

From the Paschalia

Our Passover, Christ the Redeemer, is revealed to us today as a noble Passover. This is a new and holy Passover, a mystical Passover, a blameless Passover, a glorious Passover, a Passover for the faithful, a Passover that opens for us the gates of Paradise, a Passover that sanctifies all believers.

Come back from what you have seen, O women heralds of good tidings, and say to Sion: “Accept from us the joyful announcement of the Resurrection of Christ! O Jerusalem, rejoice, exult and leap for joy! For you have seen Christ the King coming out of the tomb as fair as a bridegroom!”

A glorious Passover has shone upon us: a Passover of the Lord, a Passover perfectly honorable. Let us embrace one another with joy! O, what a Passover, delivering from sorrow: for Christ, coming out of the tomb as from a bridal chamber, fills the women with joy by telling them to bring this happy news to the disciples.



THOMAS SUNDAY



Our Lady of Perpetual Help Melkite Catholic Church
256 Hamilton St.
Worcester, MA 01604
Rectory: (508) 752-4174 Hall: (508) 755-2199
Email: olphmelkite@gmail.com
Rev. Bryan McNeil, Pastor
Email: Brymc56@comcast.net Cell: (978) 314-1962
Divine Liturgy: Sunday 10:00 AM
April 19, 2020

After Blessed is the Kingdom...

Christ is Risen... 3X

Antiphon (Feast)

1: May God be propitious to us and bless us; may He make His face to shine upon us and have mercy on us.”

O Son of God, who are risen from the dead, save us who sing to You: Alleluia!

2: May Your name be known upon the earth; among all the nations Your salvation.

O Son of God, who are risen from the dead, save us who sing to You: Alleluia!

3: May the peoples praise You, O God; may all the peoples praise You.

O Son of God, who are risen from the dead, save us who sing to You: Alleluia!

Entrance Hymn

Priest: In the assemblies bless the Lord our God, from the springs of Israel.

People: **O Son of God, who are risen from the dead, save us who sing to You: Alleluia!**

Troparion (Tone 7) [three times]

While the tomb was sealed, You shone forth from it, O Christ our Life; and while the doors remained closed, You stood among Your Disciples, O Resurrection of all; and through them You restored a new spirit in us according to Your great mercy.

Kondakion (Tone 2)

Though You went down in the tomb, O Immortal One, You overthrew the power of Hades and rose victorious, O Christ God. You greeted the ointment bearing women saying, “Rejoice!” You gave peace to Your Apostles, and to those who had fallen, resurrection!

The world sees glory in terms of wealth, power, and ostentatious display. There is none of that in the cross. Christ’s “glory” is found in the depths to which He would go to take on our humanity, embracing even rejection, humiliation and death. This is why St Paul would say, “*For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God... but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God*” (1 Cor 1:18, 23-25).

The second stage in the Gospel exposition of the paschal mystery is the *bestowal of the Holy Spirit*. This was possible only as a consequence of Christ’s sacrifice on the cross, His resurrection and His ascension. We look again to Christ’s words here: “*If I do not go away, the Helper [Paraclete] will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you*” (Jn 16:7). “Going away” here means Christ’s return to the Father upon the completion of His earthly ministry.

The Holy Spirit would remain with the Church forever, according to Christ’s promise: “*I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever — the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him*” (Jn 14:16-17). The human nature which the Son of God assumed was necessarily limited by space and time. His physical presence on earth would be as temporary as is the presence of any one of us. The Holy Spirit, on the other hand did not become man and so His presence is not limited in this way; once given to us, He remains forever.

These two stages are celebrated during the Pentecostarion on the feasts of Pascha, the Ascension and Pentecost. The third step set forth in Jn 7, quoted above, is *that the Spirit flow through the Church* to water the whole creation. It is God’s plan that the “*rivers of living water will flow from within*” the believer. The Holy Spirit is not given in order to remain stagnant in us but to flow out and bring life to the world. As has often been said, the Holy Spirit is more like the Jordan River than the Dead Sea.

That this overflowing of the Spirit has in fact occurred is the reason for the final observance of the Pentecostarion, the Sunday of All Saints. The saints are proof that the Holy Spirit has been bestowed and has transformed people of every generation since Pentecost. They in turn have allowed this living water to touch us as well through their intercessions and through the power manifested in their relics and icons. The Holy Spirit did not take on our flesh; but to see His “face” we only need to look at the saints.

The Holy Spirit is meant to flow through us as well inasmuch as we too have received Him in baptism. We are thus continually called to become who we are, as many Fathers have put it: sharers in God’s grace in whatever measure each person receives. As soon as the festive Pentecostarion season closes, we enter the Fast of the Apostles: returning to the business of Christian living, to taking up our vocation as Spirit-bearers.

52nd National Melkite Convention Re-Scheduled

The 52nd National Melkite Convention hosted by St. John Chrysostom Melkite Catholic Church on July 9 - 12, 2020 has been rescheduled for 2021 due to the coronavirus pandemic. Go to their website, 2020melkite.org for more information.

If you want me to remember someone at the Divine Liturgy, please send me an email at olphmelkite@gmail.com or call the rectory.

Today we pray for the repose of the soul of Naphie Samara, who passed away on April 13. Memory Eternal!

Financial Information

March 2020

Revenue \$ 5,656

Expenses \$11,236

Net \$(5,580)

Year to Date

Revenue \$49,546

Expenses \$55,168

Net \$(5,622)

Please don't forget to support the parish during this pandemic. Our bills have not ceased because of coronavirus. You can mail in your contributions or send them through online banking. I am also looking at ways for you to make online contributions through other means.

Thank you in advance for your generosity!

