

♥ Happy Mother's Day! ♥

# 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](mailto:fredgington@gmail.com)

[www.apostlethomas.org](http://www.apostlethomas.org)

*American Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Diocese*

*ECUMENICAL PATRIARCHATE  
OF CONSTANTINOPLE*

## **SERVICES**

**Saturday: Vespers 5 PM**

**Sunday: Matins 8:45 AM**

**Sunday School 9:30 AM**

**Divine Liturgy 10 AM**

**May 8, 2022 – Sunday of the Myrrh-bearing Women  
3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Pascha**

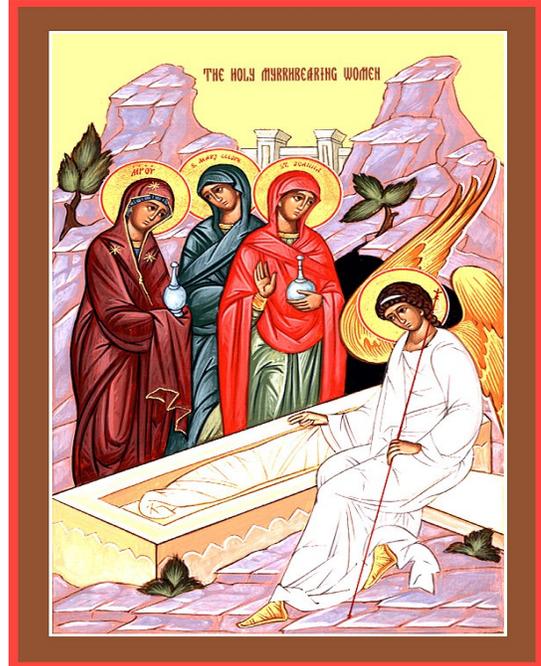
The Risen One and the Myrrhbearers (Metr. Hierotheos of Nafpaktos)

"Now when the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, that they might come and anoint Him" (Mk. 16:1).

In today's Gospel reading there is talk about the visit of the Myrrhbearing women "when the Sabbath was past" to the tomb, the encounter with the Angel and the information that "He is risen, He is not here." The encounter of the Myrrhbearers with the Lord is not described here, but we know very well that the Myrrhbearing women not only were found worthy of the angelic apparition and were the first to be informed of the Resurrection of Christ, but also were found worthy to see the Risen Christ. This is an event of great importance and significance. That is why in the person of the Myrrhbearers, female nature and in general all human nature is honored.

The Appearance of Christ to the Myrrhbearers

It is astonishing that the first appearance of the Victor of sin, the devil, and death, took place to women and not to the disciples. This issue has its explanation. According to Saint Gregory Palamas, the resurrection of Christ is the renewal of human nature, the revitalization, the regeneration and the immortal return of



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Adam, who had returned to earth through sin and death. Just as Adam was not seen when he was created, since there was no one else then, except Eve after her creation, so now the new Adam, Christ, was not seen when He was resurrected. After His resurrection, a woman was the first to see Him.

But beyond this point of view, there is another patristic interpretation, which finds a correlation between Eve and the Myrrhbearing women. The woman (Eve) after talking to the evil spirit, fell and brought the message of the fall to Adam. Now the women (Myrrhbearers) after talking to the angel and then seeing Christ, brought the message of the Resurrection to the men (the disciples). Thus we have the restoration of female nature. The division and attribution of responsibility to women for the fall is abolished. The restoration of the female nature took place with the incarnation of Christ and His birth by the Virgin Mary, whom all ages had been waiting for.

A woman in the Church ceases to be a simple biological being and becomes a person, a spiritual being, who is deified. Of course there is still the biological difference of sex, but this too will be abolished in the common resurrection. Then the human person will remain. Therefore there is no difference between a man and a woman for salvation. The Apostle Paul says, "There is neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:28). Christianity is revolutionary here as well. It creates a great revolution through the Resurrection. The Resurrection of Christ renewed everything.

### The Virtue of Bravery

With the first appearance of the Risen One to women, the virtue of bravery was honored. The Myrrhbearers counted as nothing, neither the hatred of the people, nor the strength of the soldiers, nor the night. They made a heroic outing and came to the tomb to offer perfumes to Christ. In their person is honored the Christian "anarchy" which is the healthiest expression of love for God. It honors the Christian "anarchy" that manifests itself not with bombs, which destroy, but with the love, gladness, and meekness (myrrh and tears) that build. Modern anarchists and modern feminists are blind to the heroic example of the Myrrhbearing women.

