

The Arena



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The Newsletter of
SAINT KATHERINE THE GREAT MARTYR MISSION
ORTHODOX CHURCH OF AMERICA

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A NAME FOR OUR NEWSLETTER

The new name for our Newsletter, as can be seen above, is "The Arena." Thank you all for your suggestions and for your patience as we considered them all.

PASTOR'S COLUMN

**Archpastoral Message of His Beatitude,
Metropolitan Herman for Pascha 2008**

Christ is Risen! Indeed He is Risen!

To the Very Reverend and Reverend Clergy, Monastics, and Faithful of The Orthodox Church in America

Dearly Beloved in the Lord,

The Gospel of St. John tells of St. Mary Magdalene's encounter with the Risen Christ at the empty tomb. St. Mary weeps, believing that someone has taken the Lord's Body away. Christ approaches her and asks her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom do you seek?" Not recognizing the Lord at first, she asks Him if He knows where the body of her Master has been taken. Jesus replies, "Mary!" and immediately she recognizes Him.

In this passage we witness a profound encounter between the Lord and His servant. Simply by saying her name, Christ transforms St. Mary Magdalene's lamentation into joy. What a difference even one word, spoken at a critical moment, can make in one's life.

Writing on this passage, St. Ambrose of Milan offers an important insight into the nature of faith. He states that by asking St. Mary, "Whom do you seek?" the Lord was in effect saying: "You are the cause of your own weeping; you are the author of your own lamentation, because you are disbelieving of Christ. Believe and you will see Him."

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Looking at the world from the perspective of belief makes a profound difference in what we see. The homeless person that we pass on the street, through eyes of faith, is recognized as a living icon of the living God. The crying child in our arms, through eyes of faith, is embraced as a sacred trust that God has given us to raise according to His Way. The struggles and toils of daily life, through eyes of faith, are known to be the Cross which we are called to take up as disciples of the Lord.

For most in our society, "Easter" is long gone this year. For faithful Orthodox Christians, we have only just arrived at the celebration of Pascha. Our fasting, our prayer, our Lenten journey is only now fulfilled.

"Believe and you will see Him." The reality of the Resurrection, witnessed through eyes of faith, changes everything. No longer do we need to be subject to sorrow or fear. Christ is risen, and nothing can take His victorious gift of everlasting life away from us. The holy confessors and martyrs were well aware of this. This awareness gave them the courage to stay the course of their faith, under the greatest of hardships. Even facing the threat of death, through eyes of faith, they were acutely aware of the Victor of death strengthening and comforting them.

It is only through our belief that we behold the full splendor and beauty of Pascha. With eyes of faith, on Pascha we become witnesses to the complete and ultimate victory of life over death, of freedom over captivity, of God over the evil one. "Trampling down death by death," our Risen Lord and Savior Jesus Christ grants new life to all who believe in Him as King and as God.

I greet all of you on this radiant feast. May we celebrate the most-holy day of Pascha "with faith and with love." May the triumphant brilliance of Christ's resurrection fill our lives with joy and peace. "Believe and we will see Him."

With love in the Risen Lord,



+ HERMAN

Archbishop of Washington and New York
Metropolitan of All America and Canada

PARISH COUNCIL MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

There was no Parish Council Meeting in April. The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, May 21st.

PARISH AND LOCAL EVENTS

Before Passion Week the Parish Council made an offer to our landlord for the purchase of our existing building, but on Bright Monday this offer was rejected.

On Bright Wednesday, the Parish Council and other members of the parish who have played an active role in our efforts to acquire property hosted a meeting with our diocesan architect, John Della Monica of Holy Cross Church in Sacramento. John led us in a discussion of the process necessary for selecting, purchasing, and developing property that either includes an existing structure (such as the building we presently occupy) or raw land. He sought to help us calculate the costs and estimate the time needed for doing this. He also described some projects that other parishes have undertaken. He recorded his presentation on sheets of paper that have been left on the walls upstairs for parishioners to read.

CALENDAR HIGHLIGHTS:

May 17: Evangelization Ministry Meeting @ 4:30pm

May 20: Great Vespers @ 7pm

May 21: Divine Liturgy for Midfeast of Pentecost @ 7am

Parish Council Meeting @ 7pm

May 29: Inquirer's Course @ 7pm

June 5: Ascension

June 17: Pentecost

June 23: Start of Apostles Fast (6 days long)

June 29: Feast of Sts. Peter and Paul

CATECHETICAL CHALLENGES (Our Catechumens can answer them. Can you?).

