarism as it transitions from a single-sex to a “single-gendered” college. Classification of sex into two distinct, opposite and disconnected forms of masculine and feminine is oppressive. I wonder whether Bryn Mawr biology professors will continue to teach the chromosomal distinction that males are 46,XY and females 46,XX. Could there be something in between? There's another issue: What will Bryn Mawr's administrators do when brawny XY people dominate their sports teams? Maybe they will set quotas for XY and XX people.

- Walter Williams

For many of us, much of the festal joy is deeply connected with the hymns for the Feasts. As Fr. Igor Soroka stated at the 50th Anniversary Concert of the Pittsburgh Cathedral Choir, sharing Orthodox music can “bring out the soul of each person.” Church music has many specific functions: it calls us to prayer and invites the Holy Spirit, provides us with the means to praise, bless, glorify, worship and give thanks to God, teaches us the theology of our Faith, and unites us to one another, to the angels, to all creation, and ultimately, to God.

Hymns Invite Prayer

At the beginning of almost every divine service, we invoke the Holy Spirit to be with us: ‘O Heavenly King, the Comforter, the Spirit of Truth, Who art everywhere present and fillest all things, treasury of blessings and Giver of Life, come and abide in us and cleanse us from every impurity, and save our souls, O Good One!’ These words are soon followed by, “Come let us worship and fall down before Christ our King and our God.” We are thus invited to enter into the service of prayer—to begin to worship our God and King, the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit. As we sing, we open the door of our hearts to the Spirit of God. St. Paul writes in his letter to the Ephesians, “Be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with all your heart” (Eph. 5:18-19).

St. Theophan the Recluse asks, “Do these words mean that when you are filled with the Spirit you should then sing with your mouth and your heart? Or that if you wish to be filled with the Holy Spirit, you should first sing?” He answers, “The infusion of the Holy Spirit does not lie within our power. It comes as the Spirit Himself wishes. . . . Desire to be filled with the Spirit, and sing with that aim in mind. Singing will set alight the Spirit, or lead to a state of infusion by the Spirit, or show forth His action” (The Art of Prayer, Igumen Chariton, p.56- 57). God has given us the gift of song in order to be filled with the Spirit: “I shall open my mouth to chant and with the spirit inspire it (limos, Ode 1, Canon of the Akathist Hymn).

Through music, praise, worship and Thanksgiving are offered

Having called the Spirit and begun to pray, we move on to perhaps the most obvious purpose of our church hymns—to praise, bless, worship, glorify, and give thanks to God. Every liturgical service in the Orthodox Church has music of some form. **“Just as there is no liturgical music without words, so too there are during worship no words without music.** Besides the formal hymnology itself, everything else is chanted ‘psalmodically’—all psalms, all readings, all prayers, the Creed, everything. Setting words to song in the Church not only opens our spirit, but allows us to learn the hymns by heart and keep them there—not just memorizing the words but making them a part of us.

Most of our hymns are Psalms from the Old Testament or are based around these psalms. Every Vespers begins with the Evening Psalm, “Bless the Lord, O my soul. . .” (Ps. 103 (4):1), which thanks the Lord for all of creation: “O Lord, how manifold are Thy works, in wisdom hast Thou made them all!” Later in the service we hear, “Misc the Lord all nations, praise Him all people” (Ps. 116(7):1). Our singing invites all to give praise to God thus opening our hearts to the Spirit. During the Matins service, we sing the Hymns of Many Mercies (Ps. 134(5) and 135(6), the Polyeleos: “Praise the name of the Lord; give praise, O servants of the Lord! Alleluia!” and “O give thanks to the Lord, for He is good, for His mercy endures forever. Alleluia!” Matins concludes with the singing of the Great Doxology: “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will to men. We praise Thee, we bless Thee, we worship Thee, we glorify Thee, we give thanks to Thee for Thy great glory!”

