

Saints Peter and Paul Orthodox Church

Albanian Archdiocese - OCA

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Rev. Nicholas Dellermann – Rector (860-861-7468)

SUNDAY, APRIL 30

3rd Sunday of Pascha

Holy Myrrhbearing Women

Holy Apostle James, the brother of St. John the Theologian

**Tone 2
Troparion
(Resurrection)**

*When Thou didst descend to death,
O Life immortal,
Thou didst slay hell with the
splendor of Thy Godhead.
And when from the depths Thou
didst raise the dead,
all the powers of heaven cried out:
“O Giver of life, Christ our God,
glory to Thee!”*

**Tone 2
Troparion
(Pentecostarion)**

*The noble Joseph,
when he had taken down Thy most
pure Body from the Tree,
wrapped it in fine linen and
anointed it with spices,
and placed it in a new tomb.
But Thou didst arise on the third
day, O Lord,
granting the world great mercy.*

**Tone 8
Troparion
(St. James)**

*Thou wast called to be a disciple
and warrior of Christ, one of the
exalted choir of Apostles.
With thy brother John, thou didst
abandon all to follow the Master, O
James;
thou wast filled with the Holy
Spirit and didst proclaim Him to
all.
Thou didst bow thy head to the
sword, the first of the twelve to
shed thy blood!
We celebrate thy memory, O
blessed one!*

**Tone 2
Kontakion
(St. James)**

*O James, when thou didst hear the voice of the Word
calling thee,
thou didst abandon thy father’s love and ran to Christ,
together with thy brother John.
With him thou wast accounted worthy
to behold the divine Transfiguration of Christ.*

**Tone 2
Kontakion
(Pentecostarion)**

*Thou didst command the Myrrhbearers to rejoice, O
Christ God.
By Thy Resurrection, Thou didst stop the lamentation
of Eve, the first mother.
Thou didst command them to preach to Thine
Apostles:
“The Savior is risen from the tomb!”*

Prokeimenon

Tone 6

O Lord, save Thy people, / and bless Thine inheritance! (Ps. 27:9a)

V. To Thee, O Lord, will I call. O my God, be not silent to me! (Ps. 27:1a)

Tone 8 (St. James)

Their proclamation has gone out into all the earth, / and their words to the ends of the universe. (Ps. 18:4)

The Epistle Reading

Acts 12:1-11 (*Epistle, Saint*)

Now about that time Herod the king stretched out his hand to harass some from the church. Then he killed James the brother of John with the sword. And because he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded further to seize Peter also. Now it was during the Days of Unleavened Bread. So when he had arrested him, he put him in prison, and delivered him to four squads of soldiers to keep him, intending to bring him before the people after Passover. Peter was therefore kept in prison, but constant prayer was offered to God for him by the church. And when Herod was about to bring him out, that night Peter was sleeping, bound with two chains between two soldiers; and the guards before the door were keeping the prison. Now behold, an angel of the Lord stood by him, and a light shone in the prison; and he struck Peter on the side and raised him up, saying, "Arise quickly!" And his chains fell off his hands. Then the angel said to him, "Gird yourself and tie on your sandals"; and so he did. And he said to him, "Put on your garment and follow me." So he went out and followed him, and did not know that what was done by the angel was real, but thought he was seeing a vision. When they were past the first and the second guard posts, they came to the iron gate that leads to the city, which opened to them of its own accord; and they went out and went down one street, and immediately the angel departed from him. And when Peter had come to himself, he said, "Now I know for certain that the Lord has sent His angel, and has delivered me from the hand of Herod and from all the expectation of the Jewish people."

Veprat e Apostujve 12:1-11

Në atë kohë mbreti Herod vuri duart t'u bëjë keq disave prej kishës. Edhe vrau me thikë Jakovin, të vëllain e Joanit. Edhe kur pa se kjo është e pëlqyeshme për Judenjët, vuri ndër mend të zërë edhe Pjetrin; edhe ishin ditët e të pabrumëtave. Edhe e zuri atë dhe e vuri në burg, edhe ua dorëzoi katër palë ushtarëve prej katër vetash secila, që ta ruajnë, sepse pas pashkës donte ta nxirrte përpara popullit. Pjetri pra po ruhej në burg; po prej kishës bëhej pa pushim lutje për të. Edhe kur do ta nxirrte atë Herodi përpara, atë natë Pjetri lidhur me dy vargonj ishte duke fjetur në mes të dy ushtarëve, edhe rojat ruanin burgun përpara derës. Edhe ja një engjell i Zotit erdhi papandehur, edhe dritë ndriti në atë vend; edhe si i ra Pjetrit në brinjë, e zgjoi, duke thënë: Ngrihu shpejt. Edhe i ranë vargonjtë nga duart. Edhe engjëlli i tha: Ngjishu, edhe mbath sandalet e tua; edhe ai bëri ashtu. Edhe i thotë: Vish rrobën tënde, edhe eja pas meje. Edhe ai si doli, i vinte pas, edhe nuk dinte se ishte e vërtetë kjo që bëhej prej engjëllit, po pandehte se sheh vegim. Edhe si kaluan rojen e parë e të dytë, erdhën në portën e hekurt që çon në qytet, e cila iu hap atyre prej vetiu; edhe si dolën, shkuan nëpër një rrugë; edhe përnjëherë engjëlli u nda nga ai. Edhe Pjetri, si erdhi në vete, tha: Tani e di me të vërtetë se Zoti dërgoi engjëllin e tij dhe më shpëtoi nga dora e Herodit dhe nga gjithë shpresa e popullit të Judenjve.