- Liturgical challenge: What hymn replaces the Trisagion ("Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal, have mercy on us") at the Paschal Divine Liturgy, and why?
- Scriptural challenge: Which Old Testament Prophet speaks about a valley of dry bones and by doing so foretells the future Resurrection in Christ (hint: it is read at Matins for Holy Saturday)?
- Historical challenge: Which Russian saint was known always to wear a white cassock in honor of the Resurrection?

Answers from last month

- Liturgical challenge: Sundays are weekly "Paschas," manifesting our resurrection in Christ, and so we do not kneel or perform many of the other acts of penitence that are customary on weekdays of the Great Fast.
- Scriptural challenge: Acts 8:14-17
- Historical challenge: The Forty Days were designed originally for the catechumens to make ready for Passion Week and their reception into the Church.



THE LIVES OF THE SAINTS

St. Emelia – January 1st and May 8th

The holy and righteous Emilia (also Emily or Emmelia), is the mother of Saint Basil the Great and several other children who are saints of the Church.

Churches of the Russian tradition keep her feast on January 1, along with her son Basil. Greek churches keep her feast on May 30, along with her husband Saint Basil the Elder and her mother-in-law, Saint Macrina the Elder.

There are very few descriptions of Saint Emilia's life. She was the daughter of a martyr and the daughter-in-law of Macrina the Elder. Along with her husband,

Basil the Elder, she gave birth to ten children. She instilled the Orthodox faith in her children, teaching them to pray and devote their lives to the service of the Church. As a result of her zealous yet maternal instruction of her children, five of them are commemorated as saints on the Church calendar: Sts. Macrina, Basil, Peter of Sebaste, Gregory of Nyssa, and Theosebia, a deaconess. Therefore, Saint Emilia is often called "the mother of saints."

When her son, Naucratius, suddenly died at the age of twenty-seven, she was consoled by her eldest daughter, Macrina. Macrina reminded her that it was not befitting to a Christian to "mourn as those who have no hope" and inspired her to hope courageously in the resurrection vouchsafed to us by the Pascha of the Lord.

After her children left home, St. Emilia was persuaded by Macrina to forsake the world. Together they founded a monastery for women. Emilia divided the family property among her children. Retaining only some meager possessions, she and Macrina withdrew to a secluded family property in Pontus, picturesquely located on the banks of the Iris River and not far from Saint Basil's wilderness home. A number of liberated female slaves desired to join the pair, and a convent was formed. They lived under one roof and held everything in common: They ate, worked, and prayed together. They were so eager to advance in virtue that they regarded fasting as food and poverty as riches. The harmony of this model community of women was unspoiled by anger, jealousy, hatred, or pride. Indeed, as the Church sings of monastics, they lived like angels in the flesh.

Living in this manner for many years, Emilia reached old age. When an illness signaled her departure from this world, her son Peter came to her side. Together with Macrina, he tended to his mother in her last days. As the oldest and the youngest, Macrina and Peter held a special place in Emilia's heart.

Before committing her soul to the Lord, she raised her voice to Heaven, saying, "To you, O Lord, I give the first fruits and the tithe of the fruit of my womb. The first fruit is my first-born daughter, and the tithe is this, my youngest son. Let these be for you a rightly acceptable sacrifice, and let your holiness descend upon them!" St. Emilia was buried as she had requested, beside her husband in the chapel at their estate in Annesi, where Naucratius had also been laid. She entered into rest in the Lord on May 8th, 375.

WISDOM OF THE FATHERS

THE PASCHAL SERMON BY ST. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM (347-407)

Are there any who are devout lovers of God?
Let them enjoy this beautiful bright festival!

Are there any who are grateful servants?
Let them rejoice and enter into the joy of their Lord!

Are there any weary from fasting?
Let them now receive their due!

If any have toiled from the first hour,
let them receive their reward.

If any have come after the third hour,
let them with gratitude join in the feast!

Those who arrived after the sixth hour,
let them not doubt; for they shall not be short-changed.

Those who have tarried until the ninth hour,
let them not hesitate; but let them come too.

And those who arrived only at the eleventh hour,
let them not be afraid by reason of their delay.