Weddings — One year notice. Contact Fr. Bryan for Sacramental Preparation.

Baptisms — One month notice. Contact Fr. Bryan for Sacramental Preparation.

Please let Fr. Bryan know about anyone who is sick, in the hospital, or homebound so that he can visit and bring them the Eucharist on a regular basis as soon as the coronavirus has passed.

Christ is Risen! Christos Anesti! Al Maseeh Q'aam!

Thomas Sunday is the seal of the Resurrection. The Apostles, hiding in an upper room with the doors locked, contemplated their future upon the death of Jesus. Suddenly, Jesus is in their midst. The prayers for today say, "Just as You did not break the seals of Your tomb at Your awesome Resurrection, O life-giving Christ, so You entered in to the midst of Your glorious Apostles even though the doors were locked, and You filled them with the Spirit of truth through Your countless mercies."

Thomas was not with the ten Apostles when they saw Jesus. When they told him, "We have seen the Lord," he said, "Unless I see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe."

Eight days later, Jesus appears to the eleven, including Thomas. Jesus invites Thomas to do the things he said he had to in order to believe in the Resurrection. Upon seeing Jesus, Thomas no longer needs to put his finger in the nail holes. Seeing Jesus is enough for him to believe. The line in this Gospel that touches me the most is, "Thomas, because you have seen me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

We are part of those who have not seen Christ yet believe in Him; in His Resurrection. Our faith, the same faith passed down from Pentecost to the present day, is part of what we celebrate today. In a time where there seems to be a great deal of uncertainty, it is our faith that helps us deal with it. Our connection with each other as members of the Body of Christ, is crucial during this time. While we have not physically seen Christ, we do see him in the faces of our brothers and sisters.

Be assured that you are all in my prayers. I miss you all and can't wait for us to be together again!

Christ is Risen! He is truly Risen!

Fr. Bryan

The Joyful Pentecostarion –Fifty Days of Grace

FOR MOST AMERICANS a holiday is a one-day affair – at most, a holiday weekend. In the Church, however, Pascha, the Feast of Feasts, is celebrated for a much longer period. We observe Christ’s resurrection for forty days, concluding it with the Great Feast of His Holy Ascension and climaxed with the Great Feast of Pentecost. Based on the fifty days between Pascha and Pentecost this season – and the book which contains the services celebrated every day – is called the Pentecostarion. *Pentecostos* is the Greek word for fiftieth.

The Paschal Season contains a number of special commemorations including:

Bright Week – For the first week of Pascha, the daily services are almost identical to the services of Pascha itself. One important characteristic of this week’s services is that they include no readings from the Psalter. With Pascha the New Covenant is in force – to emphasize this spiritual reality nothing from the Old Covenant is read this week.

Successive Weeks – While the services resume their regular format there are some reminders of the Resurrection. “Christ is risen” and “Now that we have seen the resurrection of Christ” are sung every day. The Sunday resurrectional services in the eight tones are sung daily as well. On Sundays a liti procession and the singing of the Paschalia and the Paschal Canon form part of our Church’s worship.

- **Mid-Pentecost** – At the mid-point of the season we celebrate the feast of Mid-Pentecost, recalling Christ’s teaching in the temple and His promise of the Holy Spirit. This feast, unique to the Byzantine rite, is so emphasized because it was the patronal feast of the Great Church of Constantinople, Aghia Sophia (Christ, the Holy Wisdom).

“We have come to the middle of those days which began with the saving Resurrection of Christ our God and end with the divine feast of Pentecost! Truly this day shines with the light of both feasts and unites them both. It radiates with the announcement of the Ascension of the Lord.”

Christ the Source of Living Water

The central theme of the Pentecostarion is that, through the Resurrection, the Holy Spirit is bestowed upon the Church to transform the world. This extraordinary gift was expressed by Christ Himself in the image of living water, when He celebrated the Feast of Tabernacles in Jerusalem with His disciples. “*On the last and greatest day of the festival, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, ‘Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them.’ By this He meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were later to receive. Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified*” (Jn 7:37-9).

This passage, read at the Divine Liturgy on Pentecost, sets forth the Paschal Mystery as a three-stage process. The first step is **the glorification of Jesus**, by which the Gospel means His saving death on the cross. The cross was hardly glory in the world’s eyes, but the eyes of faith sees Christ’s humbling Himself to death as His glory, as Christ said before His arrest, “*Now the Son of Man is glorified, and God is glorified in Him*” (Jn 13:31). This is why the inscription on the cross in Byzantine churches is not the one placed there by Pilate (“the king of the Jews”) but rather “the King of Glory.”

Prokimenon

Reader: Great is our Lord, and great is his power, and to his wisdom there is no limit.

People: Great is our Lord, and great is his power, and to his wisdom there is no limit.

Reader: Praise the Lord, for he is good, for his mercy endures forever.

People: Great is our Lord, and great is his power, and to his wisdom there is no limit.

Reader: Great is our Lord, and great is his power,

People: And to his wisdom there is no limit.

Epistle: Acts 5:12-20

Alleluia Verses

Come, let us rejoice in the Lord, let us sing gladly to God our Savior!

Verse: For the Lord is a great God, and a great King above all gods.

Gospel: John 20:19-31

Hirmos:

O shining light, O Mother of God, Honorable without compare, you are higher in dignity than any other creature. We magnify you with hymns.

Kinonikon:

Exalt the Lord, O Jerusalem, praise your God, O Sion, Alleluia.

After Communion:

Christ is risen... (once)

After final blessing (3x)

Priest: Christ is risen!

People: He is truly risen!

Priest: Glory to His Holy Resurrection on the third day!

People: We adore His Holy Resurrection on the third day!