Деяния 12:1-11

В то время царь Ирод поднял руки на некоторых из принадлежащих к церкви, чтобы сделать им зло, и убил Иакова, брата Иоаннова, мечом. Видя же, что это приятно Иудеям, вслед за тем взял и Петра, --тогда были дни опресноков, -- и, задержав его, посадил в темницу, и приказал четырем четверицам воинов стеречь его, намереваясь после Пасхи вывести его к народу. Итак Петра стерегли в темнице, между тем церковь прилежно молилась о нем Богу. Когда же Ирод хотел вывести его, в ту ночь Петр спал между двумя воинами, скованный двумя цепями, и стражи у дверей стерегли темницу. И вот, Ангел Господень предстал, и свет осиял темницу. [Ангел], толкнув Петра в бок, пробудил его и сказал: встань скорее. И цепи упали с рук его. И сказал ему Ангел: опояшьясь и обуйся. Он сделал так. Потом говорит ему: надень одежду твою и иди за мною. [Петр] вышел и следовал за ним, не зная, что делаемое Ангелом было действительно, а думая, что видит видение. Пройдя первую и вторую стражу, они пришли к железным воротам, ведущим в город, которые сами собою отворились им: они вышли, и прошли одну улицу, и вдруг Ангела не стало с ним. Тогда Петр, придя в себя, сказал: теперя я вижу воистину, что Господь послал Ангела Своего и избавил меня из руки Ирода и от всего, чего ждал народ Иудейский.

Tone 8

Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia!

V. O Lord, Thou hast been gracious to Thy land; Thou hast turned back the captivity of Jacob. (*Ps. 84:1*)

V. Mercy and truth are met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other. (*Ps. 84:10*)

Tone 1

V. The heavens will praise Thy wonders, O Lord; and Thy truth in the congregation of the saints. (*Ps. 88:5*)

Mark 15:43-16:8 (*Gospel*)

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 James 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 quickly and fled from the tomb, for they trembled and were amazed. And they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.

Markut 15:43-16:8

erdhi Josifi që ishte nga Arimatea, anëtar i nderuar i këshillit, që edhe ai priste mbretërinë e Perëndisë; edhe guxoi e hyri tek Pilati dhe lypji trupin e Jisuit. Edhe Pilati u çudit, nëse tashmë kishte vdekur; edhe thirri pranë kryeqindësin, edhe e pyeti në ka kohë që ka vdekur. Edhe si mori vesh prej kryeqindësit, i fali trupin Josifit. Edhe ky bleu pëlhurë, edhe e zbriti, edhe e mbështolli me pëlhurën, edhe e vuri në një varr, që ishte latuar prej shkëmbi; edhe rrokullisi një gur në derën e varrit. Edhe Maria Magdalena, edhe Maria e Josiut, vinin re ku po vihet. Edhe si shkoi e shtuna, Maria Magdalena, edhe Maria e Jakovit, edhe Saloma, blenë erëra, që të vijnë e ta lyejnë. Edhe shumë herët në mëngjes, të parën ditë të javës, vijnë në varr, sapo lindi dielli. Edhe thoshin në mes tyre: Cili do të na rrokullisë gurin prej derës së varrit? Edhe kur hodhën sytë, shohin se guri ishte rrokullisur; sepse ishte fort i madh. Edhe si hynë në varr, panë një djalosh duke ndenjor në të djathtë, të veshur me rroba të bardha; edhe u trembën. Po ai u thotë atyre: Mos u trembni; kërkoni Jisu Nazaretasin, që u kryqëzua. U ngjall, nuk është këtu. Ja vendi ku e vunë. Po shkoni, e u thoni nxënësve të tij dhe Pjetrit se shkon më përpara se ju në Galile. Atje do ta shihni, siç ju tha juve. Edhe ato dolën e ikën nga varri; sepse i kishte zënë tmerr e habi; edhe asnjëri s'i thanë gjë, sepse kishin frikë.

От Марка 15:43-16:8

пришел Иосиф из Аримафеи, знаменитый член совета, который и сам ожидал Царствия Божия, осмелился войти к Пилату, и просил тела Иисусова. Пилат удивился, что Он уже умер, и, призвав сотника, спросил его, давно ли умер? И, узнав от сотника, отдал тело Иосифу. Он, купив плащаницу и сняв Его, обвил плащаницею, и положил Его во гробе, который был высечен в скале, и привалил камень к двери гроба. Мария же Магдалина и Мария Иосиева смотрели, где Его полагали. По прошествии субботы Мария Магдалина и Мария Иаковлева и Саломия купили ароматы, чтобы идти помазать Его. И весьма рано, в первый [день] недели, приходят ко гробу, при восходе солнца, и говорят между собою: кто отвалит нам камень от двери гроба? И, взглянув, видят, что камень отвален; а он был весьма велик. И, войдя во гроб, увидели юношу, сидящего на правой стороне, облеченного в белую одежду; и ужаснулись. Он же говорит им: не ужасайтесь. Иисуса ищите Назарянина, распятого; Он воскрес, Его нет здесь. Вот место, где Он был положен. Но идите, скажите ученикам Его и Петру, что Он предваряет вас в Галилее; там Его увидите, как Он сказал вам. И, выйдя, побежали от гроба; их объял трепет и ужас, и никому ничего не сказали, потому что боялись.