For the Lord is gracious and receives the last even as the first.
The Lord gives rest to those who come at the eleventh hour,
even as to those who toiled from the beginning.

To one and all the Lord gives generously.
The Lord accepts the offering of every work.
The Lord honours every deed and commends their intention.

Let us all enter into the joy of the Lord!

First and last alike, receive your reward.
Rich and poor, rejoice together!

Conscientious and lazy, celebrate the day!
You who have kept the fast, and you who have not,
rejoice, this day, for the table is bountifully spread!

Feast royally, for the calf is fatted.
Let no one go away hungry.
Partake, all, of the banquet of faith.
Enjoy the bounty of the Lord's goodness!

Let no one grieve being poor,
for the universal reign has been revealed.

Let no one lament persistent failings,
for forgiveness has risen from the grave.

Let no one fear death,
for the death of our Saviour has set us free.

The Lord has destroyed death by enduring it.
The Lord vanquished hell when he descended into it.
The Lord put hell in turmoil even as it tasted of his flesh.

Isaiah foretold this when he said,
"You, O Hell, were placed in turmoil when he encountering you below."

Hell was in turmoil having been eclipsed.
Hell was in turmoil having been mocked.
Hell was in turmoil having been destroyed.
Hell was in turmoil having been abolished.
Hell was in turmoil having been made captive.

Hell grasped a corpse, and met God.
Hell seized earth, and encountered heaven.
Hell took what it saw, and was overcome by what it could not see.

O death, where is your sting?
O hell, where is your victory?

Christ is risen, and you are cast down!
Christ is risen, and the demons are fallen!
Christ is risen, and the angels rejoice!
Christ is risen, and life is set free!
Christ is risen, and the tomb is emptied of its dead.

For Christ, having risen from the dead,
is become the first-fruits of those who have fallen asleep.
To Christ be glory and power forever and ever. Amen!

THE ORTHODOX FAITH

An excerpt from Fr. Hopko's *The Orthodox Faith: Worship, Volume II*

The Church Year: Post- Easter Sundays

St Thomas Sunday: Antipascha

Every day during the week of Easter, called **Bright Week** by the Church, the paschal services are celebrated in all their splendor. The Easter baptismal procession is repeated daily. The royal gates of the sanctuary remain open. The joy of the Resurrection and the gift of the Kingdom of eternal life continue to abound. Then, at the end of the week, on Saturday evening, the second Sunday after Easter is celebrated in remembrance of the appearance of Christ to the Apostle Thomas "after eight days" (*Jn 20:26*).

It is important to note that the number eight has symbolical significance in both Jewish and Christian spiritual tradition. It signifies more than completion and fullness; it signifies the Kingdom of God and the life of the world to come since seven is the number of earthly time. The **sabbath, the seventh day**, is the blessed day of rest in this world, the final day of the week. The "first day of the week," the day "after Sabbath"; stressed in all of the gospels as the day of Christ's Resurrection (*Mk 16:1, Mt 28:1, Lk 24:1, Jn 20:1, 19*), is therefore also the eighth day," the day beyond the confines of this world, the day which stands for the life of the world to come, the day of the eternal rest of the Kingdom of God (see Hebrews 4).



The Sunday after Easter, called the Second Sunday, is thus the eighth day of the paschal celebration, the last day of **Bright Week**. It is therefore called the **Antipascha**, and it was only on this day in the early church that the newly-baptized Christians removed their robes and entered once again into the life of this world.

In the Church services the stress is on the Apostle Thomas' vision of Christ and the significance of the day comes to us in the words of the gospel:

Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side; do not be faithless, but believing." Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!" Jesus said to him, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe" (John 20:27-29).

We have not seen Christ with our physical eyes nor touched his risen body with our physical hands, yet in the Holy Spirit we have seen and touched and tasted the Word of Life (*1 Jn 1:1-4*), and so we believe. At each of the daily services until Ascension Day we sing the **Easter Troparion**. At each of the Sunday services beginning with Antipascha, we sing the Easter canon and hymns, and repeat the celebration of the "first day of the week" on which Christ rose from the dead. At all of the liturgies the epistle readings are taken from the **Book of Acts** telling us of the first Christians who lived in communion with the Risen Lord. All of the gospel readings are taken from the **Gospel of St John**, considered by many to be a gospel written particularly for those who are newly-baptized into the new life of the Kingdom of God through death and new birth in Christ, in the name of the Holy Trinity. The reason for this opinion is that all of the "signs" -- as the miracles in St

John's Gospel are called -- deal with sacramental themes involving water: wine and bread. Thus, each of the Sundays after Thomas Sunday with the exception of the third, is dedicated to the memory of one of these "signs."

