

SOBORNOST

St. Thomas the Apostle Orthodox Church

(301) 638-5035 Church

4419 Leonardtown Road

Waldorf, MD 20601

**Rev. Father Joseph Edgington,
Pastor**

(703) 532-8017

fredgington@gmail.com

www.apostlethomas.org

American Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Diocese

*ECUMENICAL PATRIARCHATE
OF CONSTANTINOPLE*

SERVICES

Today: Divine Liturgy 9:30 AM

Monday: Divine Liturgy 8 AM

Saturday: Vespers 5 PM

Next Sunday: Matins 8:45 AM

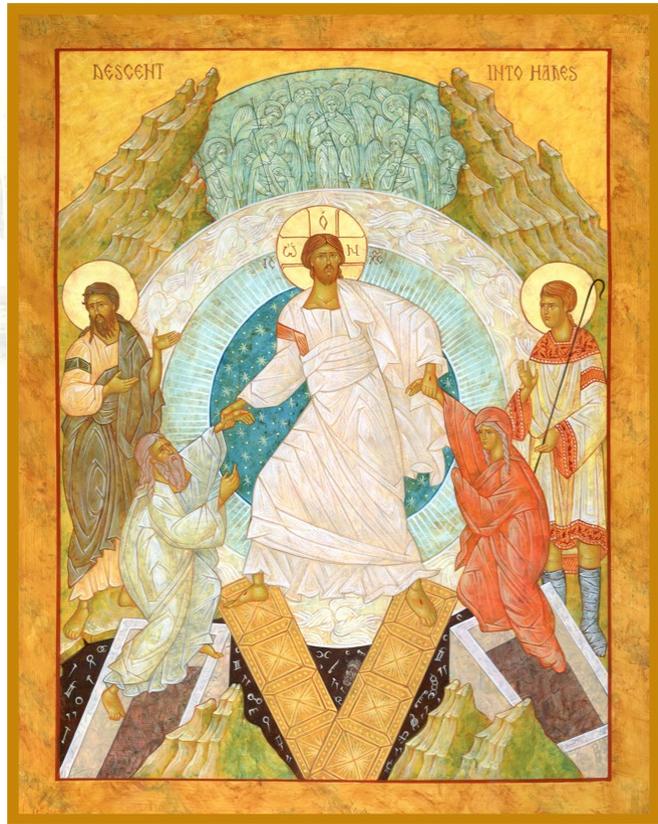
Sunday School 9:30 AM

Divine Liturgy 10 AM

April 24, 2022 – Holy Pascha | ~Christ is Risen!~

We call the present Feast “Pascha,” which means “Passover” in the Hebrew language; for this is the day on which God originally brought the world into existence from non-being. It was on this day that He conveyed the people of Israel across the Red Sea and snatched them out of the hands of Pharaoh; on this day also, descending from Heaven, He came to dwell in the Virgin’s womb. And now, after snatching the whole of mankind from the depths of Hades, He has raised it up to Heaven and restored to it the ancient dignity of incorruption. But when He descended to Hades, He did not resurrect all, but only those who chose to believe in Him. He freed the souls of the Saints from all the ages who were being forcibly held by Hades, and allowed all of them to ascend to Heaven. For this reason, rejoicing exceedingly, we celebrate the Resurrection with splendor, offering an image of the joy in which our nature abounds through the tender mercy of God. Likewise, demonstrating the destruction of enmity and our unity with God and the Angels themselves, we give each other the customary kiss of peace.

