



Holy Ghost Orthodox Church

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CHRIST IS RISEN! INDEED HE IS RISEN!

Христос воскрес! Воистину воскрес! (Chrystos voskres! Voistynu voskres!)

Χριστός ἀνέστη! Ἀληθῶς ἀνέστη! (Khristós Anésti! Alithós Anésti!)

!ماق حيسم! اقا ح (al-Masīḥ qām! Ḥaqqan qām!)

Hristos a înviat! Adevărat a înviat!

Kristo Amefufukka! Kweli Amefufukka!

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], Father Joseph Kopchak, Father Charles Mezzomo, Father Anthony Dimitri, 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, Mildred Manolovich, Evelyn Misko, Jeanne Boehing, Alex Drobot, Rachelle, Jane Golofski, Doug Diller, Harry Krewsun, Glen Lucas Burlack, Bernie Vangrin, Mary Alice Babcock, Dorie Kunkle, Andrea, & Melissa [Betty O'Masta's relatives], Mary Evelyn King, Stella Cherepko, Sam Wadrose, Cameron [a boy in Matt's class], Faith—a 7-year-old girl with rheumatoid arthritis, Isabella Olivia Lindgren—a 3-year-old with a brain tumor, Dillon, Ethel Thomas, Donna, Nick Malec [Maxine's brother], Erin, Jim Markovich, Jeff Walewski [thyroid cancer], Carol [Lotinski] Rose, Michael Miller, Dave May, Grace & Owen Ostrasky, Alverta, Gary Zurasky, Michael Horvath, Patti Sinecki, David Genshi, Sue Segeleon, Mike Gallagher, Michael Miller, 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, Robert McKivitz, Marjorie Pershing, Tom Marriott, Joe Farkas, Liz Obradovich, Liz, Halyna Zelinska [Bishop Daniel's mother], Mary Ann,

Charlotte, Peter Natishan, Michael Spak, Andrew Mark Olynyk, Deborah Finley, Claire Senita, Brandi Thomas, Eleanor Kelly, Bryan, Ben Bonifield—a classmate of Alex, Peter Special, Amy Boe, Doris Artman, Maureen Sams, Nancy Barylak, Shirley Tkacik, Carol Kowalcheck, Martin Golofski, Joe Paouncic, Anthony Yerace, Joan Hyatt, Joanne Brodrick, Khrystyna Chorniy, Anthony Cormier [2-year-old with cancer], Diane Waryanka, and Daria Masur. ARNOLD: Stefania Lucci, 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 George Senita, & John Kirkowski assigned to Iraq, Matthew Machak, Tonia Dec, Michael Repasky, 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 Sixth Grade and Matt’s Fourth Grade collections. THANK YOU ALL FOR YOUR HELP! Love, Alex & 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, April 26

Divine Liturgy 10:30 AM

ANTI-PASCHA—SAINT THOMAS SUNDAY

HIEROMARTYR ARTEMON-PRESBYTER OF LAODICEA IN SYRIA, MARTYR CRESCENS OF MYRA IN LYCIA, WOMAN MARTYR THOMIAS OF ALEXANDRIA, MARTYR ELEUTHERIUS OF PERSIA, MARTYR ZOILUS OF ROME, VENERABLE MARTIUS-ABBOT OF CLERMONT

Tone 1

Acts 5:12-20

John 20:19-31

Parastas in Blessed Memory of Catherine & Nicholas Behun—Behun Family

Sunday, May 03

Divine Liturgy 10:30 AM

SUNDAY OF THE MYRRH-BEARING WOMEN

VENERABLE TRICHINAS-HERMIT NEAR CONSTANTINOPLE, BLESSED GREGORY & BLESSED ANASTASIUS OF SINAI-PATRIARCHS OF ANTIOCH, VENERABLE ANASTASIUS-ABBOT OF MOUNT SINAI, VENERABLE ALEXANDER-ABBOT OF OSHEVENS, CHILD-MARTYR GABRIEL OF SLUTSK, SAINTS BETRAM & THEOTIMUS-BISHOPS IN LESSER SCYTHIA, VENERABLE ATHANASIUS & IOASAPH OF METEORA-MONKS, APOSTLE ZACCHAEUS-BISHOP OF CAESARAEA

