

SUNDAY OF THE MYRRH-BEARING WOMEN



Icon of the Myrrh-bearing Women

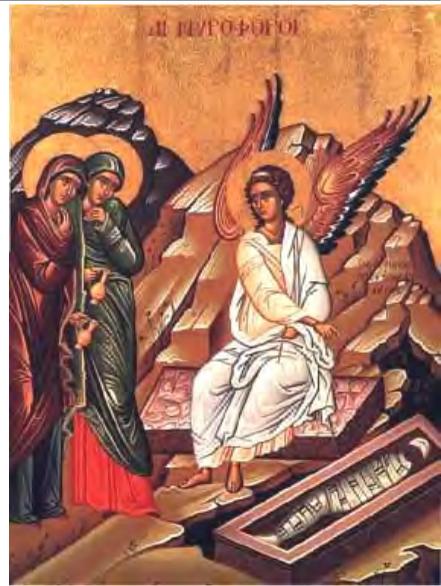
Reflections on the Scripture Readings for this Weekend

On this weekend dedicated to remembering the Myrrh-Bearing or Ointment-Bearing Women, our readings are again taken from the *Acts of the Apostles* and *Mark's Gospel*. The *Acts*, written by Luke, provides a broad survey of the Church's development from the Resurrection of Jesus to Paul's first Roman imprisonment, the point at which the book ends. Luke supplemented his Gospel by describing the origin and spread of the Christian communities in New Testament times. The portion we hear this weekend (6:1-7) relates how the Church came to the conclusion that it needed "assistants" to the Apostles.

Why did the Apostles need assistants? This was due to one of the essential characteristics of the Church, **SERVICE TO OTHERS**. Luke writes this: "The Twelve assembled the community of the disciples and said, 'It is not right for us to neglect the word of God in order to wait on tables.'" The two-fold mission of the Church: preaching the Good News given by Jesus and being of service to others. That mission is still true to this day.

The story we hear in Mark's Gospel is how Joseph of Arimathea and the women tended to the body of Jesus. Joseph had to bury the body of Jesus quickly and so the entire burial ritual was not carried out. Women came on the day after the Sabbath, that is on Sunday, to finish the burial ritual.

Although these people were fulfilling Jewish customs, they prefigured one of the essential elements of Christianity, namely **CORPORAL WORKS OF MERCY**. These works are charitable actions by which we help our neighbors in their bodily needs. The bodily works of mercy are to feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, shelter the homeless, clothe the naked, visit the sick,



visit the prisoners, bury the dead, and give alms to the poor. These actions come directly out of what Jesus preached about the final judgment (Matthew 26: 31-46) wherein Jesus said that these behaviors truly determine whether we are His followers. These serve as the criteria for what it means to be a true Christian.

The Church reminds us this weekend that service to others must be integrated into not only our community but into our individual lives. So we do well to examine ourselves this weekend and ask: *Am I true follower of Jesus?* Christians are known by their actions!

Understanding Our Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church

Our own Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church is attempting to establish in communities through-out the world what is called the VIBRANT PARISH PROGRAM. The intention of this program is to integrate into the life of every religious community activities that carry out the CORPORAL WORKS OF MERCY. Why? Because such actions are the hallmark of a Christian community. It is truly essential that even very small communities try to find ways to at least implement some of these WORKS both on a community level or on an individual level.

I am aware that it is difficult for small groups of people to try to integrate such acts as ongoing programs. It is something, however, that we must think about and at least make some attempt to find ways to at least tackle one of two of these WORKS.