Hymns teach theology

Hymns of the Church also teach us theology in the most complete way. Fr. Georges Florovsky (a great 20th century Orthodox theologian in America) once said, "Go and stand next to the chanter's stand for a full year and you will learn the theology of the Church". Not only do they teach us about events in the life of Christ—about the Incarnation of Christ, the Virgin Mary, the Cross, the Resurrection, the Ascension—the hymns enter our hearts and allow the teachings of the Church to become more real and understandable to us. For example, listen to the theology contained in the Hymn of Incarnation from the Divine Liturgy:

Only-Begotten Son and Immortal Word of God, Who for our salvation didst will to be incarnate of the holy Theotokos and ever virgin Mary, Who without change didst become man and was crucified, O Christ our God, trampling down death by death, Who art one of the Holy Trinity, glorified with the Father and the Holy Spirit, save us!

We sing that Christ is the "only begotten Son and immortal Word of God." He existed with the Father before time began. When He became man, He did not cease to be divine. He trampled upon death. He is God, one of the Trinity! There is a lot of theology in this hymn! We can memorize it and be able to tell others what we believe. But even more, we can allow it into our hearts and truly live by it—humbly acknowledging what God has done to save us.

Music unites all of creation

Opening our hearts and learning to sing praises also helps unite us to each other and to all of creation. Singing uplifts our spirits to heaven where we participate with the angels in the Divine Liturgy before the throne of God. At the end of each litany, the priest or deacon chants, "...let us commend ourselves and each other and all our life unto Christ our God," and we respond together as a congregation led by the choir, "To Thee, O Lord!" The ascent to Heaven in the Liturgy is done together as a community, we help each other. We join with the angels, uniting our spirits with the Seraphim singing the Thrice Holy Hymn: "Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal, have mercy on us!"

During the Anaphora, we join the angels, of whom Isaiah says: "I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted, and the train of His robe filled the temple. Above Him were seraphs, each with six wings: ...And they were calling to one another: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of His glory" (Is. 6:1-3).

We also join the Cherubim: "Let us who mystically represent the Cherubim, and who sing the thrice-holy hymn to the Life-creating Trinity, now lay aside all earthly cares, that we may receive the King of All Who comes invisibly upborne by the angelic hosts. Alleluia." As we enter the heavenly worship with the angels, the music of the Church helps us to lay aside our earthly cares and prepare to receive Christ.

Let us Open our Hearts

The next time we enter the Church, let us open our minds and our hearts by opening our ears and attentively listening to the hymns fed to us by the Church. Through them, let us actively come to worship, let us invite the Holy Spirit to abide in us, let us truly glorify and give thanks to Christ our God. Let us open ourselves to love God and be loved by God and thus be united with all creation.

In the wondrous blending of sounds, it is Thy call we hear. In the harmony of many voices, in the sublime beauty of music, in the glory of the works of great composers, Thou dost lead us to the threshold of Paradise to come, and to the choirs of angels.. All true beauty has the power to draw the soul towards Thee and make it sing in ecstasy: Alleluia!"

(Ode 7, Akathist "Glory to God for All Things")

Let me Ponder on the Risen Lord Jesus!

From the Prologue of St. Nikolai of Ochrid

- ✚ In His earthly body before the Resurrection – a body subject to hunger, pain and death.
In His heavenly body after the Resurrection – a body subject to neither hunger, pain, nor death.
- ✚ How He appeared to Mary Magdalene in the garden, and Mary did not know Him at first.
How He quietly greeted Mary, and she recognized Him and rejoiced at Him, and declared her joy to the disciples.
- ✚ How He appeared to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, and how they did not recognize Him.
How their hearts burned within them while He spoke with them, and how they only knew Him in the blessing and breaking of bread.
- ✚ How Simon Peter and the other disciple ran quickly to the tomb to confirm the news of the Lord's Resurrection.
How they went into the tomb one behind the other, and saw the linen clothes and the cloth.
How they both saw and believed, and both witnessed to this belief and Peter died for it.
- ✚ How Christ entered through closed doors among His disciples, and gave them peace.
How there was no material hindrance to His appearing in His glorified body where He wanted.
- ✚ How, for the sake of Thomas, the only one among the Disciples who doubted, He appeared a second time in His glorified body.

How Thomas put his fingers into the wounds on the Lord's pure body, and believed.

