



Holy Ghost Orthodox Church

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CHRIST IS RISEN! INDEED HE IS RISEN!

ON THE MEND: Please keep the following parishioners and others in your prayers for recovery from their illnesses and injuries: Metropolitan Constantine, Patriarch Pavle, Metropolitan Theodosius, Bishop Robert, Father Peter Natishan, Father Gerald Olszewski, Father Jakiw Norton, Father Dragan Filipović, Father Elias Katras, Father Stevo Rocknage, Father Paul Stoll, Father Igor Soroka, Father Michael Mihalick [MS], Ollie Pendylshok, Walt & Evelyn Burlack, Joshua Agosto and his family, Harley Katarina Rahuba, Mike and Hilda Holupka, Eva Malesnick, Helen Likar, Stella Peanoske, Joe Nezolyk, Nick Behun, Grace Holupka, Virginia Bryan, Joseph Sliwinsky, Maria Balo, Linda Mechtly, Mary Mochnick, Mary Pekich, Mildred Manolovich, Evelyn Misko, Jeanne Boehing, Alex Drobot, Rachelle, Jane Golofski, Doug Diller, Harry Krewsun, Sandy Gamble, Glen Lucas Burlack, Bernie Vangrin, Mary Alice Babcock, Dorie Kunkle, Andrea, & Melissa [Betty O'Masta's relatives], Mary Evelyn King, Stella Cherepko, Sam Wadrose, Khoruia Joanne Abdalah, Cameron [a boy in Matt's class], Faith—a 6-year-old girl with rheumatoid arthritis, Isabella Olivia Lindgren—a 2-year-old with a brain tumor, Dillon, Ethel Thomas, Donna, Nick Malec [Maxine's brother], Erin, Jimmy Fennel [7th Grader], Jim Markovich, Jeff Walewski [thyroid cancer], Carol [Lotinski] Rose, Michael Miller, Dave May, Grace & Owen Ostrasky, Alverta, Margaret Mueller, Gary Zurasky, Michael Horvath, Patti Sinecki, David Genshi, Rita Very & family, Sue Segeleon, Mike Gallagher, Mildred Walters, Michael Miller, Mike Pelchar [Liz's brother], Jim Logue—throat cancer, Liz Stumpf, Ester Tylavsky, Ed Jamison, Theodore Nixon, Charles Johnson, Amy Forbeck, Michelle Corba Kapeluck, Gloria Prymak [Liz's niece], Robert Hippert & family, Margaret Vladimir, Luke Emmerling, John Sheliga, Sabrina, George & Mika Rocknage, Elizabeth Mitchell, Amari Clark, Robert McKivitz, Cliff Dow, Marjorie Pershing, Robert Paouncic, Tim Monta, Amy Kemerer, Tom Marriott, and Daria Masur. **ARNOLD:** Stefania Lucci, Kay Tomson, Ann Ostaffy, Steve Sakal, Homer Paul Kline, and Steve Ostaffy. We pray that God will grant them all a speedy recovery.

Please remember David Weaver in Mosul, James John Logue assigned to Iraq, and ALL American servicemen and women in the Middle East in your prayers.

May God watch over them and all American servicemen and women—and bring them all home safely!

PLEASE REMEMBER TO BRING YOUR “BOXTOPS FOR EDUCATION” AND CAMPBELL’S SOUP LABELS TO CHURCH. There is a shoebox in the basement for Alex’s Fifth Grade and Matt’s Third Grade collections. THANK YOU ALL FOR YOUR HELP! ALEX AND MATT

REMEMBER—PRAYERS ARE ALWAYS FREE!

Communion Fasting: nothing to eat or drink after midnight, EXCEPT in cases where your doctor tells you to eat or drink something for medical reasons: medication, diabetes, etc. If you have a question, please call Father Bob.

AT ANY TIME—if there is an emergency, if you have questions, or if you just need to talk, please CALL FATHER BOB at [412] 279-5640.