When you look at the CORPORAL WORKS OF MERCY, you realize that they all are truly based on LOVE OF NEIGHBOR, perhaps the greatest command that Jesus gave to us. They all include giving a helping hand to some other person who is in need. They are not meant to be actions that only target our friends or relative. They

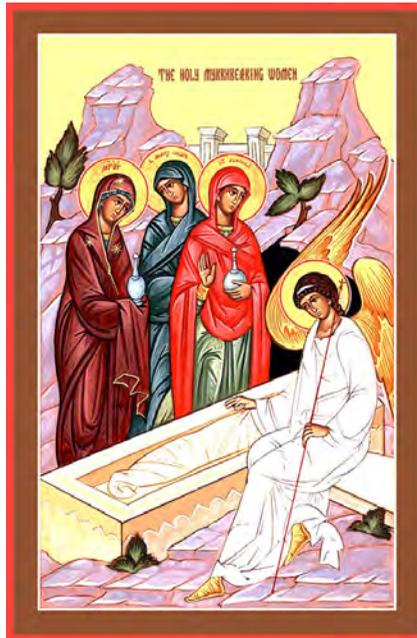
are actions which extend us into the world to bear witness to the message of Jesus. The love towards our neighbors and toward our fellowmen - Caritas - can be considered the core of Christianity. In the New Testament the deeds/manifestations of God's love are emphasized in many ways. In particular, the life and action of Jesus Christ show us how to practice this love in everyday life.

Attempting to put into practice the way that Jesus and His early followers lived, makes our religion - faith - much more real.

A fundamental life fact is that God loves us and that God's love to us became visible in Jesus Christ. The only true answer to God's love is our love, which is going in both ways: "In God and with God, I love even the person whom I do not like or even

know. Then I learn to look on this other person not simply with my eyes and my feelings, but from the perspective of Jesus Christ. His friend is my friend".

So let us think about this and decide how we can integrate this into our Christian communities and into our everyday lives. ***Do we truly want to be followers of Jesus Christ?***



Understand More About the Resurrection

On Anti-Pascha, St. Thomas weekend, I began sharing one of the unique aspects of our Eastern Christian understanding of the Resurrection of Jesus. As I stated, we do not place emphasis on Jesus coming out of the tomb but, rather, on the impact of His resurrection from the dead. They is clearly signified in His DESCENT INTO HADES. I began by sharing some vital information on the sources that our faith uses to support this particular emphasis. Understanding the impact of Christ's descent into Hades is, I believe, essential for our understanding of our faith.

In the first part of this article I shared that our Church bases its interpretation of the Resurrection not only on Scripture but also on tradition which is expressed in our liturgical texts and the writings of various Fathers of the Church. Our Church's interpretation of the event is not based only on the New Testament.

In addition to the sources I shared, there exist works by those called "teachers" of the church - theologians who influenced the formation of church doctrine but who, for various

reasons, have not been raised to the rank of "fathers." Their opinions are authoritative only inasmuch as they correspond to the teaching of the Church.

From apocryphal literature, only those works accepted by the church - either directly or indirectly - are considered authoritative. They include texts that have been reflected in the liturgical life of the Church or in other religious literature. Apocrypha rejected by the church do not have any standing for the Eastern Christian believer.

Finally, numerous theological works of both ancient and contemporary church authors, which clarify aspects of doctrine, may also be considered authoritative. Although the dogmatic teaching of the church is unchangeable for all time, it has required fresh explanations in different periods of church history. The Eastern Church does not limit the "patristic age" to any particular period in church history: this "age" continues over the entire course of history; for as long as Christ's church stands; and for as long as

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St. Michael's Parish News

A Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church in Dearborn Michigan

CONTINUING EDUCATION



During the Great Fast, I provided three articles which I thought might provoke some thought and learning. I would like to know if anyone would like me to continue providing such articles to stimulate thought. It is my personal belief that the more we know about our faith and religion the greater will be our experience going to church. I know that I print a lot in the Bulletin, but in order to get a lot out of it you have to faithfully read it each week. Let me know what you think.