(Instead of "It is truly meet...", we sing the following)

The Angel cried to the Lady, full of grace:
"Rejoice, O pure Virgin! Again, I say: Rejoice,
thy Son is risen from His three days in the tomb!
With Himself He has raised all the dead."
Rejoice, O ye people!

Shine, shine, O new Jerusalem!
The glory of the Lord has shone on thee.
Exult now, and be glad, O Zion!
Be radiant, O pure Theotokos,
in the Resurrection of thy Son!

Communion Hymn

Receive the Body of Christ; taste the fountain of immortality!
Their proclamation has gone out into all the earth, and their words to the ends of the universe. *(Ps. 18:4)*
Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia!

Apostle James the Brother of Saint John the Theologian

Commemorated on April 30

The Holy Apostle James, the son of Zebedee, was the brother of Saint John the Theologian, and one of the Twelve Apostles. He and his brother, Saint John, were called to be Apostles by our Lord Jesus Christ, Who called them the "Sons of Thunder" (Mark 3:17). It was this James, with John and Peter, who witnessed the Raising of the Daughter of Jairus, the Lord's Transfiguration on Mount Tabor, and His agony in the Garden of Gethsemane.

Saint James, after the Descent of the Holy Spirit, preached in Spain and in other lands, and then he returned to Jerusalem. He openly and boldly preached Jesus Christ as the Savior of the world, and he denounced the Pharisees and the Scribes with the words of Holy Scripture, reproaching them for their malice of heart and unbelief.

The Jews could not prevail against Saint James, and so they hired the sorcerer Hermogenes to dispute with the apostle and refute his arguments that Christ was the promised Messiah Who had come into the world. The sorcerer sent to the apostle his pupil Philip, who was converted to belief in Christ. Then Hermogenes himself became persuaded of the power of God, he burned his books of magic, accepted holy Baptism and became a true follower of Christ.

The Jews persuaded Herod Agrippa (40-44) to arrest the Apostle James and sentence him to death (Acts 12:1-2). Eusebius provides some of the details of the saint's execution (CHURCH HISTORY II, 9). Saint James calmly heard the death sentence and continued to bear witness to Christ. One of the false witnesses, whose name was Josiah, was struck by the courage of Saint James. He came to believe in Jesus Christ as the Messiah. When they led the apostle forth to execution, Josiah fell at his feet, repenting of his sin and asking forgiveness. The apostle embraced him, gave him a kiss and said, "Peace and forgiveness to you." Then Josiah confessed his faith in Christ before everyone, and he was beheaded with Saint James in the year 44 at Jerusalem.

Saint James was the first of the Apostles to die as a martyr.