Schedule of Services

Sunday, May 25

Divine Liturgy

10:30 AM

SUNDAY OF THE SAMARITAN WOMAN

**SAINT EPIPHANIUS-BISHOP OF CYPRUS, SAINT GERMANUS-PATRIARCH OF CONSTANTINOPLE,
SAINTS SABINUS & POLYBIUS-BISHOPS IN CYPRUS, VENERABLE DIONYSIUS-ARCHIMANDRITE OF
RADONEZH**

Tone 4

Acts 11:19-26, 29-30

John 4:5-42

Parastas in Blessed Memory of Mary Pendlyshok—Ollie

Sunday, June 1

Divine Liturgy

10:30 AM

SUNDAY OF THE BLIND MAN

**HIEROMARTYR PATRICK-BISHOP OF PRUSA & PRESBYTERS ACACIUS, MANANDER, & POLYENUS,
MARTYR CLUFUS OF EGYPT, VENERABLE JOHN-BISHOP OF THE GOTHES IN CRIMEA, VENERABLE
CORNELIUS-ABBOT OF KOMEL, MARTYR ACOLOTHUS OF THE THEBAID, SAINT JOHN-PRINCE OF
UGLICH-TONSURED IGNATIUS, VENERABLE SERGIUS-MONK OF SHUKHTOV, VENERABLE
CORNELIUS-ABBOT OF PALEOSTROV**

Tone 5

Acts 16:16-34

John 9:1-38

Litany in Blessed Memory of Ann Roman, Mary Maoli, & Joe Karas—Fr. Bob

Sunday, June 8

Divine Liturgy

10:30 AM

HOLY FATHERS OF THE FIRST ECUMENICAL COUNCIL

**APOSTLES CARPUS & ALPHAEUS OF THE 70, MARTYRS ABERCIUS & HELEN-CHILDREN OF APOSTLE
ALPHAHEUS, GREAT-MARTYR GEORGE THE NEW OF SOFIA, VENERABLE JOHN PSYCHIATA THE
CONFESSOR OF CONSTANTINOPLE, VENERABLE VARLAAM OF KHUTYN, UNCOVERING OF THE
RELICS OF SAINT MACARIUS-ABBOT OF KOLYAZIN, NEW-MARTYR ALEXANDER OF THESSALONICA
AT SMYRNA**

Tone 6

Acts 20:16-18

John 27:1-13

BULLETIN INSERT FOR 25 MAY 2008

SUNDAY OF THE BLIND MAN

**HIEROMARTYR PATRICK-BISHOP OF PRUSA & PRESBYTERS ACACIUS,
MANANDER, & POLYENUS, MARTYR CLUFUS OF EGYPT, VENERABLE
JOHN-BISHOP OF THE GOTHs IN CRIMEA, VENERABLE CORNELIUS-
ABBOT OF KOMEL, MARTYR ACOLOTHUS OF THE THEBAID, SAINT
JOHN-PRINCE OF UGLICH-TONSURED IGNATIUS, VENERABLE SERGIUS-
MONK OF SHUKHTOV, VENERABLE CORNELIUS-ABBOT OF
PALEOSTROV**

TROPARION—TONE 5

Let the faithful praise and worship the Word,
Coeternal with the Father and the Spirit;
Born for our salvation from the Virgin;
For He willed to be lifted up on the Cross in the flesh,
To endure death,
And to raise the dead by His glorious Resurrection!

**Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto
ages of ages. Amen.**

KONTAKION—TONE 5

Thou didst descend into Hell, O my Savior,
Shattering its gates as almighty;
Resurrecting the dead as Creator,
And destroying the sting of death.
Thou hast delivered Adam from the curse,
O Lover of Man,
And we all cry to Thee: O Lord, save us!

PROKEIMENON—TONE 5

READER: Thou, O Lord, shalt protect us and preserve us from this
generation forever.

**PEOPLE: Thou, O Lord, shalt protect us and preserve us from this
generation forever.**

READER: Save me, O Lord, for there is no longer any that is godly.

**PEOPLE: Thou, O Lord, shalt protect us and preserve us from this
generation forever.**

READER: Thou, O Lord, shalt protect us and preserve us...

PEOPLE: From this generation forever.

ALLELUIA VERSES—TONE 5

I will sing of Thy mercies, O Lord, forever; with my mouth I will proclaim Thy truth from generation to generation.

Thou hast said: Mercy will be established forever, and my truth will be prepared in the heavens.