A GOOD TIME WAS HAD BY ALL

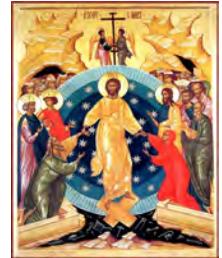


I would thank all that attended our Sviachenne, Easter Dinner. The food was absolutely delicious and the company grand. That all had a good time was evidenced by the fact that it seemed like very few wanted to go home. All had a great time just sharing life. **Thank you.**

*There isn't a way things should be.
There's just what happens, and
what we do*

CALLED TO HOLINESS

If you have been a faithful reader of this article on holiness, you realize that I have been "wandering" all over the place as I attempt to come to some real understanding of the idea of holiness. Indeed, holiness is not about becoming "perfect". That is an impossibility for us humans during this lifetime. In fact the Gospels tell us that only one is perfect and that person is Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God. Holiness does not consist in never making a mistake.

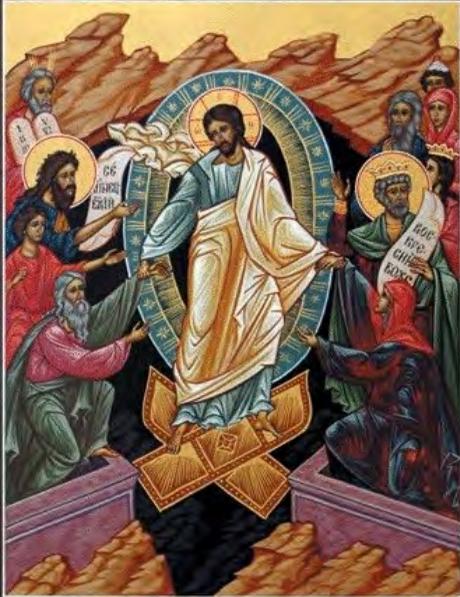


Holiness, as I suggested in the last issue of this article, is coming to a genuine and real understanding of the meaning and purpose of life and, it is important to note, a true and genuine understanding of our relationship with our Creator and other human beings. I think it is critical that we understand that we do have a relationship not only with God with other human beings.

It is important to ask yourself: *What is my relationship with other human beings? What is my relationship with my Creator-God?* Life is the school that God has given us to come to some answers to

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The World as Gift and Word



In the last issue of the Bulletin, I began sharing thoughts about our world as being a gift from God and Word - that is His revelation. I ended this article by indicating that the way Christians are called to respond to God's love is by offering back to Him the gifts He has given us, namely the gift of life. This is the primary focus of the Divine Liturgy, our worship of God. By doing this, the human person thus shows that he recognizes that all he has received from God as a gift does indeed belong to God. In its character as a gift from God, the world shows that it is not the ultimate and absolute reality. The world is necessary for the human

person not only because he needs it to be given to him, but also because he himself has need of it so that, in his turn, he may make a gift of it for the sake of his own spiritual growth. Thus the world proves once more its educative character for the human person. The human person makes further use of the world by the fact that he in turn gives it as a gift. Moreover, he does not lose the world totally in this act of offering it as a gift, but through it is enriched still more by the very fact of his own offering of it. In the Acts we read: "It is more blessed to give than to receive." Hence the human person is genuinely enriched not only through God's gift to him, but also through the complete dialogue of the gift, that is, through the reception and return of the gift. The paradox is explained by the fact that the gift received and returned draws the persons close to one another to such an extent that the object of the gift becomes something common and comes to be the transparent means for the fullest communion between persons. And not only is the gift something common, but it is also increased through the life which the persons communicate to one another through the love manifested in the gift they make; in this way the persons give themselves as gift, and through this giving they grow spiritually.

I suspect that most people have never really thought about this fact. These ideas can truly enrich our worship. Think about it. The gift of life we have is surrendered in thanksgiving.