The Resurrection of the Lord took place in this manner. While the soldiers were guarding the tomb, around the middle of the night an earthquake occurred; for an



Angel came down and removed the stone from the door of the sepulchre. On beholding this, the guards fled, and thus the women were afforded their opportunity at the end of the Sabbath, that is, around the middle of Saturday night. The Resurrection was made known first to the Mother of God, who sat opposite the tomb with Mary Magdalene, as St. Matthew says. But in order that the Resurrection should not be a matter of doubt, on account of the familiarity of the Lord's Mother, the Evangelists say: He appeared first to Mary Magdalene. It was she who saw the Angel on the stone and, stooping down to look, saw the Angels inside the tomb; these Angels announced the Resurrection of the Lord. For "He is risen," they said, "He is not here; behold the place where they laid Him." Therefore, on hearing these words, she ran to the most ardent among the Disciples, Peter and John, and told them the glad tidings of the Resurrection. As she was returning with Mary, Christ encountered them, saying: "Rejoice!" For it was fitting that the sex which first heard the words, "in pain thou shalt bring forth children," should be the first to hear this joy. Overcome with love, they approached and touched His immaculate feet, wishing to recognize Him more precisely. The Apostles came to the tomb; and Peter stooped down to look inside the tomb and departed, while John went inside and looked more searchingly, and touched the linen clothes and the napkin.

Mary Magdalene returned with other women at dawn so as to confirm with greater certainty what had been seen. Standing outside, she lamented, but when she stooped to look inside the tomb, she saw two Angels shining with radiance, reproving her, as it were, and saying: "Lady, do you weep? Whom do you seek? Do you seek Jesus of Nazareth, Who was crucified? He is risen; He is not here." And at once they arose in fear, seeing the Lord. Turning round, she saw Christ standing; thinking Him to be the gardener (for the tomb was in a garden), she said: "Sir, if you have borne Him hence, tell me where you have laid Him, and I will take Him away." When she beckoned again to the Angels, the Savior said to Magdalene: "Mary." And she, perceiving the sweet and familiar voice of Christ, wanted to touch Him. But He said: "Touch Me not; for I am not yet ascended to My Father, as you reason, still supposing Me to be a man; but go to My brethren, and tell them all that you have seen and heard." Magdalene did this. As day dawned again, she came to the tomb with the other women. Those who were with John and Salome arrived at sunrise; and, to put it simply, the women came to the tomb in different groups, among them being the Theotokos; for she is the one whom the Gospel calls Mary, the mother of Joses; this Joses was a son of Joseph. It is, however, unclear at what hour the Lord arose: some say that it was at the first cockcrow, others that it was when the earthquake occurred, and others suggest different times.

After these events, some of the guards went and reported to the high priests what had happened; the latter, putting money in their hands, persuaded them to say that Christ's Disciples had come by night and stolen Him. In the evening of the same day, when the Disciples had gathered together through fear of the Jews and the doors were securely shut, Christ came to them—for His body was incorrupt—and greeted them with the customary greeting, "Peace." On seeing Him, they rejoiced exceedingly, and when Christ breathed on them they received the energy of the All-holy Spirit more perfectly.

This is how the Lord's Resurrection took place on the third day. The evening of Thursday and the day of Friday (for this is how the Hebrews measure the period of twenty-four hours) are one day. The night of Friday and the whole of Saturday are another period of twenty-four hours; this is the second day. The night of Saturday and the day of Sunday are another period of twenty-four hours; this is the third day. To Him be glory and dominion unto the ages of ages. Amen. (*synaxarion for Holy Pascha*)

Today's Epistle Lesson – The Acts of the Apostles 1:1-8

The former account I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach, until the day in which He was taken up, after He through the Holy Spirit had given commandments to the apostles whom He had chosen, to whom He also presented Himself alive after His suffering by many infallible proofs, being seen by them during forty days and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.

And being assembled together with *them*, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, "which," *He said*, "you have heard from Me; for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now." Therefore, when they had come together, they asked Him, saying, "Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" And He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority. But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

Today's Gospel Lesson – Saint John 1:1-17

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.