When our father Euthymius had begun to make his place a laura (a small monastery) and the twelve brethren with him were in great straits as regards the necessities of life, and Domitian had been appointed steward for the first year, it happened that a crowd of Armenians, around four hundred in number, on their way from the holy city to the Jordan, deviated off the road to the right and arrived at the laura, as if by pre arrangement an occurrence, in my opinion, contrived by Providence to reveal Euthymius' virtue and God given grace.

On seeing them, the elder summoned Domitian and said, "Serve these people with something to eat." He replied, "The cellar, venerable father, does not contain enough to feed ten persons. How, then, can I give bread to such a multitude?" The godly Euthymius, filled with prophetic grace, said, "Proceed as I have told you, for the words of the Holy Spirit are, 'They shall eat and have something left over.'" Going accordingly to the small cell called by some the pantry, where a few loaves were lying, Domitian was unable to open the door, for God's blessing had filled the cell right to the top. So, calling some of the men, he took the door off its hinges, and out poured the loaves from the cell. The same blessing occurred likewise with the wine and the oil. All ate and were satisfied, and for three months they were unable to reattach the door of the cell. Just as God, through the prophet's voice, made the jar of meal and the cruse of oil well up for the hospitable widow, so in the same way he granted to this godly elder a supply of blessings equal to his zeal for hospitality.

Domitian, in his amazement, threw himself at his teacher's feet, begging to receive forgiveness for having reacted in a human fashion. The elder made him rise and said, "My child, 'he who sows with blessings will also reap with blessings.' 'Let us not neglect to show hospitality, for, thereby as the Apostle says some have entertained angels unawares.' Be confident that if you and those after you receive with faith and treat worthily all the strangers and brethren who visit you, the Lord will never fail this place from now on till eternity. For God is well pleased with such an offering."

Cyril of Scythopolis, Life of St. Euthymius, 17
St. Euthymius, commemorated 20 January

They say that there was another Macarius who was the first to build a hermitage in Scetis. This place is a wasteland lying at a distance of a day's and a night's journey from Nitria through the desert. It is a very perilous journey for travelers. For if one

makes even a small error, one can get lost in the desert and find one's life in danger. All the monks there have attained perfection. Indeed, no one beset with imperfection could stay in that place, since it is rugged and inhospitable, lacking all the necessities of life.

Now this Macarius whom I have mentioned, who was a native of the capital city (Alexandria), one day met with the great Macarius (of Egypt). As they both had to cross the Nile, it so happened that they boarded a very large ferry which two tribunes had also boarded with much commotion. They had a chariot covered entirely in bronze, and horses with gold bridles, and a military escort, and servants appareled in collars and gold cinctures. When the tribunes saw the monks sitting in the corner dressed in rags, they blessed their simplicity of life. One of these tribunes said to them, "Blessed (macarioi) are you who have mocked the world." Macarius of Alexandria said to him, "We have mocked the world, but the world mocks you. You should know that you have said this not of your own accord but by prophetic inspiration. For we are both called Macarius." The tribune, moved to compunction by this remark, went home and took off his uniform, and after a generous distribution of alms, chose to live as a monk.

Historia Monachorum in Aegypto 23. 1-4

St. Macarius the Great (of Egypt) & St. Macarius of Alexandria commemorated 19 Jan.

Eusicius was another man with power who lived in this territory. Just like a hermit he had secluded himself from intimacy with men among thick brambles, and he rejected gold and the riches of this world as if they were manure. Although various people visited him because of their different illnesses, often infants whose throats were swollen were brought to him. With the gentlest of touches he felt them, and as if amused by a spiritual joke he always said, "This throat that does not permit swallowing is understandably racked by pains." He then made the sign of the cross in the name of the Trinity and freed these sore throats from their pains and swellings. He was of such immediate benefit for people suffering from quartan fevers that he immediately restored them to health simply by offering water that he had blessed for drinking.

His fellow monks had two hives of bees. When a man from his vicinity was troubled by the burning of a quartan fever, he went to Eusicius, received from him the usual medicine, and was restored to health. As he wished to return home, he noticed these hives in a tree at a distance. Immediately his greed, which is described as the root of all evils, was aroused, and he decided to steal these hives in secret. He found an accomplice similar to himself, and at night he looked for the tree. After he climbed the tree to take the hives and hand them to his companion, behold, the old man came from another direction! When he saw the old man, the accomplice who was on the ground fled but did not tell his companion what to beware of. The old man

stood beneath the tree and took in turn the one beehive that the thief handed down to him.