Tone 2

Acts 6:1-7
Mark 15:43-16:8

*Litany in Blessed Memory of Charles Cherepko, Anna Metrick, Bogdan Mural, Khouria Joanne Abdalla,
Katherine Tomson, Walter Golofski, Jr., & Anna Vangrin—Fr. Bob*

Sunday, May 10

Divine Liturgy

10:30 AM

SUNDAY OF THE PARALYTIC—MOTHERS' DAY

APOSTLE & HIEROMARTYR SIMEON THE KINSMAN OF THE LORD, BLESSED EVLOGIUS, VENERABLE STEPHEN-
ABBOT OF PERCHEVSKY LAVRA & BISHOP OF VOLODYMYR IN VOLYN', VENERABLE JOHN-ABBOT OF CATHARES
MONASTERY IN CONSTANTINOPLE, NEW-MARTYR ELIAS URDUNIS OF MOUNT ATHOS, SAINT SERAPION-BISHOP
OF PHANAR

Tone 3

Acts 9:32-42

John 5:1-15

*Litany in Blessed Memory of All Deceased Mothers, Grandmothers, etc.—Fr. Bob
Parastas in Blessed Memory of John Batch—Harry Batch*

BULLETIN INSERT FOR 26 APRIL 2009

ANTI-PASCHA—SAINT THOMAS SUNDAY

**HIEROMARTYR ARTEMON-PRESBYTER OF LAODICEA IN
SYRIA, MARTYR CRESCENS OF MYRA IN LYCIA, WOMAN
MARTYR THOMIAS OF ALEXANDRIA, MARTYR ELEUTHERIUS
OF PERSIA, MARTYR ZOILUS OF ROME, VENERABLE MARTIUS-
ABBOT OF CLERMONT**

TROPARION—TONE 7

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

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

KONTAKION—TONE 8

Thomas touched Thy life-giving side with an eager hand, O Christ God,
When Thou didst come to Thy apostles through closed doors.
He cried out with all: Thou art my Lord and my God!

PROKEIMENON—TONE 3

READER: Great is our Lord and abundant in power. His understanding is
beyond measure.

PEOPLE: Great is our Lord and abundant in power. His understanding is
beyond measure.

READER: Praise the Lord! For it is good to sing praises to our God!

PEOPLE: Great is our Lord and abundant in power. His understanding is beyond measure.

READER: Great is our Lord and abundant in power.

PEOPLE: His understanding is beyond measure.

ALLELUIA VERSES

Come, let us rejoice in the Lord! Let us make a joyful noise to God our Savior!

For the Lord is a great God, and a great King above all the earth.

HYMN TO THE THEOTOKOS [INSTEAD OF IT IS TRULY MEET...]

The angel cried to the Lady Full of Grace Rejoice, O Pure Virgin! Again I say: Rejoice! Your Son is risen from His three days in the tomb! With Himself He has raised all the dead! Rejoice, all ye people!

Shine! Shine! O New Jerusalem! The Glory of the Lord has shone on you! Exult now and be glad, O Zion! Be radiant, O Pure Theotokos, in the Resurrection of your Son!

COMMUNION HYMN

Praise the Lord, O Jerusalem! Praise your God, O Zion!

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ARCHIEPISCOPAL ENCYCLICAL FOR PASCHA 2009

Protocol 40/09

April 19, 2009

Holy Pascha

The Feast of Feasts

Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. (Hebrews 11:1)

To the Most Reverend Hierarchs, the Reverend Priests and Deacons, the Monks and Nuns, the Presidents and Members of the Parish Councils of the Greek Orthodox Communities, the Distinguished Archons of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, the Day, Afternoon, and Church Schools, the Philoptochos Sisterhoods, the Youth, the Hellenic Organizations, and the entire Greek Orthodox Family in America

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Christ is Risen! Χριστός Ἀνέστη!

On this great and glorious Feast of our Holy Orthodox Church, I greet you in the abundant joy of our Risen Lord and in the peace of His unchanging promise of salvation and true life. As we gather at night anticipating the dawning of the new day, our churches, our homes, and most certainly our souls are filled with the radiance of the Resurrection and the illuminating Truth of our faith in Christ.