Mysticism - A Characteristic of Our Church

In the last issue of this article, I ended with pointing out that in the early Church martyrdom was seen as the ultimate test of one's faith. In fact St. Ignatius of Antioch wrote: "Allow me to be an imitator of the passion of my God". Another author, Frend, insisted that it was from Judaism that the early Christians inherited what one might call a 'spirituality' of martyrdom. The martyr stood on the brink of the age to come, his death atoned for the failing of those who lived in expectation of the coming age, and brought that age closer. The age to come would be Paradise, the restoration of God's original creation (*it is worth noting that it is in reflection on the fate of the Maccabean martyrs that both the doctrine of creation out of nothing and, justified by that doctrine, belief in the resurrection of the body came to prominence within Judaism, and were thence bequeathed to Christianity*). According to one tradition, which seeks to understand Christ's death in terms of martyrdom, Christ goes from the cross to Paradise, taking with him the repentant thief. The Christian martyrs, as they die, see the risen and glorified Christ: first, St. Stephen (Acts 7:56) and then others. Karl Hall was doubtless wrong in seeking the original meaning of the word *martus* in the fact that the martyr was a witness to the risen Christ (i.e., had literally seen him), but it was a profound insight that led to the mistake. Some accounts of martyrdom, most notably the North African *Passion of Perpetua*, are full of items later associated with mysticism: visions, ecstasy, great intercessory power (availing even for the departed). But the literal following of Christ in martyrdom was not isolated from the other focus of Christian understanding of union with God, the Eucharist. Ignatius, in a clear eucharistic metaphor, sees himself as 'God's wheat, ground



fine by the teeth of wild beasts, that I may be found Christ's pure bread', and St. Polycarp, as he prays before the pyre is lit, models his prayer of self-offering on the eucharistic prayer he offered week by week.

So as we think about the fact that the early Church saw martyrdom as a means of union with God, we see the true beginnings of mysticism in our Eastern Church. The focus of our Eastern Spirituality is, of course, the attainment of true union with God by growing in our likeness of Jesus, the Christ.

SCHEDULE OF SERVICES

WEEK OF THE OINTMENT BEARERS

Sunday April 15 - Weekend of the Ointment-Bearers

10:00 AM + Mary Boyduy; Schlicht Family
+ Eva Papinchak; Bob & Corinne Boyko

Monday, April 16 - Agape, Irene & Chionia, Martyrs

8:00 AM - Special Intention

Tuesday, April 17 - Simeon of Persia, Venerable Martyr

No Service Scheduled

Wednesday, April 18 - John, Venerable

8:00 AM - Special Intention

Thursday, April 19 - John the Hermit, Venerable

No Service Scheduled

Friday, April 20 - Theodore the Hairshirt Wearer, Venerable

8:00 AM - Special Intention

Saturday, April 21 - Januarius & Others, Bishop Martyr

No Service Scheduled

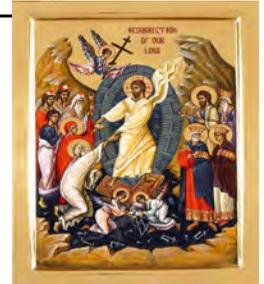
WEEK OF THE PARALYIC MAN

Sunday, April 22 - Weekend of the Paralytic Man

10:00 AM - George Durisin; Family (90th Birthday)

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these two questions in particular. I suppose one might say that the real questions are: *Why did God create me?* and *Why is life the way that it is?* I realize that these are deep questions that require us to truly think about our lives.

Holiness, to me, is becoming truly engaged in finding answers to these basic questions. When a person does this, they are engaged in the genuine "tasks" of earthly life. As I think about the people that we call saints, I realize that they were people who attempted to come to answers to these questions. Think about this and challenge yourself to answer these basic questions!



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LITURGY SCHEDULE

Sundays @ 10:00 AM
Ukrainian & English

Weekdays @ 8:00 AM
English

SACRAMENTS

Penance
By Appointment

Baptism & Matrimony
*In most instances membership
required for six months*

Funerals
*Membership of an immediate
family member required*

Parish Life Council

Bob & Corinne Boyko
734.451.1893

John & Janet Dicky
313.563.5509

Daria Drobny
313.791-0292

Robert Krokosky
248.431.9554

Leo & Mary LaDouceur
313.278.7378

Gordon Malaniak
734.564.9817

Leonard Mier
313.584-6795

Greg & Esther Petrovich
734.453-4354

Rafic Vawter
313.624.9867

<http://www.stmichaelarchangel.org>
[Facebook.com/stmichaelugccdbn](https://www.facebook.com/stmichaelugccdbn)

Understanding More About the Resurrection

(Continued from page 4 - Resurrection)

the Holy Spirit, who enlightens and inspires people to theological creativity, works within it. There exists, however, a clear criterion, by which Eastern theological positions of any period can be “tested” for dogmatic accuracy. For the Eastern Christian mind the criterion is faithfulness to church tradition.