When he wished to steal the other also, the monk said, "Son, let this one be sufficient for now; leave the other for the man who has worked on it." The thief was terrified by this voice and jumped down. But the old man caught him, brought him to his cell, and said, "Son, why do you follow the devil as your guide? Did you not come to me yesterday and receive the blessing of the Lord? If you were pleased with the honey, you might have come to men and I would have given enough for you to have a supply, without any criticism and without your inconvenience." After admonishing him then with many other words, Eusicius gave him a honeycomb and allowed him to leave unharmed. He said, "Take care lest you repeat this deed, because theft is payment to Satan."

Gregory of Tours, *Glory of the Confessors*, 81

Christ is Risen! Indeed He is Risen!
Христос воскрес! Воистину воскрес!
Χριστός ἀνέστη! Ἀληθῶς ἀνέστη!
(Khristós Anésti! Alithós Anésti!)
Hristos a înviat! Adevărat a înviat!
ماق اقا ح! ماق حيس مل!
(al-Masīḥ qām! Ḥaqqan qām!)
Kristo Amefufukka! Kweli Amefufukka

REMINDERS:

NO KNEELING until the Kneeling Prayers of Pentecost Sunday.

Instead of “Vechnaya Pam’yat” at the end of a Parastas or during a funeral service *until Ascension Thursday*, we sing “Christ is Risen!”

Also, we do not say the prayer to the Holy Spirit “O Heavenly King” until Pentecost Sunday.

Last week, I took my children to a restaurant.

My six-year-old son asked if he could say grace.

As we bowed our heads he said, "God is good, God is great. Thank you for the food, and I would even thank you more if Mom gets us ice cream for dessert. And Liberty and justice for all! Amen!"

Along with the laughter from the other customers nearby, I heard a woman remark, "That's what's wrong with this country. Kids today don't even know how to pray. Asking God for ice cream! Why, I never!"

Hearing this, my son burst into tears and asked me, "Did I do it wrong? Is God mad at me?"

As I held him and assured him that he had done a terrific job, and God was certainly not mad at him, an elderly gentleman approached the table.

He winked at my son and said, "I happen to know that God thought that was a great prayer"

"Really?" my son asked.

"Cross my heart," the man replied.

Then, in a theatrical whisper, he added (indicating the woman whose remark had started this whole thing), "Too bad she never asks God for ice cream. A little ice cream is good for the soul sometimes."

Naturally, I bought my kids ice cream at the end of the meal. My son stared at his for a moment, and then did something I will remember the rest of my life.

He picked up his sundae and, without a word, walked over and placed it in front of the woman. With a big smile he told her, "Here, this is for you. Ice cream is good for the soul sometimes; and my soul is good already ."

ENCOUNTERING THE MYSTERY: UNDERSTANDING ORTHODOX CHURCH

By His All Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew

Doubleday, 249 pages, \$25.00

The preacher who gets comfortable with rolling lengthy sermons off the top of his head may be an engaging speaker, but his writing is likely to be meandering and

verbose. Likewise, the person who grows up in a religious minority, perennially aware of the real (if not official) hostility aimed his way, is apt to form a habit of vigilant verbal diplomacy.

Thus, when Patriarch Bartholomew writes that "After the fall of Constantinople [to Ottoman Muslim invaders in 1453], Christian buildings could not be covered with prominent domes," it doesn't mean that the laws of physics had mysteriously altered. The passive voice enables him to finesse the awkward fact that the Turkish government lays stringent restrictions on expression of religious faith, including the forms of church architecture. I expect that he would agree with the contemporary proverb: You have to choose your fights.

So how does he fight? Primarily through requesting dialogue. This is not as pointless as it sounds. The ground rules of dialogue provide the weaker party with a foothold, recognition and some safety, while obligating the stronger party to stop, listen, and at least pretend respect. (I learned this while dialoguing with abortion advocates, as a co-founder of the Common Ground Network for Life and Choice.) So when the Patriarch writes at length about the Christian obligation to "cherish" strangers and renounce petty nationalism, then concludes that "we emphasize that the religious rights of minorities must be duly respected, including and especially their right to worship and education," you may catch that he is deftly drawing a line in the sand, and drawing international attention to it. The Patriarch's alma mater, the Halki Seminary, has been closed by order of Turkey's Constitutional Court since 1971.