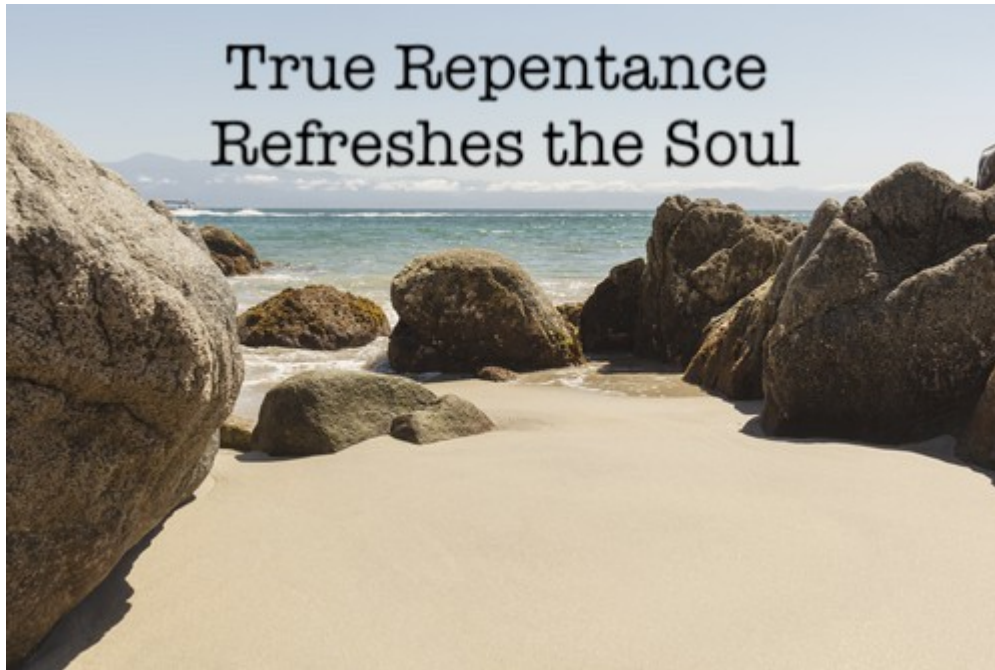
PRAYERS	Birthdays, Names-days, & Anniversaries	SCRIPTURE THIS WEEK
<i>For Those Who Have Fallen Asleep</i>		SCRIPTURE THIS WEEK
<p>Newly-Departed Jonas, Newly Departed Evgeniy, Newly Departed Margret, Newly Departed David, Newly departed Miles</p> <p><i>[To be inserted after the petition for the departed]</i> Again we pray for those who have lost their lives because of the war in Ukraine: that the Lord our God may look upon them with mercy, and give them rest where there is neither sickness, or sorrow, but life everlasting.</p>	<p><i>April 30 – May 6</i> Harry Halkedis</p> <p><u>Seven-Day Vigil Candles</u></p> <p>Seven-Day Vigil Candles are used for the Eternal Light that hangs above the Royal Doors and are often placed in front of the icons of Christ or the Birth-giver of God. If you would like to donate a Seven-Day Vigil Candle, Please include the name or names of those for whom the candle is donated, and we will place them in this section for special prayers.</p>	<p><u>Church Lectionary</u></p> <p><i>Today</i> Acts 12:1-11 Luke 5:1-11 Acts 6:1-7 Mark 15:43-16:8</p> <p><i>Monday</i> Acts 6:8-7:5, 47-60 John 4:46-54</p> <p><i>Tuesday</i> Acts 8:5-17 John 6:27-33</p> <p><i>Wednesday</i> Hebrews 13:7-16 Matthew 11:27-30 Acts 8:18-25 John 6:35-39</p>
<i>For Those Who Are Sick And Home-bound</i>		
<p>Virginia, Denise, Olvian, Marie, James, Alexandra, Andrew, Christina, Louise, Porter, Alvin, Tracy, Kathy, Andrew, Maria, Helen, John, Tom, Nina, Sophia, Jim, Spresha, Kristin, Niko, Spiro, Angjeliki, Melod, Olgay, Ruth, Fr. Milorad, Naomi, Terry, Naomi, Annette, Tatiana, Aleena, Lester Jr., Luke and his family, Natalia, Otari, Lasha</p>		
<i>Prayers In General</i>	COFFEE HOUR	
<p>Fr. Dennis and his family, Fr. Ioan, Christian, Michael, Erica, Kaida, DuDash family, Michael, Robert, Ally, Steve, Jake and Amanda and their children, Katherine, Ron, Anthony, Volodymyr, Nick, Sophia, Michael, Rafael, Bob, Barbara, Juliya and the child born of her, Ansley and the child to be born of her, Sandra, Enoch, John, Victoria, Melenie, Grace, Michael, Barbara, Giorgi, Molly, Jim, Chloe</p> <p><i>[To be inserted after the petition for the living]</i> Again we pray for mercy, life, peace, health, salvation, for those who are suffering, wounded, grieving, or displaced because of the war in Ukraine.</p> <p><i>[Petitions at Augmented Litany]</i> Again we pray for a cessation of the hostilities against Ukraine, and that reconciliation and peace will flourish there, we pray thee, hearken and have mercy.</p> <p>We give thanks to You, O Lord our God, Who in Your mercy and providential care, has called forth Archimandrite NIKODHIM to become a shepherd of wisdom and strength for our Albanian Archdiocese. We ask that You Bless Father NIKODHIM as he readies himself to become our future archpastor so he may:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • care for our spiritual well-being, • unite us in a zealous confession of our holy faith, • commit us in loving service to one another in bright witness to the glory of Your holy Name. <p>Hear us and have mercy.</p>	<p><u>April</u> 30 – Hot Dog Sunday</p> <p><u>May</u> 07 – Shaloka – Memorial 14 – Dellermann Family 21 – 28 – Pat Lane</p> <p>Coffee Hour is a wonderful chance for us to get together to break bread and spend time with each other, to celebrate those whom we have held memorials for, and to come together as the family of God outside of worship. To sign up, to host a coffee hour, contact Fr. Nicholas or Donna Bacon.</p>	<p><i>Thursday</i> Acts 8:26-39 John 6:40-44</p> <p><i>Friday</i> Acts 8:40-9:19 John 6:48-54</p> <p><i>Saturday</i> Acts 9:20-31 John 15:17-16:2</p> <p><u>Reading the Bible in a Year</u></p> <p>Apr 30: Psalms 5-8 May 01: Psalms 9-12 May 02: Psalms 13-16 May 03: Psalms 17-20 May 04: Psalms 21-24 May 05: Psalms 25-28 May 06: Psalms 29-32</p>

True Repentance Refreshes the Soul

April 24, 2023 · Fr. Barnabas Powell

Christ is risen!

I like this quote: “A vacation is what you take when you can no longer take what you’ve been taking.” Yep, I bet you know that feeling of being so fed up with the everyday activities of life that you say “STOP!”