The Holy Fathers say that bravery is one of the four great virtues (wisdom, prudence, bravery, righteousness) that are necessary for an encounter with God. Bravery is born from the clash of the will with the internal, and the harmonization of bravery with wisdom creates the virtue of meekness which is also called dispassion, because it harmonizes the active forces of the soul with the corresponding body sensations and the energies of the senses.

More generally, we can say that bravery is born of faith in God, love for Him, and hope in His mercy. And these are possessed by the one who proceeds with the

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heart and not with cold reason. Reason also considers cowardice, as was done with the Apostles. The heart loves and progresses forward. Bravery is necessary in the struggle against our passions and in fact in enduring in every good work and in overcoming the passions of the soul and the body. He who has bravery is not afraid in the difficult moments of the struggle. As has been said, even if he falls into sin and if he worships the devil, he does not lose his bravery, but turns to God in repentance and defeats his enemies.

On the contrary, the lack of bravery results in two great evils. The audacity that turns against his neighbor and the cowardice that leads to damnation. This is because the cowardly soul is muddled, despairs and finally is destroyed, and thus lost. This is what we often see in Christians today. They lose themselves easily. Maybe because they have not experienced practical philosophy. Maybe because they overlook the moral life, which is the basis of the spiritual life.

### The Myrrhbearers of Human Nature

Encountering the Risen Christ was not the exclusive prerogative of some women. All human nature accepted Christ, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity. In the Song of Songs it is said: "Your name is like myrrh poured out" (1:3). Before the incarnation Christ was the Myrrh, after the incarnation He became the Chrism and anointed human nature. He gave it holiness and Grace. As Nicholas Cabasilas observes, human nature, after sin, separated itself from God, but when the flesh was deified then human nature took God as its essence and the wall became myrrh.

Therefore the Myrrhbearers are not only those women who went to the Tomb of Christ with myrrh, but they are all human nature after the Resurrection and Ascension and especially those who live sacramentally in the Church. They do not just hold the myrrh in their hands, but they have in their hearts the myrrh, the immortal Christ. They do not have only the virtues of goodness, love, truth, but Christ Himself, who is Goodness, Love and Truth. The Grace of Christ that exists in their hearts is poured out on their bodies as well, so that they are not just perfume jars, but these bodies are also transformed into myrrh.

Myrrhbearers are those people, who have been purified by the word of the gospel commandments, whose soul is blameless and fruitful in virtues, who have expelled all passions with meekness and are fervent in giving birth to spiritual meanings with discernment (Niketas Stethatos). A myrrhbearer is one who has inner unceasing prayer and such were and are all the saints.

The Resurrection of Christ is indeed the renewal of human nature. He anointed with myrrh and chrism all human nature. We can all have the privilege of becoming myrrhbearers of Christ. (*from johnsanidopoulos.com*)

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**Today's Epistle Lesson – The Acts of the Apostles 6:1-7**

In those days, when *the number of* the disciples was multiplying, there arose a complaint against the Hebrews by the Hellenists, because their widows were neglected in the daily distribution. Then the twelve summoned the multitude of the disciples and said, “It is not desirable that we should leave the word of God and serve tables. Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of *good* reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business; but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word.” And the saying pleased the whole multitude. And they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit, and Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas, a proselyte from Antioch, whom they set before the apostles; and when they had prayed, they laid hands on them. Then the word of God spread, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith.

**Today's Gospel Lesson – Saint Mark 15:43-16:8**

At that time, Joseph of Arimathea, a prominent council member, who was himself waiting for the kingdom of God, coming and taking courage, went in to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Pilate marveled that He was already dead; and summoning the centurion, he asked him if He had been dead for some time. So when he found out from the centurion, he granted the body to Joseph. Then he bought fine linen, took Him down, and wrapped Him in the linen. And he laid Him in a tomb which had been hewn out of the rock, and rolled a stone against the door of the tomb. And Mary Magdalene and Mary *the mother* of Joses observed where He was laid.

Now when the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, Mary *the mother* of James, and Salome bought spices, that they might come and anoint Him. Very early in the morning, on the first *day* of the week, they came to the tomb when the sun had risen. And they said among themselves, “Who will roll away the stone from the door of the tomb for us?” But when they looked up, they saw that the stone had been rolled away—for it was very large. And entering the tomb, they saw a young man clothed in a long white robe sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed. But he said to them, “Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He is risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid Him. But go, tell His disciples—and Peter—that He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him, as He said to you.” So they went out and fled from the tomb, for they trembled and were amazed. And they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.