- ✚ How He appeared to the Disciples on the shore of the lake, and called to them: 'Children!'
How He again filled their nets with fish, and they knew Him, though none dare ask: 'Who art Thou?'
- ✚ How He provided for the physical feeding of His disciples, breaking and blessing the bread for the two at Emmaus.
How, on the shore of the lake, He asked the disciples: 'What have you to eat?' and, when they told Him that they had nothing, prepared bread and fish and fed them.
- ✚ How He appeared alive after His death to five hundred people at once, according to the testimony of the Apostle Paul (1 Cor. 15:6).
How He appeared to the Apostle James, again according to the testimony of the Apostle Paul (1 Cor. 15:7).
How still more of those who were living in St. Paul's time, outside the circle of the apostles, saw Him.
- ✚ How He remained on earth for forty days after His Resurrection, showing Himself to the faithful and confirming them in the Faith.
How, during these forty days, He showed plainly that He did not rise for His own sake, but for the sake of men.
- ✚ How His Resurrection brought unspeakable joy to those who loved Him.
How His Resurrection brought unspeakable bitterness to those who hated Him.

Let me Ponder...

How His last coming into the world, in power and glory, will call forth different responses from men – either joy or bitterness.

✚ How He is close to His disciples in His glorified body; close to those seeking Him (Mary Magdalene in the garden); close to those who are afraid (the disciples in the locked room); close to those who are hungry (on the shore of the lake).
How He is even now close to each of us who seeks Him, or is fearful or hungry.

✚ How He, appearing to the apostles, appears to each one of us.
How His Resurrection is proof of life immortal, and is the herald of this immortal life for the whole of the human race.
How He, by His Resurrection, justified the faith and hope of men in immortality.

✚ How He, by His Resurrection, destroyed for the faithful the fear of death.
How His Resurrection is the beginning of new days of light in the history of the human race.

How His Resurrection is my peace and my strength, and the resurrection of my soul while I am still in the body.

✚ How His Resurrection drives far from us all confusion, sorrow and distress. How His Resurrection brings serenity, courage and good-will to the soul of man.

✚ How His Resurrection stimulates us and strengthens us for every good work, both physical and spiritual. How His Resurrection illumines every good work of ours with the light of hope in the living God, who numbers our labors, measures them, and keeps them for the Day of Judgement.

✚ How His Resurrection is a great light, driving away the darkness of our doubt, ignorance, and despair concerning life after death. How His Resurrection is a great light, which reveals the path by which we must walk in this life to attain to the life to come.

✚ How He commanded that repentance be preached in His name, and the forgiveness of sins.
How He commanded the disciples to wait upon the Father's promise of the power from on high of the Holy Spirit

GODLY BUMPER STICKERS:

- Be ye fishers of men. You catch them - He'll clean them.
- Coincidence is when God chooses to remain anonymous.
- Don't wait for 6 strong men to take you to church.
- Forbidden fruits create many jams.
- God doesn't call the qualified, He qualifies the called.
- God grades on the Cross, not the curve.
- He who angers you, controls you!
- Most people want to serve God, but only in an advisory capacity.
- Prayer: Don't give God instructions - just report for duty!
- The task ahead of us is never as great as the Power behind us.
- We don't change the message, the message changes us.
- You can tell how big a person is by what it takes to discourage him.

Wisdom of Our Fathers

From St. Porphyrios of Athens and Kavsoalyvia

✠ We should seek that the will of God be done. This is the most beneficial, the safest way for us and for everyone to pray.

Christ will give us all riches. When there is even a little egotism, however, nothing occurs. When God does not give us something which we are persistently asking for, He has His reason. God has His "secrets". If you do not show obedience (to your priest or spiritual father), and you don't have humility, the prayer (i.e. "Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me") does not come, and there is a fear of delusion.

The prayer should not become chore. Pressuring can bring opposition within us, and cause something bad. Many have sickened with the prayer, because they said it with pressure. And also, of course, when you make it a chore. But this isn't healthy.

There is no need to gather specifically to say the prayer. You don't need any effort when you have divine eros. Wherever you are, on a stool, on a chair, in the car, everywhere, on the road, in school, in the office, at work, you can say the prayer, the "Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me", gently, without pressure, without asphyxiation.

Meaning in prayer comes not from length of time, but from the state. You may only pray for five minutes, but they should be offered to God with love and longing. One can pray the whole night, and this five-minute prayer can surpass it. This is a mystery, of course, but this is how it is.