The Biblical record is replete with several accounts of the appearances of Christ to His disciples after His triumphant Resurrection from the dead. The Gospel of John (20:19-29) presents us with two such appearances of the Risen Christ to His apostles in the upper room, where they frequently gathered. In the first of these appearances, the Risen Christ showed His apostles His hands and His side, the scars of the physical agony which He endured on the Cross unto death. His presence before them was a visible sign of His Resurrection from the dead. At this first appearance of the Risen Christ in the upper room, however, the Apostle Thomas was not present. Hearing of this encounter from the other apostles, Thomas had clearly stated that he would not believe that Christ had risen from the dead unless he saw Christ and touched His wounds. Eight days later, Christ made a second appearance to His apostles in the upper room. This time, Thomas was present, and he was able to see the prints of the nails and spear in the flesh of the body of the Risen Christ. Thomas recognized the Risen Christ with the following, unique exclamation of his belief: *My Lord and my God!* (John 20:28). To this, Christ replied to Thomas, *Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe* (John 20:29).

Thomas needed to see in order to believe, and Thomas' struggle with his doubt and his faith is a very human one indeed. Today, we profess our belief in the Risen Christ nearly 2,000 years after the appearances of the Risen Christ to His apostles. We do this within a society that is removed historically by the passage of time since these Divine appearances. For this reason, we can rejoice in our belief in the Risen Christ because we know the beatitude pronounced by Christ which tells us that we are blessed because we are among those *who have not seen and yet believe* (v.29).

On this day of Pascha, we gather to celebrate this continued and real presence of Christ in our midst, Whose Resurrection from the dead is at the very core of our Christian faith. Christ's authentic presence is experienced by each and every one of us in many ways, such as when we gather together in His name for prayer, or when we hear His Holy Gospel. However, His presence is made manifest in the most superb way when we partake of His very real body and blood in the most blessed sacrament of Holy Communion, through the physical elements of bread and wine. This is why we give thanks to the Lord when we partake of the Holy Communion by acknowledging that we have "received the divine, holy, pure, immortal, life-giving and awesome Mysteries of Christ," to quote the words of the Divine Liturgy. Thus, paradoxically, while we did not "see" the Risen Christ in the same way in which His apostles

did, we nonetheless do “see” Him and experience Him in a total and complete way, just as His apostles. It is here where we are presented with the element of Divine Mystery that is a distinguishing characteristic of our Orthodox Christian faith. It is in this most blessed experience of our receiving the Holy Communion that we are given the ability to see and experience that which Thomas needed to see 2,000 years ago in order for him to believe. It is in this Divine Mystery of Holy Communion that we experience the Risen Christ, that we receive the Son of God physically into our bodies and spiritually within our lives, and that we are continuously renewed by His healing power.

My beloved Christians,

On this Holy Feast of Pascha, as we fill our churches and our hearts with the light and joy of the Resurrection, let us joyfully profess our belief in the Risen Lord, Who is in our midst. Through faith and our partaking of His body and blood in the Divine Mystery of Holy Communion, let us receive His love and affirm the assurance of His blessings upon us. Let us proclaim to a world in need that we are people of the Resurrection, that we are people of hope and salvation, and that we are people of faith. And let us invite all to come into the loving embrace of the living Lord Who is Risen and to see Him, experience Him, and find everlasting joy and peace in Him, Who has vanquished the power of death *so that whoever believes in Him will not perish but have eternal life* (John 3:16). Once again we joyfully proclaim:

Christ is Risen! Χριστός Ανέστη! Truly He is Risen! Ἀληθῶς Ανέστη!

With paternal blessings in the Risen Christ,

**† DEMETRIOS
Archbishop of America**

"Lord, we don't need you anymore. Science has finally figured out a way to create life out of nothing. In other words, we can now do what you did in the 'beginning'."

"Oh, is that so? Tell me..." replies God.

"Well," says the scientist, "we can take dirt and form it into the likeness of you and breathe life into it, thus creating man."

"Well, that's interesting. Show Me."

So the scientist bends down to the earth and starts to mold the soil.

"Oh no, no, no..." interrupts God. **"Get your own dirt."**

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.

Waiting for the Miracle—by Maria C. Khoury, Ed. D.

Every year during Holy Saturday, for many centuries, there is a most magnificent miracle that continues to take place in Jerusalem since the time we were allowed as Christians to celebrate ceremonies in public.