There was a man sent from God, whose name *was* John. This man came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all through him might believe. He was not that Light, but *was sent* to bear witness of that Light. That was the true Light which gives light to every man coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him. But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. John bore witness of Him and cried out, saying, “This was He of whom I said, ‘He who comes after me is preferred before me, for He was before me.’” And of His fullness we have all received, and grace for grace. For the law was given through Moses, *but* grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

A Word From the Holy Fathers

Brethren and Fathers, while the sufferings of our Lord Jesus Christ when they are recalled are always able to pierce the soul, they do so especially in these present days, on which each of them reached its end. What then are they? The murderous council against him, the Jewish arrest, his being led away to death, his arraignment before Pilate's tribunal, the interrogation, the scourging, the blows, the spittings, the insults, the mockeries, the ascent of the Cross, the nailing of his hands and feet, the tasting of gall, the piercing of his side and all the other things which blazed forth with them, which the world cannot contain, nor can anyone worthily proclaim, not human tongue, nor even all the tongues of angels together. For let us consider, brethren, this great and ineffable mystery. The Lord *who reveals the counsels of hearts* [1 Cor. 4:5] and knows every human desire is the one who is taken before a council of death; the Lord *who bears all things by the word of his power* [Hebrews 1:3.] is the one who is handed over to sinners; the Lord *who binds the water in the clouds* [Job 26:8.] and sows in the earth in due season and uniformly is the one who is led away prisoner; the Lord *who measures the heavens with the span of his hand and the earth in a handful and weighed all the mountains in the balance* [Isaiah 40:12.] is the one who is struck by the hand of a servant; the Lord who adorned the boundaries of the earth with flowers is the one who is dishonorably crowned with thorns; the Lord who planted the tree of life in Paradise is the one who is hanged upon an accursed tree. O great and more than natural sights! The sun saw them and faded, the moon saw them and was darkened, the earth perceived them was shaken, the rocks perceived them and were rent, all

creation was turned back at the outrages done to the Master. The lifeless elements which have no senses, as if endowed with life and sensation from fear of the Lord and from the spectacle of what is seen, were amazed and altered; and do we, who have been honored with reason, for whose sake Christ died, remain untouched and unweeping in these days? How could we be less rational than things which have no reason, more unfeeling than the stones? In no way, my brothers, in no way. Let us rather be amazed in a manner worthy of God, by being changed with a fair change; let us draw down tears, sacrifice the passions, changing insults for insults and exchanging wounds for wounds, the one through obedience, the other through unflinching confession. Do we not see the burning incitements of divine love? Who ever dwelt in prison for a friend? Who accepted slaughter for their beloved? But our good God not only did the one and both of them, but accepted ten thousand sufferings for the sake of us, the condemned. Fittingly then the blessed Apostle, when he thought on these things and became powerfully aware of the love of God, said *For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, neither angels nor rules nor powers, neither present nor future, neither height nor depth, nor any other creature will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord* [Rom. 8:38-39]. For such was the love God had for us *that he gave his only Son, that all who believe in him might not perish, as it is written, but have eternal life* [John 3:16.]. As an exchange for this love, the saints, when they had nothing to offer, offered their own bodies and blood by asceticism and struggle, singing with blessed David the song: *What return may we make to the Lord for all that he has given to us?* [Psalm 115:3.] Let us also, brethren, cry out these words each day, as we serve him with an unceasing attitude of love, striving again and again for what is better, so that we may become heirs with the saints of the eternal blessings in Christ Jesus our Lord, to whom be glory and might with the Father and the Holy Spirit, now and for ever, and to the ages of ages.

– St. Theodore the Studite, *Catechesis 73, on Holy Friday*

Also Commemorated Today: Venerable Thomas the Fool of Syria

Saint Thomas the Fool-for-Christ was a monk in one of the monasteries in Caesarea of Cappadocia (Asia Minor). His obedience was to collect alms for the monastery. When the Blessed Thomas arrived in the city of Antioch, Syria he began his exploit of foolishness for the sake of Christ.

The steward of one of the churches, a certain Anastasius, became annoyed with the entreaties of Saint Thomas, and struck him on the cheek. Those present reproached Anastasius for his inappropriate manner of dealing with the fool, but Saint Thomas quieted them saying, “From this moment I shall accept nothing further from

Anastasius, nor will Anastasius be able to give me anything further.” These words proved prophetic. Anastasius died the very next day, and the saint also died along the road to his monastery, at the church of Saint Euthymius in the suburb of Daphne. They buried him at a place set aside for the burial of strangers.