Now, having established the sources of our Eastern understanding of the Resurrection, I would attempt to separate what in the dogma of Christ’s descent into Hades belongs to the teaching of the entire church from that which belongs to the realm of personal theological opinion. I do truly believe, however, that our Eastern approach to the Resurrection is much more spiritually rewarding to me. If we only emphasize that He came back to life and came out of the tomb, that, for me, has very little impact on my life and on what He accomplished.

First of all, belief in Christ’s descent into Hades and his preaching to the dead belongs to the realm of general church doctrine. This belief is based on the New Testament, works of the church fathers, and liturgical texts and, I might add, on the ICONOGRAPHY of our Church. It is, therefore, as significant for our church today as it was for the Christian church of early centuries. The teaching that Christ granted to *all* the possibility of salvation and opened for *all* the doors



to paradise should also be considered general church doctrine. This teaching is confirmed by the vast majority of liturgical texts referring to the subject, as well as by works of many church fathers.

Did all or only some follow Christ? Answers to this question belong to the realm of *theologoumena* (*theological speculation or opinion*). The doctrine on salvation formulated by the Eastern Fathers, particularly by Maximus the Confessor and John Damascene, can serve as a key to answering this question.

I shall keep my readers in suspense until next week when I share what these two fathers wrote. I hope that my readers understand the question. What was the impact of Jesus’ descent into Hades and His preaching to them? Did all therefore receive eternal life? Did only some gain eternal life? Does His descent tell us anything about our lives?

Some Thoughts About the Eucharist

The Eucharist is only the visible “effect” of an invisible “model:”; and the celebrant “by offering Jesus Christ to our eyes, shows us in a tangible way and, as an image, our intelligible life.” Thus, for Dionysius, “the loftiest sense of the Eucharistic rites and of sacramental communion itself is in symbolizing the union of our minds with God and with Christ”. Dionysius never formally presents Eucharistic communion as a participation in the Body and Blood of Christ. Dionysius’ symbolism only very superficially affected the Eucharistic rites themselves, but it became quite popular among commentators on the liturgy. Thus, the great Maximus the Confessor, whose use of the concept of “symbol” is probably much more realistic than Dionysius’ use, nevertheless systematically applies the terms *symbol* or *image* to the Eucharistic liturgy in general and to the elements of bread and wine.

In the eighth century, this symbolism led to a serious theological debate concerning the Eucharist - the only one Byzantium ever knew. The iconoclastic council of 754, in condemning the use of religious images, proclaimed that the only

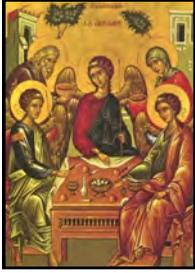
admissible *image* of Christ is the one established by Christ Himself, the Eucharistic Body and Blood. This radical and clear contention, based upon a long-standing tradition, was a real challenge to those who were the true believers. The ambiguity of the Areopagite was evidenced once more, and a clarification of symbolism made necessary.

Thus, the defenders of the images, especially Theodore the Studite and Patriarch Nicephorus, firmly rejected it. For Theodore, the Eucharist is not *type*, but the very *truth*. It is the *mystery* which recapitulates the whole of the divine dispensation. According to Nicephorus, it is the *flesh of God, one and the same thing*, with the Body and blood of Christ, who came to save the very reality of human flesh by



becoming and remaining *flesh*, even after His glorification. Thus , in the Eucharist, what is the matter of the sacrament, if the flesh is not real, so that we see it being perfected by the Spirit?”