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## A Word From the Holy Fathers

I thought that my blessed mother had died; but, it seems, she is still on earth. For what more could she have done than you in showing me a mother's care? But though I am a sinner, I trust in the Lord that he will repay you with no ordinary grace for what you have done for my unworthiness and grant you the attainment of what you long and ask for. But enough of what has been done. For I dealt with all that in my previous letter. But you, on the other hand, have increased rather than exhausted your generosity. And so how could we not now remember your piety. With clothes, a sacred offering, food and drink you have astounded us from every side. So now put an stop to your gifts, and be confident of your reward from God. For he was no liar who said that he rewards even a cup of cold water. [Cf. [Matthew 10,42](#)]

You say you are grieved by your concern for your child, which leaves you no leisure for the necessary care for the soul. But God is perfectly well able to look after the affairs of the good child and to let you have leisure in all things to occupy yourself with what is profitable for the soul, so as to dispose you with a ready heart for your departure from the body. You are not able, because of the sickly condition of your body, to fast and afflict yourself harshly. Bear this without grieving, bringing what you can to the Lord and filling up what you lack in ascetic practices by an abundance of humility.

You ask to be taught how you ought to pray. The Lord himself taught us this through the invocation 'Our Father', and that we should not ask for anything temporary, but for his kingdom and eternal justice. Moreover it has been ordained by the Fathers that first should come thanksgiving to God; next confession of our sins to him; and so a request for their forgiveness, and intercession for the other things that bring salvation.

So, when you are about to pray, give thanks to the Lord and Master that he brought you out of nothing into existence; that he redeemed you from every error, calling you and counting you worthy to become a partaker in the knowledge of himself, free from pagan, free from heretical error. Next that he prepared you for the monastic life, which equals that of the Angels, after the enjoyment of life in the world. The thought of all this is enough to soften the soul to compunction and the outpouring of tears. From all this comes enlightenment of heart, sweetness of spirit, desire for God. When this is present in the heart, there comes the rejection of every evil. When you have thus given thanks to God, confess to him like this, 'You know, Master, how many sins I have committed against you, and how many I commit each hour', as you reckon up this sin and this offense and the ones committed in knowledge and in ignorance. But do not recall in any detail the ones

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that by being clearly remembered harm the soul. [Cf. [The Ladder](#) 28,58] And from this the grace of humility will dawn for you, with a broken heart [Cf. [Psalm 50,18](#)] and fear of God's recompense. After this, ask, groan, implore your Lord for forgiveness of these sins and strengthening for the future to please him, saying, 'My Lord, Lord, may I no longer anger you, may I no longer love anything but you, alone truly to be loved. And should I anger you again, falling down I implore your compassion, that I may be given strength from now on to please you.' And if anything else comes to your mind that is good to be accomplished, ask for it fervently. And after this call upon the holy Mother of God to have mercy on you, the holy Angels, and the Angel you have as the guardian of your life, that he may watch over you and protect you, the Forerunner and the holy Apostles, all the Saints and those whom you usually call on especially, and the one whose memory is kept that day. These then are the things, it seems to me, which hold the power of prayer, even if each person doubtless prays with other words and not the same as these, because people who pray do not always say the same things themselves, but the power, as I reckon, is always the same. So may you be kept safe as you pray for what is necessary, and become better each day, and through a strict way of life present your entire self well-pleasing to the Lord.

– St. Theodore the Studite, *Letter 42, to the Nun Anna*

### **Also Commemorated Today: Apostle and Evangelist John the Theologian**

When Saint John was more than one hundred years old, he told seven of his disciples to take spades and follow him to a certain place outside the city of Ephesus, and then he told everyone to sit down while he went off to pray by himself for a while. When he returned, he told his disciples to dig a grave as long as he was tall, in the form of a cross. After giving them instructions and kissing them, he climbed into the grave and said: "Take some earth, my mother earth, and cover me." They covered him with earth up to his knees, and he said: "Now take some more earth and cover me up to my neck."

As soon as he they had done this, Saint John spoke again: "Bring a linen cloth and place it on my face, then kiss me again for the last time, because you shall not see me anymore in this life." After the Apostle dismissed them, they buried him and wept bitterly. Later, they returned and opened the grave, but the Saint's body was not there. They wept and returned to the city.