Pilgrims from all over the world gather in Jerusalem to witness the greatest of all miracles—the Miracle of the Holy Fire. The miracle has turned into a glorious cultural event but many simply cannot get anywhere near the Holy Sepulcher Church. The soldiers, the police, the large crowds, the noise, the drums of the Boys Scouts and the Girl Scouts anxiously waiting to receive the Holy Fire from the Life Giving Tomb of Christ is a day long adventure. But always happens approximately 2 pm on Holy Saturday. It was a miracle in itself that finally after twenty years waiting, because of the Second Uprising and the height of the violence with lack of pilgrims in the Holy Land; I got inside the church myself.

It is an exciting celebration with the sound of many languages at the same time where representatives of many churches from all over the Holy Land come to receive the Holy Fire and carry the flame back in small lanterns to their particular churches for the Midnight Resurrection Service. Special permits must be issued for Christians from Gaza and the West Bank to enter Jerusalem but furthermore, you need another ticket/pass to enter the Holy Sepulcher as an added bureaucracy.

It is on this Great and Holy Saturday that the Holy Fire will be received by the Greek Orthodox Patriarch, His Beatitude Theophilus III, as it has been done every year, on the same day, in the same manner, at the same time, at the same holy place of Christ's Life Giving Tomb. This is the miracle that allows us to believe that Christ is alive and offers eternal life. This is the miracle that tells us that Christ is truly among us. This powerful miracle is another way that God communicates that we do believe in the Living God. As we chant in our Midnight Resurrection Service: "Come ye and receive light from the unwaning Light, and glorify Christ, Who a rose from the dead."

A spectacular parade to receive the Holy Fire is held in every town and city where small numbers of Christians live. For example, we anxiously wait at the outskirts

entering our village of Taybeh by five in the evening. The priests of all three churches, Fr. Daoud, Fr. Raed and Fr. Jack with the mayor of the village, my husband, David, usually lead the faithful with the choir chanting to meet our cousin Ibrahim with his seven year old son Philip who traditionally go to the city of Ramallah to receive the Light from a patriarchate representative who brings it from Jerusalem to Ramallah for all the Palestinian Christian communities that cannot reach the Holy City. Philip made his dad put a sign on their little white car last year that read "Light of Christ," and wanted to ride on top but was forced to patiently sit with the flame until he said "Christ is Risen" and gave it to the adults.

Nine years of violence in the Holy Land, back and forth, surely we have been living in the darkness of all evil where children do not even have a childhood especially following the latest devastating war in Gaza. "And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not." (John 1:5) The strong Christian message during this Holy Week is that our hope lies in Christ and the streets will simply be filled on Holy Saturday with faithful who came to witness in Christ's love. Be this Light for Christ no matter where you live in the world.

For us who live behind the ugly Wall, this Holy Saturday we await this glorious miracle of the Light that proceeds from the core of the stone that covers Christ's Life Giving Tomb and once again we hope to celebrate the oldest unbroken Christian ceremony that exists in the world.

In Luke 16:15 we read that Jesus said: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved" We witness the truth and receive the Holy Fire on Holy Saturday in Jerusalem so that all who are not living in the land of Christ's Holy Resurrection can believe that Christ is the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world. (John 1:9)

"And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And you are witnesses of these things." (Luke 24:47)

Our Christian community is small and diminishing but with God's help can survive the daily hardships that make life unbearable. We await the miracle of a free Palestine and human rights for all people. We are waiting for a miracle of peace with justice, stability, and genuine democracy to happen. In the Holy Land, in the hearts of Christians, every day one says, "Truly the Lord is Risen!"

***Editor's Note:** Maria (Kouremenou) Khoury sincerely thanks all individuals and over 100 churches that have hosted a Holy Land presentation and have generously supported Taybeh projects in housing, education and her ministry. She is currently organizing the Taybeh Oktoberfest, the annual village festival, Oct 3-4, 2009 in Taybeh-Ramallah, Palestine.*