Such jabs are subtle enough to be lost on American readers, however. While similar matters of poverty, freedom, and the environment occupy the book's latter half, earlier chapters do a good job of presenting Orthodox faith and life in the gentle, simple terms typical of Orthodox devotional writing. While I now savor such writing and find it genuinely inspiring, Western readers, who expect theology to be in the form of propositional jousting, are apt to find such talk too vague. (As a Newsday editor told me regarding a paragraph I'd written on theosis: "It just sounds so theoretical!") I can see how "Encountering the Mystery" would satisfy the aims of the author and publisher, but it wouldn't surprise me if ordinary American readers find the encounter still a little too mysterious for their taste.

Frederica Mathewes-Green

www.frederica.com

THE BRICK

A young and successful executive was traveling down a neighborhood street, going a bit too fast in his new Jaguar. He was watching for kids darting out

from between parked cars and slowed down when he thought he saw something.

As his car passed, no children appeared. Instead, a brick smashed into the Jag's side door! He slammed on the brakes and backed the Jag back to the spot where the brick had been thrown. The angry driver then jumped out of the car, grabbed the nearest kid and pushed him up against a parked car shouting, 'What was that all about and who are you? Just what the heck are you doing? That's a new car and that brick you threw is going to cost a lot of money. Why did you do it?'

The young boy was apologetic. 'Please, mister...please, I'm sorry but I didn't know what else to do,' He pleaded. 'I threw the brick because no one else would stop...' With tears dripping down his face and off his chin, the youth pointed to a spot just around a parked car. 'It's my brother,' he said. 'He rolled off the curb and fell out of his wheelchair and I can't lift him up.' Now sobbing, the boy asked the stunned executive, 'Would you please help me get him back into his wheelchair? He's hurt and he's too heavy for me.'

Moved beyond words, the driver tried to swallow the rapidly swelling lump in his throat. He hurriedly lifted the handicapped boy back into the wheelchair, then took out a linen handkerchief and dabbed at the fresh scrapes and cuts. A quick look told him everything was going to be okay. 'Thank you and may God bless you,' the grateful child told the stranger. Too shook up for words, the man simply watched the boy push his wheelchair-bound brother down the sidewalk toward their home.

It was a long, slow walk back to the Jaguar. The damage was very noticeable, but the driver never bothered to repair the dented side door. He kept the dent there to remind him of this message: 'Don't go through life so fast that someone has to throw a brick at you to get your attention!'

God whispers in our souls and speaks to our hearts. Sometimes when we don't have time to listen, He has to throw a brick at us. It's our choice to listen or not.

Thought for the Day:

God didn't promise days without pain, laughter without sorrow, sun without rain, but He did promise strength for the day, comfort for the tears, and light for the way.

The Greek Way

Constantinos talks to his son George.

CONSTANTINOS (father): 'I want you to marry a girl of my choice.'

GEORGE (son): 'I will choose my own bride!!'

CONSTANTINOS (father): 'But the girl is Bill Gates' daughter...'

GEORGE (son): 'Well, in that case...okay.'

Next CONSTANTINOS approaches Bill Gates.

CONSTANTINOS (father): 'I have a husband for your daughter.... '

Bill Gates: 'But my daughter is too young to marry!!'

CONSTANTINOS (father): 'But this young man is a vice-president of the World Bank.'

Bill Gates: 'Ah! in that case...okay.'

Finally CONSTANTINOS goes to see the president of the World Bank.

CONSTANTINOS: 'I have a young man to be recommended as a vice-president.'

President: 'But I already have more vice-presidents than I need!'

CONSTANTINOS: 'But this young man is Bill Gates' son-in-law.'

President: 'Ah, in that case... okay.'

And that, my friends, is how Greeks do business.