The Myrrhbearing Women

The third Sunday after Pascha is dedicated to the **myrrhbearing women** who cared for the body of the Saviour at his death and who were the first witnesses of his Resurrection. The three troparia of Holy Friday are sung once again and from the theme of the day:

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.

When Thou didst descend to death, O Life Immortal, Thou didst slay hell with the splendor of Thy Godhead.

The angel came to the myrrhbearing women at the tomb and said: Myrrh is fitting for the dead, but Christ has shown himself a stranger to corruption! So proclaim: The Lord is risen, granting the world great mercy.



The Paralytic



The fourth Sunday is dedicated to Christ's healing of the **paralytic** (Jn 5). The man is healed by Christ while waiting to be put down into the pool of water. Through baptism in the church we, too, are healed and saved by Christ for eternal life. Thus, in the church, we are told, together with the paralytic, to sin no more that nothing worse befall you" (Jn 5:14).

The Feast of Mid-Pentecost

In the middle of this fourth week, the middle day between Easter and Pentecost is solemnly celebrated. It is called the feast of **Mid-Pentecost**, at which Christ, "in the middle of the feast" teaches men of his saving mission and offers to all "the waters of immortality" (Jn 7:14). Again we are reminded of the Master's presence and his saving promise: "If anyone is thirsty let him come to me and drink" (Jn 7:37). We think also once again of our death and resurrection with Christ in our baptism, and our reception of the Holy Spirit from him in our chrismation. We "look back to one, and anticipate the other" as one of the hymns of the feast puts it. We know that we belong to that kingdom of the Risen Christ where "the Spirit and the Bride say, 'Come!' And let him who is thirsty come, let him who desires take the water of life without price" (Rev 22:17. Is 55:1).



In the middle of the feast, O Saviour, fill my thirsting soul with the waters of godliness, as Thou didst cry unto all: If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink! O Christ God, Fountain of life, glory to Thee! (Troparion).

Christ God, the Creator and Master of all, cried to all in the midst of the feast of the law: Come and drink the water of immortality! We fall before Thee and faithfully cry: Grant us Thy bounties, for Thou art the Fountain of our life! (Kontakion)

The Samaritan Woman



The fifth Sunday after Easter deals with the **woman of Samaria** with whom Christ spoke at Jacob's Well (*Jn 4*). Again the theme is the "living water" and the recognition of Jesus as God's Messiah (*Jn 4:10-11; 25-26*). We are reminded of our new life in him, of our own drinking of the "living water," of our own true worship of God in the Christian messianic age "in Spirit and in Truth" (*Jn 4:23-24*). We see as well that salvation is offered to all: Jews and Gentiles, men and women, saints and sinners.

The Blind Man

The sixth Sunday commemorates the healing of **the man blind from birth** (*Jn 9*). We are identified with that man who came to see and to believe in Jesus as the Son of God. The Lord has anointed our eyes with his own divine hands and washed them with the waters of our baptism (**John 9:6-11**).

Jesus used clay of spittle and told the man to wash in the waters of Siloam. He did so because it was the Sabbath day on which spitting, clay-making and washing were strictly forbidden. By breaking these ritual laws of the Jews, Jesus showed that he is indeed the Lord of the Sabbath, and, as such, that he is equal to God the Father Who alone, according to Jewish tradition, works on the Sabbath day in running his world.



There is scandal over the healing of the blind man on the Sabbath day. He is separated from the synagogue because of his faith in Christ. The entire Church follows this man in his fate, knowing that it is those who do not see Jesus as the Lord who are really blind and still in their sins (*Jn 9:41*). The others have the light of life and can see and know the Son of God, for "you have seen him, and it is he who speaks to you" (*Jn 9:37*).

I come to Thee, O Christ, blind from birth in my spiritual eyes, and call to Thee in repentance: Thou art the most radiant Light of those in darkness! (Kontakion)

PASCHAL HYMNS

The Paschal Troparion

Christ is risen from the dead,
Trampling down death by death,
And upon those in the tombs bestowing life.