And yet, why is it that too many of my vacations have been as stressful or more stressful than my regular schedule? It’s because an actual “refreshing” isn’t happening. And why is that? Because true refreshing is an internal reality. True, your outward circumstances can help, but nothing takes the place of inner peace for rejuvenating your life!

And the Wisdom of a Normal Orthodox life is filled with the disciplines that teach you how to control your thoughts, tame your

passions, and discipline your desires so that they serve you instead of master you. This Normal Orthodox life is available to all of us IF we are willing and humble enough to do the one thing that starts the process!

OK, so how do you get that?

Look at our lesson today in Acts 3:19-26:

IN THOSE DAYS, Peter said to the people, “Repent therefore, and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out, that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send the Christ appointed for you, Jesus, whom heaven must receive until the time for establishing all that God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets from of old. Moses said, ‘The Lord God will raise up for you a prophet from your brethren as he raised me up. You shall listen to him in whatever he tells you. And it shall be that every soul that does not listen to that prophet shall be destroyed from the people.’ And all the prophets who have spoken, from Samuel and those who came afterwards, also proclaimed these days. You are the sons of the prophets and of the covenant which God gave to your fathers, saying to Abraham, ‘And in your posterity shall all the families of the earth be blessed.’ God, having raised up his servant, sent him to you first, to bless you in turning every one of you from your wickedness.”

Let’s set the scene: The Lord is risen from the dead, and the disciples have been empowered by the coming of the Holy Spirit to fulfill the command of the Lord to “make disciples of all nations.” And now St. Peter is preaching his famous Pentecost sermon to the multitude of the people gathered in Jerusalem and they have just asked him what I asked above: What do we do?

St. Peter’s answer is still the answer for you and me today: Repent. What a powerful word! St. Isaac the Syrian said “This life has been given to you for repentance. Do not waste it on vain pursuits.” The truth is

the whole of living a Normal Orthodox life is learning how to make repentance your everyday lifestyle. It is in learning how to repent that creates a perpetual refreshing of your life and creates inner peace regardless of any external circumstances. So, how do we repent?

First, repenting isn't about being sorry you broke a rule. No, repentance comes from love. If I love God, then I want to be with Him and everything that stands in the way of me being with God needs repentance to remove that obstacle. And it starts with how I think. If I really love God and want to be with Him, that reality is reflected in my priorities. If my priorities are right then obstacles are removed. Next, repenting isn't just a negative; it's a positive also. A lifestyle of repentance means I am not just turning FROM something, but I am constantly turning TOWARDS Someone! A lifestyle of repentance is always a positive and encouraging lifestyle of choosing well. We must first stop thinking that repentance is some negative thing where God is "mad" at us for breaking His "rules" and start seeing repentance as the gift it is to refresh my life!

Finally, to repent is a moment-by-moment wakefulness. My need to repent has nothing to do with God loving or accepting me and everything to do with building an increasing awareness and sensitivity to my need for God's mercy and grace to heal me and refresh my weary heart. Repentance doesn't fix God because He's not the One broken. A lifestyle of repentance repairs and refreshes ME because I am the one who needs the grace of God to become "like" Him.

On this 2nd Monday of Pascha, we are still basking in the glow of the Resurrection, and we are still hearing the Paschal hymns and greeting each other with "Christ is risen!" But guard your heart, dear one. Don't allow the familiarity of this season to rob you of the wonder and cosmic beauty of the miracle of the Resurrection. Especially as we move toward the Feast of Pentecost, let's make a promise to one another that we will be attentive to repentance during this time and allow our thoughts to be focused on being filled with the Holy Spirit and empowered by the Spirit to share this wonderful faith with everyone we know!

Today, when was the last time you had your life refreshed by honest repentance? Have you fallen for the con game of the evil one to convince you that you don't need to repent or that you're too evil to repent? Isn't it time your life had a true refreshing? Since Christ has destroyed death, my dearest, there is simply no need for you to stay stuck. So, let's live in the Resurrection and have a Normal Orthodox life!

Prayer for the Week

Christ our God, You are the Life that dawned from the grave, though the tomb was sealed. Through closed doors You came to the Apostles. You are the Resurrection of all. And, You renewed us through them with an upright spirit, according to Your great mercy.

<https://blogs.ancientfaith.com/faithencouraged/2023/04/true-repentance-refreshes-the-soul/>

It Is God Who Seeks Us Out

A child who has been adopted by loving parents knows from the outset that he is loved, because he knows they chose him. He was not simply accepted because he was conceived and born into their midst, but was sought out to become their child. God is like that with us! "Although it may appear outwardly that we make our way toward God, the joyful and wonderful truth is that it is God who comes to us (Matthew the Poor)."