I will ask, when Christ said, Go out and make disciples of all nations, who was He addressing? To whom was this commandment given? We do not see anything in His words that suggests, if you have spare time and if you have nothing else to do, then just go and talk to the people about the gospel. Not at all! This is a commandment, a must! For whom? For the eleven disciples? Now what would happen once the twelve disciples exited this life? Wouldn't this commandment become irrelevant? Of course! So, the commandment of evangelizing was only seasonal? —One of a limited time, a certain epoch, necessary only way back when? — Certainly not. This commandment concerns every faithful without exception!

From the book of the Revelation 100 homily series

by +Geronda Athanasios Mitilinaios—*translated by Constantine Zalalas*

Holy fire will appear this year on April 26

▲ **Where and when does the miracle occur?**

The ceremony, which awes the souls of Christians, takes place in the Church of the Resurrection in Jerusalem. The date for Pascha is determined anew for every year. It must be a first Sunday after the spring equinox and Jewish Passover. Therefore, most of the time it differs from the date of Catholic and Protestant Easter, which is determined using different criteria. The Holy Fire is the most renowned miracle in the world of Eastern Orthodoxy. **It has taken place at the same time, in the same manner, in the same place every single year for centuries.** No other miracle is known to occur so regularly and so steadily over time. No other miracle is known to occur so regularly and so steadily over time. It happens in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, the holiest place on earth[2], where Christ was crucified, entombed, and where He finally rose from the dead.

▲Ceremony of Holy Light

In order to be as close to the Sepulchre as possible, pilgrims camp next to it. The Sepulchre is located in the small chapel called Holy Ciborium, which is inside the Church of the Resurrection. Typically they wait from the afternoon of Holy Friday in anticipation of the miracle on Holy Saturday. Beginning at around 11:00 in the morning the Christian Arabs chant traditional hymns in a loud voice. These chants date back to the Turkish occupation of Jerusalem in the 13th century, a period in which the Christians were not allowed to chant anywhere but in the churches. "We are the Christians, we have been Christians for centuries, and we shall be forever and ever. Amen!" - they chant at the top of their voices accompanied by the sound of drums. The drummers sit on the shoulders of others who dance vigorously around the Holy Ciborium. But at 1:00 pm the chants fade out, and then there is a silence. A tense silence, charged from the anticipation of the great demonstration of God's power for all to witness.

Shortly thereafter, a delegation from the local authorities elbows its way through the crowd. At the time of the Turkish occupation of Palestine they were Muslim Turks; today they are Israelis. Their function is to represent the Romans at the time of Jesus. The Gospels speak of the Romans that went to seal the tomb of Jesus, so that his disciples would not steal his body and claim he had risen. In the same way the Israeli authorities on this Holy Saturday come and seal the tomb with wax. Before they seal the door, they follow a custom to enter the tomb, and to check for any hidden source of fire, which would make a fraud of the miracle.[1,2]

▲How the miracle occurs

"I enter the tomb and kneel in holy fear in front of the place where Christ lay after His death and where He rose again from the dead... (narrates Orthodox Patriarch Diodor - ed.). I find my way through the darkness towards the inner chamber in which I fall on my knees. Here I say certain prayers that have been handed down to us through the centuries and, having said them, I wait. Sometimes I may wait a few minutes, but normally the miracle happens immediately after I have said the prayers. From the core of the very stone on which Jesus lay an indefinable light pours forth. It



usually has a blue tint, but the colour may change and take many different hues. It cannot be described in human terms. The light rises out of the stone as mist may rise out of a lake — it almost looks as if the stone is covered by a moist cloud, but it is light. This light each year behaves differently. Sometimes it covers just the stone, while other times it gives light to the whole sepulchre, so that people who stand outside the tomb and look into it will see it filled with light. The light does not burn — I have never had my beard burnt in all the sixteen years I have been Patriarch in Jerusalem and have received the Holy Fire. The light is of a different consistency than normal fire that burns in an oil lamp... At a certain point the light rises and forms a column in which the fire is of a different nature, so that I am able to light my candles from it. When I thus have received the flame on my candles, I go out and give the fire first to the Armenian Patriarch and then to the Coptic. Hereafter I give the flame to all people present in the Church."