First Ode of the Paschal Canon

This is the day of resurrection !
Let us be illumined for the feast!
Pascha! The Pascha of the Lord!
From death unto life,
and from earth unto heaven
has Christ our God led us!
Singing the song of victory:
Christ is risen from the dead!

Evlogetaria (sung at Holy Saturday and Resurrectional Matins)

Blessed are You, Lord, teach me your statutes.

The company of angels was amazed seeing you numbered among the dead, O Savior, who destroyed the power of death and raised up Adam with yourself, setting all free from Hades.

Blessed are You, Lord, teach me your statutes.

Why mingle spices with tears of pity, O women disciples, cried the resplendent angel from within the tomb to the myrrh-bearing women. Behold the tomb and understand, for the Savior has risen from the grave.

Blessed are You, O Lord, teach me your statutes.

The myrrh-bearing women hastened early in the morning to your tomb lamenting. But the angel arose before them and said: The time for lamentation has ceased. Weep not, but tell the apostles of the resurrection.

Blessed are you, Lord, teach me your statutes.

The myrrh-bearing women came to your tomb, O Savior. But they heard an angel say to them: Why count the living one among the dead? For as God he has risen from the tomb.

Glory to the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

We worship the Father together with the Son and the Holy Spirit, the Holy Trinity, one in essence, and we cry together with the Seraphim: Holy, holy, holy, are you, O Lord.

Now and forever and to the ages of ages. Amen.

O Virgin, you have given birth to the Giver of life; you have delivered Adam from sin, and to Eve you have brought joy in the place of sorrow. He who took flesh from you, who is both God and man, has raised up those who had fallen from life. *Alleluia, Alleluia, alleluia, glory to You, O God (3).*

TROPARIA & KONTAKIA: MAY

May 4

Antipascha – St. Thomas Sunday

Troparion - Tone 7

From the sealed tomb, You did shine forth O Life!
Through closed doors You did come to Your disciples, O Christ God!
Renew in us, through them, an upright spirit,
By the greatness of Your mercy, O Resurrection of all!

Kontakion - Tone 8

Thomas touched Your life-giving side with an eager hand, O Christ God,
When You did come to Your apostles through closed doors.
He cried out with all: You are my Lord and my God!

May 11 – Mother's Day

Sunday of the Holy Myrrhbearing Women with the Noble Joseph

Troparion - Tone 2

The Noble Joseph,
When he had taken down Your most pure Body from the tree,
Wrapped it in fine linen and anointed it with spices,
And placed it in a new tomb.
But You did rise on the third day, O Lord,
Granting the world great mercy.

Troparion - Tone 2

The angel came to the myrrhbearing women at the tomb and said:
Myrrh is meet for the dead;
But Christ has shown Himself a stranger to corruption!
So proclaim: the Lord is risen,
Granting the world great mercy!

Kontakion - Tone 2

You did command the myrrh-bearers to rejoice, O Christ!
By Your Resurrection, You did stop the lamentation of Eve, O God!
You did command Your apostles to preach: The Savior is Risen!

May 18

Sunday of the Paralytic

Kontakion - Tone 3

By Your divine intercession, O Lord,
as You raised up the paralytic of old,
so raise up my soul, paralyzed by sins and thoughtless acts;
so that being saved I may sing to You:
"Glory to Your power, O compassionate Christ!"

May 25

Sunday of the Samaritan Woman

Kontakion - Tone 8

The Samaritan Woman came to the well in faith;
She saw You, the Water of Wisdom, and drank abundantly
She inherited the Kingdom on High and is ever glorified!

PARISHIONERS' NAME DAYS – MAY

May 8th – Fr. John (Apostle and Evangelist John, the Theologian)

May 8th – Emily Lorelli and Emily Stchur (Emmelia, mother of St. Basil)

May 21st – Konstantin Beaty & Matushka Yelena (Equal to the Apostles, Emperor Constantine and his mother Helen)

PRAYER REQUESTS

Please keep the following people in your prayers this month:

LIVING:

Charles

Robert

Mark

Sarah

David

Patricia

Flore

Allan Simeon

Naheda

Gregory

Arne

Lena

Child Ben

Niki and the child to be born of her

Nicholas

DEPARTED:

ND (newly-departed) Ghergina