With love in Christ,
Abbot Tryphon

<https://abbottryphon.com/the-wonderful-truth-3/>

April/May Events

April

30 – 10:00am Divine Liturgy
Education Sunday

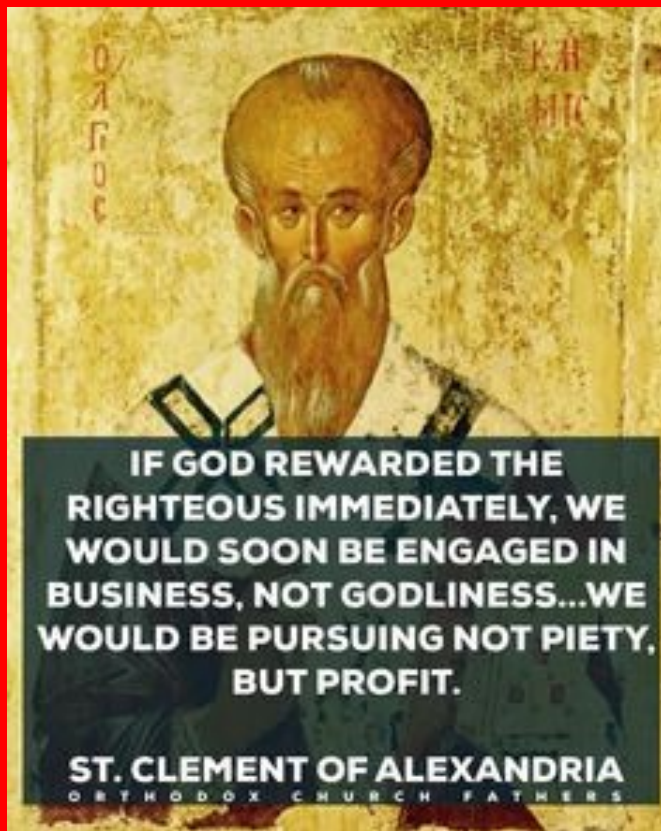
May

03 – 7:15pm Bible Study via GoogleMeets
07 – 10:00am Divine Liturgy
1:30pm Blessing of the Graves
(Lawnview)
10 – 7:15pm Bible Study via GoogleMeets
14 – 10:00am Divine Liturgy
1:30pm Blessing of the Graves
(Magnolia)
17 – 7:15pm Bible Study via GoogleMeets
21 – 10:00am Divine Liturgy
1:30pm Blessing of the Graves
(Forrest Hills)
24 – 6:30pm Vespertal Liturgy *Feast of Ascension*
28 – 10:00am Divine Liturgy
29 – Blessing of the Graves
(Fernwood)
31 – 7:15pm Bible Study via GoogleMeets

Can't join us in person?

We stream our services on our YouTube Channel:

<https://www.youtube.com/@sspeterpaulorthodoxhurcho1810>



Saint Donatus, Bishop of Euroea in Epirus

Commemorated on April 30

Saint Donatus lived during the reign of the holy Emperor Theodosius the Great (379-397) and was bishop of the city of Euroea (in Albania). Not far from this city, in the vicinity of Soreia, was a brackish spring of water. When the saint learned of this, he went with clergy to the spring and cast out a monstrous serpent, which died. The saint prayed, he blessed the spring and drank the water without harm. Seeing this miracle, the people glorified God.

Another time, Saint Donatus prayed and brought forth water from a dry and rocky place, and during a drought he entreated the Lord to send rain to the parched land.

The daughter of the holy Emperor Theodosius fell terribly ill and was afflicted by an unclean spirit. Saint Donatus came to the palace, and as soon as he arrived the devil left and the sick woman was healed.

A certain man, shortly before his death, repaid a loan to a money-lender. The creditor tried to extort the money a second time from the dead man's widow. The saint resurrected the dead man, who told where and when the loan had been repaid. After obtaining a receipt from the creditor, the man fell asleep in the Lord.

Saint Donatus reposed in peace about the year 387.

†Anastasios

Archbishop of Tirana, Durrës, and All Albania

Easter 2023

Overcome pain – Paschal joy

«Rejoice!» (Mat.28:9)

*Pascha! With joy let us embrace one another.**Pascha, the ransom from sorrow! (Stichera of Pascha)*

Pascha this year invites us to a difficult exercise. These past years and especially the recent months have accumulated multifaceted grief around us and in our hearts: unspeakable pain from the railway calamity and the multitude of victims from the earthquake in our region, indescribable distress from the merciless war in Ukraine. Simultaneously, various personal and social trials increase the rays of suffering. However, the Church, with her superb hymnology of Pascha, calls us to a decisive transcendence: “Pascha! With joy let us embrace one another. Pascha, the ransom from sorrow!”

Grief and joy coexist in human life. This truth is emphasized vividly in the events experienced during Holy Week. Before the Passion, Christ during the Mystical Supper clarified to His disciples: “Therefore you now have sorrow; but I will see you again and your heart will rejoice, and your joy no one will take from you” (John 16:22).

Pain agitates us in the days of the Passion, but it is ultimately overcome in the light of the triumph of the Resurrection. The first decisive word and exhortation of the Risen Lord to the devoted Myrrh-bearing women who rushed to His tomb was: “Rejoice!” (Mat. 28.9). When the Risen Christ first appeared to the disciples, the evangelist John notes that “they were glad when they saw the Lord” (John 20:20). The joy of Pascha springs from the polymorphous pain that preceded it: betrayal, disapproval, contempt, death on the Cross. The cross-resurrectional Pascha redeems every sorrow. The resurrection of Christ certifies the victory of truth over falsehood, love over hate, and the triumph of life over death. The risen Christ dispels every shadow of Hades. He demolishes the dominion of death, which brings violence, arrogance, mania for wealth, exploitation, injustice.