After a certain while they buried another stranger in the saint’s grave. After four hours the ground on the grave of the stranger was thrown aside. They again covered the grave, but in the morning the ground on the grave again lay open. They reburied the stranger in another place.

The same thing happened when they buried two women nearby. Everyone realized that Saint Thomas did not wish to have a woman buried over him. The occurrence was reported to Patriarch Domnus of Antioch (546-560). At his command the relics of Saint Thomas were transferred to Antioch and placed in a cemetery where the relics of many holy martyrs rested. A small church was built over these relics, from which many healings occurred. Through the prayers of Saint Thomas a deadly plague ceased at Antioch. From that time the inhabitants began to honor the memory of Saint Thomas every year. *(from oca.org)*

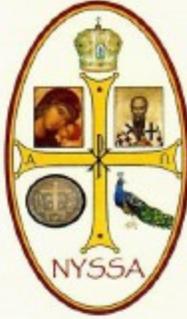
Saint Elizabeth, Wonderworker of Constantinople

Saint Elizabeth the Wonderworker was from Constantinople, and was chosen for the service of God at birth. It was revealed to her mother that the girl would become a chosen vessel of the Lord (Acts 9:15). The parents sent their daughter to a monastery as a child. She grew up in an atmosphere of fasting and constant prayer, and received the gift of healing physical and spiritual infirmities.

The sisters chose her to be abbess of the Saints Cosmas and Damian Monastery. She wore a coarse hairshirt all year round. Her body was chilled in winter, but her spirit blazed with ardent love for God.

The saint’s asceticism was very strict. For many years she ate only grass and vegetables, but would not partake of bread, wine, or oil. Many times Saint Elizabeth ate nothing at all during the forty days of the Great Fast. Imitating the Publican in humility, for three years she did not lift up her eyes to the heavens, but she looked constantly to God with her spiritual eyes. At midnight prayers, the saint shone with a heavenly light.

Saint Elizabeth performed many miracles: a vicious serpent was killed by her prayer, she healed a woman with issue of blood who had been ill for many years, and she cast out unclean spirits from people. At her tomb many were healed of various illnesses, and the blind received their sight. Many were cured with just some earth from her grave. We do not know exactly when Saint Elizabeth lived, but it was probably between the sixth and ninth centuries. *(from oca.org)*



Office of the Metropolitan

*312 Garfield Street
Johnstown, PA 15906*

April 24, 2022

Protocol No. 14/2022

PASCHA ARCHPASTORAL LETTER

To the Very Reverend Protopresbyters, Very Reverend and Reverend Fathers, and Faithful (young and old) of our God-Protected Diocese:

CHRIST IS RISEN!

INDEED HE IS RISEN!

**“Christ is Risen from the dead, trampling down death by death,
and to those in the tombs bestowing life.”**

Today I greet you with great love and joy in the Name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ following His glorious Resurrection. On Great and Holy Pascha, we behold the triumph of Christ, as He rose from death to life, from darkness of the tomb into the Light. With the Resurrection of Christ, all Creation is filled with a new Light of life and joy. On this Feast of Feasts, this Holy Day of Holy Days, we all proclaim the only truth that matters, the Truth that Christ is Risen!

We gather together as family and friends, in joy and in love, celebrating the presence of the Risen Lord in our midst, and singing with one voice the triumphant hymn “Christ is Risen from the dead, trampling down death by death, and to those in the tombs bestowing life.”

This day of the Resurrection marks the beginning of an explosion of joy that comes immediately after the spiritually intense and challenging period of Great Lent and Holy Week. This beautiful hymn captures in three verses the fundamental message of the Feast of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is a message of victory, of love, and of hope in everlasting life. On this day and throughout the Paschal season over the next 40 days, we proclaim this message of victory, of love and of hope together in song through this hymn at the beginning of very divine service in our Church. This hymn, simple in form yet deep in power, is worthy of study as we seek to fully understand its meaning.