Every year, on May 8, a red dust appears on his grave, which heals the sick, through the prayers of the Holy Apostle John. People call this dust "manna from the earth." Saint Augustine knew about this dust, and Saint Gregory of Tours also wrote about it. Some sources call this Feast "rodismos" (ροδισμός) i.e. Day of the

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Roses. Some think that this manna is called ροδής (a pink ointment, or a rose-colored dust). Others say that by this name they celebrate the roses of spring, just as we decorate the church with greenery and flowers on Pentecost.

Saint John's principal Feast Day is September 26, but today the Church commemorates Saint John because of the annual pilgrimage to his grave.

There is a special title to be used when commemorating Saint John at the Dismissal: "The holy, glorious Apostle and Evangelist, Virgin, Beloved friend of Christ, John the Theologian." (*from oca.org*)

### **Saint Walpurga**

The Holy Martyr Victor of Milan, also known as Victor the Moor and Victor Maurus, was born in ancient Mauretania, a Roman province on the Mediterranean coast of North Africa. He was a Berber of the Mauri tribe, after which the Moors were named. Born into a Christian family during the latter part of the third century, he nevertheless became a soldier in the Roman army and advanced through the ranks to become a member of the Praetorian Guard that served the Roman emperor Maximian who was the emperor for the Western Roman Empire from 286 to 305.

His zeal for Christ became known to Maximian after Victor had destroyed a pagan altar to a Roman god. Brought before the angry emperor, Victor confessed his love of Jesus Christ which he would not deny. Maximian then ordered Victor's imprisonment. Finding that Victor would not deny Christ, the emperor then ordered his further subjection to imprisonment and various tortures. Still rejecting the emperor's calls to sacrifice to the pagan gods, Maximian finally, in 303, directed the beheading of Victor in the emperor's garden in a small wood called The Elms in Milan.

Before his martyrdom, Victor foretold that the emperor would soon die. After his beheading on May 8, Maximian ordered that no one was to bury his body so that it would be eaten by the wild animals. When six days later the emperor sent his soldiers to check the condition of Victor's body, they found it untouched by the animals. The emperor then ordered his body buried. After having received permission to bury the martyred Victor's body, Bishop Maternus of Milan found it was guarded by two beasts, one each at his head and his feet. As the holy Maternus approached, the beasts withdrew and Bishop Maternus wrapped the corpse in linen and buried it, in peace, not far from the small wood on May 14.

Veneration of the martyr Victor began soon after his death. Saint Gregory of Tours recorded that miracles occurred above his grave over which a church was built. Saint Ambrose of Milan encouraged devotion to the martyr Victor. In his *Commentary on the Gospel of Luke*, Ambrose wrote: "Our martyrs Felix, Nabor

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and Victor were like mustard seeds: although they bore the odor of faith, yet they were passed over. But when persecution came, they laid down their weapons, extended their necks and, struck by the sword, shed abroad the beauty of their martyrdom even to the ends of the earth." And Saint Gregory of Tours writes in his work *Glory of the Martyrs* (Ch. 45):

"At Milan the illustrious martyr Victor is honored, because often he releases bound men from prisons and allows captives to depart as free men. At one time Apollinaris was fleeing to Italy with duke Victorius, who some say was killed in Rome. The inhabitants of one region seized Apollinaris as a captive, and said: 'You will not see your fatherland, but like your companion you will suffer an appropriate penalty.' After making these threats they sent him into exile at Milan. But it happened that it was the time for the festival of Saint Victor and people were assembling. Since he was constrained without restriction by an open custody, Apollinaris attended the vigils. He knelt before the holy tomb of the saint and began to pray more fervently than always that the power of the martyr free him from this exile. As he left the church about midnight, he heard one of the beggars talking with another. The beggar said: 'O fellow beggar, what do you think of the power of this martyr? I tell the truth and I am not mistaken that tonight whatever captive flees and is liberated from his master will return to his fatherland as a free man and will be pursued no further.' Apollinaris took these words as a sign sent by the will of God. Again and again he knelt at the tomb of the martyr and prayed that he be helped by the martyr's power and that he be able to leave without any opposition. Next he called his servant and ordered his horse to be saddled; he said: 'Today we must be freed from the chain of this captivity.' After mounting their horses they crossed the peaks of the Alps that were covered with drifts of snow and reached Clermont. The power of the blessed martyr preceded them, so that no one asked where they were going or whence they had come. It is obvious that they were saved from this tribulation by the assistance of the blessed martyr." (*from johnsanidopoulos.com*)

### **Social Team for May 15**

Team 1 is up next week - Hanbury, P. Blaydoe, Chumak. Thank you!

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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, Bennett family, 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. Nectarios & 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.)