The intermingling of pain and joy surprises us. However, this harmonization of opposites remains a characteristic of the life in Christ. The Apostle Paul emphasizes this extraordinary experience: “in much tribulation, with joy of the Holy Spirit” (1 Thess. 1:6). This is an amazing harmonization, a paradoxical counterpoint. He describes it expressively in another of his letters: “We are hard-pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed” (2 Cor. 4:8-10). And elsewhere: “as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet

†Anastasi

Kryepiskop i Tiranës, Durrësit dhe i gjithë Shqipërisë

Pashkë 2023

Kapërcimi i dhimbjes – Gëzimi paskal

«Gëzohuni!» (Mt. 28:9)

*«Pashka, me gaz le të përqafojmë njëri-tjetrin,**Oh, Pashka, na çliron prej hidhërimit» (Vargëzim I Pashkës).*

Pashka e këtij viti na fton në një betejë të vështirë. Këto vite, veçanërisht muajt e fundit, kanë grumbulluar rreth nesh, por edhe në zemrën tonë, një hidhërim të shumëtrajtshëm: Dhimbje të parrëfyeshme për shkak të fatkeqësisë hekurudhore dhe numrit të madh të të prekurve nga tërmeti tek fqinjët tanë, pikëllim të papërshkrueshëm për shkak të luftës së ashpër në Ukrainë. Këtyre hidhërimeve u shtohen edhe sprovat e ndryshme personale e shoqërore. Megjithatë, Kisha, përmes himnologjisë së mrekullueshme të Pashkës, na fton në një kalim vendimtar: «Pashka, me gaz le të përqafojmë njëri-tjetrin, Oh, Pashka, na çliron prej hidhërimit».

Hidhërimi dhe gëzimi gjenden përkrah njëri-tjetrit në jetën njerëzore. Kjo e vërtetë theksohet fort në ngjarjet e Javës së Madhe. Përpara Pësimit, gjatë Darkës Mistike, Krishti ua bëri të qartë nxënësve: «Kështu dhe ju pra tani keni hidhërim, por kur përsëri do t’ju shoh dhe zemra juaj do të gëzohet dhe askush nuk do t’ju marrë gëzimin» (Jn. 16:22).

Dhimbja shkakton tronditje gjatë ditëve të Pësimeve, por, në fund, ajo mposhtet në dritën e ngadhënjimit të Ngjalljes. Fjala dhe këshilla e parë vendimtare e Krishtit të Ngjallur drejtuar Miroprurëseve të përkushtuara, që rendën me vrap drejt varrit, ishte: «Gëzohuni!» (Mt. 28:9). Kur Krishti i Ngjallur iu shfaq për herë të parë nxënësve të tij, Ungjillor Joani thotë se ata «u gëzuan kur panë Zotin» (Jn. 20:21). Gëzimi i Pashkës buron brenda dhimbjeve të shumëtrajshme që i kishte paraprirë: tradhëtia, mohimi, shpërfillja, vdekja në kryq. Pashka kryqngjallësore të çliron nga çdo lloj hidhërimi: Ngjallja e Krishtit vërteton fitoren e së vërtetës ndaj gënjeshtres, të dashurisë ndaj urrejtjes, ngadhënjimit e jetës mbi vdekjen. Krishti i Ngjallur zhduk çdo gjurmë të Hadhit. Trondit pushtetin e vdekjes që sjell dhuna, krenaria, padrejtësia.

Gërshetimi i dhimbjes me ngazëllimin na lë pa fjalë. Megjithatë, harmonizimi i të kundërtave mbetet karakteristikë e jetës në Krishtin. Apostull Pavli e thekson këtë përvojë të jashtëzakonshme: «... në shumë hidhërime, por me gëzimin e Shpirtit të Shenjtë» (1 Thes. 1:6). Kemi të bëjmë me një harmonizim të habitshëm, me një kundërshti të çuditshme. Ai e përshkruan këtë në mënyrë më shprehëse në një letër tjetër: «Jemi të munduar nga çdo anë, por jo të ligështuar; jemi të pështjelluar, por jo të dëshpëruar; përndiqemi, por nuk jemi të braktisur; na

possessing all things” (2 Cor. 6:6-11). Again, in the last book of the Holy Bible, the Revelation of John, the union of sorrow and the final victory of the crucified and resurrected Christ is summarized with astonishing symbolic images and the sequence of opposites.

* *

The harmonization of sorrow with the joy of the Holy Spirit which we are referring to initially appears impossible. Nevertheless, as the Apostle to the Gentiles confirms to us “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me” (Phil. 4:13). This union seems unfeasible, but a close relationship with the suffering and Risen Lord makes it possible. We experience this communion with the Incarnate Word of God by being incorporated in the Church, which is His mystical Body. The Holy Spirit, by this communion, acts in our existence, strengthens and delights our whole being. The resurrection is the foretaste of the ultimate victory of the God of love in the eschaton.