While the patriarch is inside the chapel kneeling in front of the stone, there is darkness but far from silence outside. One hears a rather loud mumbling, and the atmosphere is very tense. When the Patriarch comes out with the two candles lit and shining brightly in the darkness, a roar of jubilee resounds in the Church.[2]

The Holy Light is not only distributed by the Archbishop, but operates also by itself. It is emitted from the Holy Sepulchre with a hue completely different from that of natural light. It sparkles, it flashes like lightning, it flies like a dove around the tabernacle of the Holy Sepulchre, and lights up the unlit lamps of olive oil hanging in front of it. It whirls from one side of the church to the other. It enters some of the chapels inside the church, as for instance the chapel of the Calvary (at a higher level than the Holy Sepulchre) and lights up the little lamps. It lights up also the candles of certain pilgrims. In fact there are some very pious pilgrims who, every time they attended this ceremony, noticed that their candles lit up on their own accord!his divine light also presents some peculiarities: As soon as it appears it has a bluish hue and does not burn. At the first moments of its appearance, if it touches the face, or the mouth, or the hands, it does not burn. This is proof of its divine and supernatural origin. We must also take into consideration that the Holy Light appears only by the invocation of an Orthodox Archbishop.[1]



The miracle is not confined to what actually happens inside the little tomb, where the Patriarch prays. What may be even more significant, is that the blue light is reported to appear and be active outside the tomb. Every year many believers claim that this miraculous light ignites candles, which they hold in their hands, of its own initiative. All in the church wait with candles in the hope that they may ignite spontaneously. **Often unlit oil lamps catch light by themselves before the eyes of the pilgrims. The blue flame is seen to move in different places in the Church.** A number of signed testimonies by pilgrims, whose candles lit spontaneously, attest to the validity of these ignitions. The person who experiences the miracle from close up by having the fire on the candle or seeing the blue light usually leaves Jerusalem changed, and for everyone having attended the ceremony, there is always a "before and after" the miracle of the Holy Fire in Jerusalem.

▲How old is the wonder?

The [first written](#) account of the Holy Fire (Holy Light) dates from the fourth century, but authors write about events that occurred in the first century. So Ss. John Damascene and Gregory of Nissa narrate how the Apostle Peter saw the Holy Light in the Holy Sepulchre after Christ's resurrection. "One can trace the miracle throughout the centuries in the many itineraries of the Holy Land." The Russian abbot Daniel, in his itinerary written in the years 1106-07, presents the "Miracle of the Holy Light" and the ceremonies that frame it in a very detailed manner. He recalls how the Patriarch goes into the Sepulchre-chapel (the Anastasis) with two candles. The Patriarch kneels in front of the stone on which Christ was laid after his death and says certain prayers, at which point the miracle occurs. Light proceeds from the core of the stone - a blue, indefinable light which after some time kindles unlit oil lamps as well as the Patriarch's two candles. This light is "The Holy Fire", and it spreads to all people present in the Church. The ceremony surrounding "The Miracle of the Holy Fire" may be the oldest unbroken Christian ceremony in the world. From the fourth century A.D. all the way up to our own time, sources recall this awe-inspiring event. From these sources it becomes clear that the miracle has been celebrated on the same spot, on the same feast day, and in the same liturgical frame throughout all these centuries.[2]



Every time heterodox have tried to obtain the Holy Fire they have failed. Three such attempts are known. Two occurred in the twelfth century when priests of the Roman church tried to force out the Orthodox church but by their own confession these ended with God's punishment. [3,4] But the most miraculous event occurred in the year 1579, the year when God clearly testified to whom alone may be given His miracle.

"Once the Armenians (monophysites - ed.) paid the Turks, who then occupied the Holy Land, in order to obtain permission for their Patriarch to enter the Holy Sepulchre, the Orthodox Patriarch was standing sorrowfully with his flock at the exit of the church, near the left column, when the Holy Light split this column vertically and flashed near the Orthodox Patriarch.

A Muslim Muezzin, called Tounom, who saw the miraculous event from an adjacent mosque, immediately abandoned the Muslim religion and became an Orthodox Christian. This event took place in 1579 under Sultan Mourad IV, when the Patriarch of Jerusalem was [Sophrony IV](#). (The above mentioned split column still exists. It dates from the twelfth century. The Orthodox pilgrims embrace it at the "place of the split" as they enter the church).[2, date and name are corrected]

Turkish warriors stood on the wall of a building close to the gate and lightning-struck column. When he saw this striking miracle he cried that Christ is truly God and leaped down from a height of about ten meters. But he was not killed-the stones under him became as soft as wax and his footprint was left upon them. The Turks tried to scrape away these prints but they could not destroy them; so they remain as witnesses [5].