From Elder Ephraim:

✠ Let us love the humble disposition, my child, and if the Lord pities our nakedness and sends us some ability to pray and clothes our soul with some divine garment, we must be cautious lest we soil it out of carelessness: that is, through pride, criticism, negligence, disobedience, etc. But let us make a greater effort to whiten it through good works, especially through humble-mindedness and self-reproach. God is pleased more with these than with great works done with vainglory.

Always have perfect obedience. Obedience is the offspring of humility. Whereas back talk, quarrels, and disobedience are the offspring of pride...and the cause of the soul's defilement.

✠ We, as Orthodox Christians, have been made worthy to know this great mystery of sacred confession. We should thus have very great joy; because whenever we fall down upon a sin, into something evil, we can run immediately to correct it and to preserve the health of our souls. And when death comes, we will go to meet the Lord, cleansed, repentant, and returned as prodigal sons. And our Heavenly Father will accept us and will place us within Paradise, the place of eternal bliss, where there is no end to Divine joy and sees no conclusion to that spiritual bliss, which cannot be compared to anything earthly.

And even the holy Apostle Paul, he that went up to the third heaven and saw the eternal good things, in spite of his apostolic and graceful tongue, he remained unable to express with human words the things of Paradise and the life above! Indeed, such is the inexpressible gift of happiness that is attained through sacred Confession. Therefore, my brethren, with much yearning, love, and awareness we must all run to be cleansed, to be made ready and when death follows, to depart in peace. Amen.

~ Elder Ephraim

✠ Even the devil, having lost the knowledge of God, and so inevitably becoming ignorant in his ingratitude and pride, cannot of himself know what to do. On the contrary, he sees what God does to save us and maliciously learns from this and contrives similar things for our destruction. For he hates God and, being unable to fight Him directly, he fights against us who are in God's image, thinking to avenge himself on God in this way.

~St. Peter of Damascus

St. John Chrysostom (4thC)

We do not offer a different sacrifice like the high priest of old, but we ever offer the same. Or rather, we offer the *anamnesis* (remembrance) of the Sacrifice.

St. Cyril of Alexandria (5thC)

We proclaim the death, in the flesh, of the Only-Begotten Son of God, Jesus Christ, and acknowledge His return to life from the dead and His Ascension into heaven, and as we do this we perform the bloodless sacrifice in the churches, thus we approach the consecrated gifts of the Mystery, and are sanctified by partaking of the holy Flesh and the precious Blood of Christ, the Savior of all.

St. Ephraim the Syrian (6thC)

(The Lord Jesus) called the loaf His living Body and filled it with Himself and with the Spirit... *Take it and eat it in faith, never doubting that it is my Body, and that whoever eats it in faith is eating fire and the Spirit... Eat it, all of you, and eat the Spirit in it, for it is truly my Body.* †

Pascha Old and New

The Days Have Come!

There (in the Old Passover) we have Moses sent by God into Egypt; here we have Christ sent by the Father into the world. There the task is to free the oppressed people from Egypt; here to rescue men tyrannized in the world by sin. There the blood of the lamb wards off the destroyer; here the Blood of the true Lamb, Jesus Christ, puts the demons to flight.

St. Cyril of Jerusalem (5thC)

Let the Jews then eat the azymes (matzo) for seven days, let them strive on during the seven ages of the world. But as for us, Christ our Pascha is sacrificed, and we have received a new paste for his holy mixing.

You will eat in a house; there is one gathering, there is one house, there is one Church, in which the true Body of Christ is consumed.

St. Hyppolytus of Rome (+236)

From the life of Elder Ambrose of Optina – *Farmer's Cheese*

“Three years in a row I greeted Pascha at the Belev Convent dacha, and there was this incident: a poor, old village woman came and asked for some farmer’s cheese for Pascha. The steward was a generous, good nun, but she was too economical and refused the woman. Soon afterwards the sisters went to get some farmer’s cheese for the Pascha cheese and were stunned when they saw that in the large, full vat of farmer’s cheese a rat had rummaged through to the bottom and died right there in the vat.”

“When I saw Batiushka Ambrose I told him about all this and he replied meaningfully: ‘Remember this and know that this will be useful to you and will serve as a lesson when you yourself become an abbess. In a monastery where the steward is generous there is always abundance; and to the contrary, where the steward is stingy, there are always chastisements from God, just as it happened on your dacha with the farmer’s cheese.’”