The first verse of the hymn expresses the reality of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, “Christ is Risen from the dead.” This reality of the Resurrection has been a distinguishing feature of Christianity

The American Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Diocese of North America

ECUMENICAL PATRIARCHATE OF CONSTANTINOPLE

from the beginning. St Paul expresses this idea to the Corinthians "If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins" (I. Corinthians 15:17). He declares unequivocally that Christ has been raised from the dead, that He appeared after His Resurrection to as many as 500 people at a time, most of whom were still alive when St. Paul was writing (I. Corinthians 15:6). The reassuring words of this Epistle continue to provide us today with their intended effect, which is that our faith in Christ is not futile at all and that, because of the reality of His Resurrection, we are no longer held captive to our sins.

The second verse of the Paschal hymn explains to us the extraordinary manner by which Christ conquered death's dominion over us once and for all: "Trampling down death by death." When Jesus was crucified, He took on the sins of all humanity and suffered the intensity of which remains truly incomprehensible to us as human beings. This demonstrates the unending love of our God, Who took on human flesh and Who died on a Cross for our salvation. By submitting Himself to death, Christ not only annihilated sin but also death. The final defeat of the archenemy death could not happen but only through death itself, not an ordinary death however, but the death of God who became man.

The third and final verse reveals the very essence of the Feast, for it encapsulates the full consequence of Christ's Resurrection from the dead: "And to those in the tombs bestowing life." To all of us on this day then, this is a day of promise and of hope for everlasting life with Him. This last verse reiterates the message that St. Paul was communicating to the Romans when he wrote that as Christians we are dead to sin, but alive in Christ: "We were buried therefore with Him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of God, we too might walk in newness of life" (Romans 6:4). This is the message of our Orthodox Christian faith which we celebrate on this day of Pascha and indeed every day of our lives here on Earth. It is a message that proclaims our ultimate victory over all forces of darkness that attempt to impede our progress on the road to salvation and eternal life with Jesus Christ.

It is in this spirit that our repeated singing of this beautiful triumphant hymn for 40 days will enable us to come closer and closer toward understanding the power of its message:

CHRIST IS RISEN! INDEED HE IS RISEN!

May the Clergy and Laity, Friends and Supporters of the American Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Diocese experience the love, joy, and excitement of the early followers of Christ when they first saw Him after His Resurrection. Christ is Risen!

Working in the Risen Lord's Vineyard with much love,

+ Metropolitan Gregory
+Metropolitan Grigory of Nyssa

To be read as the sermon in all churches of the Diocese at the Divine Liturgy on the Feast of the Resurrection of our Lord, God, and Saviour Jesus Christ!

The American Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Diocese of the U.S.A.

ECUMENICAL PATRIARCHATE OF CONSTANTINOPLE

Social Team for May 1

Team 7 is up next week - Howl, Hood, Dee Jubb, Charlotte F. Thank you!

Follow Our Diocese On-Line

Diocesan Website: <http://www.acrod.org>

Camp Nazareth: <http://www.campnazareth.org>

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Twitter: <https://twitter.com/acrodnews>

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In Your Prayers – Please Remember... His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch BARTHOLOMEW, His Eminence Metropolitan GREGORY, Fr. Joseph & Family, His Grace Bishop Neofitos of Nyeri & Mt. Kenya, Tatyana & Slava Chumak & family, Luke & Marlena Cooper, Roberta Corson, Jon Church, Tina Crull, Mary Diane David, Howl family, Andrew Kinn, Kopan family, Valentina Makowelski, Susan Matula, Anna Meinhold, David & Kathryn Newman, John Reece, Mary Reed, Rose Song, Dcn. Nectaros & Ia, Mother Virginia Marie & the Carmelite Nuns of Port Tobacco, the suffering people of Ukraine, and those in need of our prayers. (Please advise Fr. Joseph of changes.)