He was burned by the Turks near the Church. His remains, gathered by the Greeks, lay in the monastery of Panagia until the 19th century shedding chrisim.

Muslims, who deny the Passion, Crucifixion and Resurrection of Christ, tried to put obstacles in the way of the miracle. Well known Muslim historian Al Biruni wrote: "... a (note: Muslim) governor brought a copper wire instead of a wick (note: for the self lighting oil lamps), in order that it wouldn't ignite and the whole thing would fail to occur. But as the fire descended, the copper burned." [6]

This was not the only attempt. The report written by the English chronicler, Gautier Vinisauf, describes what happened in the year 1192.

"In 1187, the Saracens under the direction of Sultan Salah ad-Din took Jerusalem. In that year, the Sultan desired to be present at the celebration, even though he was not a Christian. Gautier Vinisauf tells us what happened: "On his arrival, the celestial fire descended suddenly, and the assistants were deeply moved...the Saracens... said that the fire which they had seen to come down was produced by fraudulent means. Salah ad-Din, wishing to expose the imposter, caused the lamp, which the fire from Heaven had lighted, to be extinguished, but the lamp relit immediately. He caused it to be extinguished a second time and a third time, but it relit as of itself. Thereupon, the Sultan, confounded, cried out in prophetic transport: 'Yes, soon shall I die, or I shall lose Jerusalem.'" [7]

▲A miracle that is unknown in the West

One can ask the question of why the miracle of the Holy Fire is almost unknown in Western Europe. In Protestant areas it may, to a certain extent, be explained by the fact that there is no real tradition of miracles; people don't really know in which box to place the miracles, and they rarely feature in newspapers. But in the Catholic tradition there is vast interest in miracles. Thus, why is it not more well known? For this only one explanation suffices: Church politics. Only the Orthodox Churches attend the ceremony which is centered on the miracle. It only occurs on the Orthodox date of Easter and without the presence of any Catholic authorities. [2]

▲The question of the authenticity of the miracle

As with any other miracle there are people who believe it is a fraud and nothing but a masterpiece of Orthodox propaganda. They believe the Patriarch has a lighter inside of the tomb. These critics, however, are confronted with a number of problems. Matches and other means of ignition are recent inventions. Only a few hundred years ago lighting a fire was an undertaking that lasted much longer than the few minutes during which the Patriarch is inside the tomb. One then could perhaps say, he had an oil lamp burning inside, from which he kindled the candles, but the local authorities confirmed that they had checked the tomb and found no light inside it.

The best arguments against a fraud, however, are not the testimonies of the shifting Patriarchs. The biggest challenges confronting the critics are the thousands of independent testimonies by pilgrims whose candles were lit spontaneously in front of their eyes without any possible explanation. According to our investigations, it has never been possible to film any of the candles or oil lamps igniting by themselves. However, I am in the possession of a video filmed by a young engineer from Bethlehem, Souhel Nabdiel. Mr. Nabdiel has been present at the ceremony of the Holy Fire since his early childhood. In 1996 he was asked to film the ceremony from the balcony of the dome of the Church. Present with him on the balcony were a nun and four other believers. The nun stood at the right hand of Nabdiel. On the video one can see how he films down on the crowds. At a certain point all lights are turned off - it is time for the Patriarch to enter the tomb and receive the Holy Fire. While he is still inside the tomb one suddenly hears a scream of surprise and wonder originating from the nun standing next to Nabdiel. The camera begins to shake, as one hears the excited voices of the other people present on the balcony. The camera now turns to the right, whereby it is possible to contemplate the cause of the commotion. A big candle, held in the hand of the Russian nun, takes fire in front of all the people present before the patriarch comes out of the tomb. She holds the candle with shaking hands while making the sign of the Cross over and over again in awe of the miracle she has witnessed. This video appears to be the closest one gets to an actual filming of the miracle.

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Translated by Gotthard trohmaier
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