Indeed the Eucharist is a great and wonderful mystery whereby the very essence of Christ is made present to us when we remember what He did with His disciples before He died.



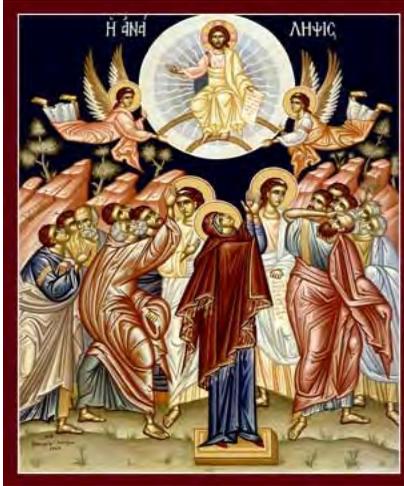
THE EASTERN HERALD

СХІДНЬЙ ВІСНИК

The Weekly Newsletter of Very Reverend Canon Wayne J. Ruchgy, Ph.D.
Vol. 64 No 15 Weekend of the Ointment-Bearers April 14-15, 2018

The Spirituality of the Christian East

I indicated in the last issue of this article, that our spirituality is not “devotion-based” but, rather “worship-based”. What did I mean? I meant to indicate that, for example, we do not worship Christ in the Blessed Sacrament but, rather, partake of His essence in the changed Bread and Wine which become His very Body and Blood. It is in the very action of receiving His Body and Blood that we become united - come into communion - with Him and one another. This approach changes, therefore, the way that we look at the transformed Bread and Wine. We base our approach on the fact that Jesus said to His disciples that He would be present to them in a real way when they *ate is body and drank His blood*. We do not see the transformed gifts as *objects* that we come and venerate or pray before. They are the spiritual food that we partake of with a *desire* to have the



Life's Journey is an Ascension to the Heavenly Father

Lord present to us. This is why we partake of the transformed gifts, or at least this is how we should think as we make a decision to partake of Holy Communion.

We use the words Holy Communion to indicate that we want to have a UNION WITH Christ. Of course we never do this as an individual but, rather, as a community of believers. *(It is to be noted that an Eastern priest cannot celebrate the Divine Liturgy by himself. There must always be at least one other person)*. So, when we are in communion with Christ, we also have to be in communion with others. This spells out what Christ said when He said: *Love your neighbors as yourself*. The Eucharist is all about UNION WITH Christ and others.

This is probably something that we don't think about often. We do well, however, to think about it.

The Myrrh-Bearing Women

The Sunday of the Myrrh-Bearing Women ... reminds us that the love and faithfulness of a few individuals shone brightly in the midst of hopeless darkness. It calls us to ensure that in this world love and faithfulness do not disappear or die out. It judges our lack of courage, our fear, our endless and servile rationalizations. The mysterious Joseph and Nicodemus, and these women who go to the grave at dawn, occupy so little space in the gospels. Precisely here, however, is where the eternal fate of each of us is decided.

Today, I think, we are especially in need of recovering this love and basic human loyalty. For we have entered a time when even these are being discredited by harmful concepts of the person and human life now prevailing in this world. For centuries, the world still had the weak, but still

flickering and shining, glow from that faithfulness, love and co-suffering which was silently present at the sufferings of the Man cast aside by all. And we need to cling, as if to a last thread, to everything in our world that still thrives on the warm light of simple, earthly, human love. Love does not ask about theories and ideologies, but speaks to the heart and soul. Human history has rumbled along, kingdoms have risen and fallen, cultures have been built and bloody wars fought, but what has remained unchanging on earth and in this troubled and tragic history is the bright image of the woman. An image of care, self-giving, love, compassion. Without this presence, without this light, our world, regardless of its successes and accomplishments, would be a world of terror.

Father Alexander Schmemmann