The resurrectional joy is based upon unshakable foundations. First, upon Christ’s assurance that “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth” (Matt. 28:18). Over the centuries, many appeared as rulers of the universe. But the One who has the final authority over what happens in the heavens and on earth is our Lord Jesus Christ. The second unshakeable foundation is the assurance of the Risen One that: “lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age” (Mat. 28:20). Our Lord is not a distant and indifferent spectator of what is occurring. He continues to be “with us” in all the phases and difficult moments of our life. And upon a third foundation: The Paschal joy which increases when it offers love where hate abounds, where despair ravages.

Pascha! With joy let us embrace one another.

Pascha, the ransom from sorrow!

Sadness and joy alternate in our lives. Unexpected excruciating situations are not absent from our journey, disasters that exceed our strength and defeat us. We feel uneasy to face them and frequently we are overwhelmed by fear. Nonetheless, let not our will remain inert. As much as it depends upon us, let us allow the light of the Resurrection to illuminate our life and let the Holy Spirit grant us endurance, patience, and hope. The cross-resurrectional joy is a distinct characteristic of life in Christ. For this reason, the preeminent Apostle insists: “rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice” (Phil. 4:4, 1 Thess. 5:16).

Therefore, let the joy of the Resurrection illuminate our lives, redeeming us from sorrow and gloom. Let the resurrectional certainty, the resurrectional phronema, support and suffuse our everyday lives with joy.

Christ is Risen!

kanë hedhur tej, por nuk kemi marrë fund» (2 Kor. 4:8-10). Edhe diku tjetër: «... jemi të hidhëruar, por gjithmonë të gëzuar; jemi të varfër, por pasurojmë shumë veta; nuk kemi asgjë, por në të vërtetë kemi gjithçka» (2 Kor. 6:6-11). Në librin e fundit të Shkrimit të Shenjtë, në Zbulesën e Joanit, përmbledhet, me anë të paraqitjeve simbolike tronditëse, harmonizimi i të kundërtave, ndërthurja e hidhërimit dhe fitores përfundimtare të Krishtit të kryqëzuar dhe të ngjalluar.

Harmonizimi i hidhërimit me gëzimin e Shpirtit të Shenjtë, për të cilën flitet, në pamje të parë duket i pamundur. Por, sikurse na siguron edhe Apostulli i kombeve, «unë mund të bëj gjithçka përmes Krishtit që më forcon» (Filip. 4:13). Kjo ndërthurje duket e pamundur, por marrëdhënia e ngushtë me Krishtin që pësoi dhe u ngjall e bën të mundur. Këtë kungim me Fjalën e Perëndisë së mishëruar e përjetojmë duke qenë pjesë e Kishës, e cila është Trupi i Tij mistik. Shpirti i Shenjtë, përmes këtij kungimi, vepron në jetën tonë, forcon dhe gëzon tërë qenien tonë. Ngjallja është parashijimi i fitores përfundimtare të Perëndisë, parashijim i dashurisë në amshim.

Gëzimi ngjallësor mbështetet mbi themele të forta. Së pari, mbështetet te siguria që na dha Krishti: «M’u dha çdo pushtet në qiell dhe në tokë» (Mt. 28:18). Përgjatë shekujve, shumë janë shfaqur si sundues të botës. Mirëpo, Ai që ka pushtetin përfundimtar për gjithçka që ndodh në qiell e mbi dhë është Zoti ynë Jisu Krisht. Themeli i dytë i patundur është siguria që dha Krishti i Ngjallur: «Unë do të jem me ju të gjitha ditët, deri në fund të kohërave» (Mt. 28:20). Zoti ynë nuk është i largët, nuk është vëzhgues shpërfillës i gjërave që ndodhin. Ai vazhdon të jetë “me ne” në të gjitha fazat dhe çastet e vështira të jetës sonë. Dhe, së treti: Gëzimi paskal shumëfishohet kur dhuron gëzim aty ku urrejtja është me tepri, aty ku dëshpërimi të merr frymën.

«Pashka, me gaz le të përqafojmë njëri-tjetrin,

Oh, Pashka, na çliron prej hidhërimit».

Hidhërimi dhe gëzimi këmbehen me njëri-tjetrin në jetën tonë. Në rrugëtimin tonë nuk mungojnë ngjarjet e dhimbshme të paparashikueshme, fatkeqësitë që kapërcejnë forcat tona dhe na vënë poshtë. Ndihe mi të pafuqishëm për t’i përballuar dhe shpesh na pushton frika. Megjithatë, vullneti ynë le të mos bjerë në plogështi. Për sa varet nga ne, le të lëmë që drita e Ngjalljes të ndriçojë jetën tonë dhe Shpirti i Shenjtë të na dhurojë qëndresë, durim, shpresë. Gëzimi kryqngjallësor është tipar dallues i jetës në Krishtin. Prandaj, Apostulli korife e thekson me këmbëngulje: «Gëzohuni gjithnjë në Zotin. Përsëri ju them: Gëzohuni!» (Filip. 4:4, 1 Thes. 5:16).

Gëzimi i Ngjalljes le ta ndriçojë, pra, jetën tonë, duke na çliruar nga hidhërimi dhe mjegulla. Siguria e ngjalljes, fryma ngjallësore, le të jenë mbështetje dhe burim gëzimi çdo ditë në jetën tonë.

Krishti u ngjall!