a word from the desert

There was a certain bishop from the country of the Africans, Cyprian by name, who cared for the true priesthood and led a life most deserving of God. He arranged to journey to the queen of cities, Byzantium, on a pressing matter of necessity. And when they had sailed for many days and had already drawn near to the regions of Greece, he was captured by the most fierce Slavs together with all his [companions]. When they had divided these captives among themselves, the [Slavs] enslaved the aforementioned bishop together with his [companions]. When these things had been done in this way, they returned to their native places, and each barbarian placed the burden of slavery upon his captive according as he wished. Bishop Cyprian managed his lord's stores and distributed his foodstuffs wisely and with foresight, and in praiseworthy fashion took comfort in prayers, vigils, and fasts. And he said to the Lord, "Although I am without any merit, you appointed me a shepherd of your flock; how have I now been brought to such a state that I have been demoted from such rank to the service of the barbarians? But I call to mind that this has happened to me on account of my sins, and that it is for this reason that I am held ensnared by this affliction. Who will guide my sheep now that their shepherd has been captured by barbarian animals?"

While he was weeping about these and similar things, a beautiful young man, decorous in form, with a military bearing and appearance, said to him, "If you want to be freed from the slavery in which you are held and to be rescued from the barbarians, rise and follow me. Watch yourself, while we are walking, lest you say anything at all to me; but let us march each striving for quiet and praying to God in our minds." Then the bishop replied to him, "Who are you and from where have you come here?" The other said to him, "I am called Demetrius, and I am a soldier of the great emperor. My house stands in the middle of the city of Thessalonica, to which I will lead you without harm if you follow me." Rising, therefore, he followed him, and they both proceeded in silence. They marched during the night and rested during the day. Furthermore, Demetrius used to leave the bishop in the morning and return to him again as the evening drew near, bringing with him fruit from various trees, together with the berries of shrubs, with which he fed his companion, and when they had taken their food, they used begin their journey.

After eight days, when they had drawn near the walls of the city already mentioned, Demetrius set Cyprian in front of the gates of the city and disappeared. When the bishop looked for his faithful guide and good companion and did not find him, he entered the city. He made enquiries of those he met and asked them where was the house of Demetrius the soldier. And when they replied that there were many Demetrii in the city who discharged military office, he remarked, saying, "The house of

the one I am looking for is in the middle of the city." Therefore, since they were all at a loss in this matter, the man being sought was found nowhere. However, the inhabitants of the city led the bishop to the church of the martyr. When he entered, he immediately surrendered himself to prayer, and gave thanks and praise to God the Savior; and as he raised his hands and eyes in prayer, he saw an image of the martyr Demetrius in the clothing of his companion and guide. Then, in the presence of all, he cried out, declaring that, without a doubt, it was Demetrius himself who had guided and saved him, and that this was the house which the martyr himself had mentioned to him as he appeared to him in the beginning.

*Anastasius Bibliothecarius, the Passion of St. Demetrius
Great Martyr Demetrius, commemorated 26 October/08 November*

Abba Zosimas used to say: Once, I commissioned certain books to a brilliant calligrapher. When he had completed his work of writing, he sent me a message saying, "I have finished my work. Whenever you want, send someone to pick them up." When one of the brothers heard about this, he went to the calligrapher in my name, paid him the money and took the books.

Since I was unaware of this, I sent one of our other brothers with a letter and the payment in order for the books to be picked up.

Now, when the calligrapher understood that he was deceived by the first brother, who had already picked them up, he was troubled and said, "Indeed, I am going to be disgusted with that brother in two ways: both because he tricked me, as well as because he took what did not belong to him."

When I heard this, I sent him a message saying, "My brother, you know that we acquire books in order to learn from them about love, humility, and meekness. If the beginning of acquiring books includes quarreling, then I do not want to acquire any books which might become the beginning of quarrelling. 'The Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome' (2 Tim.2:24)." Thus, by despising the book, I helped the brother not to be troubled at all.

Reflections (Dialogismoi) of Abba Zosimus 13.f (trans., Fr. John Chryssavgis)

Put up with that person who grieves you and creates temptations. Put up with him joyfully. Pray for him every day. Always try to do good to him, to commend him, to speak to him with love, and God will work His miracle and he will reform. Then our Christ will be glorified and the devil, who sets up all the stumbling-blocks, will be foiled. Force yourself especially to stop criticizing and lying. Your penance is to do one prayer-rope every day for this person who hates you, so that God may enlighten him to repent and do ten more metanoias daily for one month.

If this person does something against you, overlook it, be patient. Let yourself be wronged, but do not wrong; let yourself be slapped, but do not slap; let yourself be criticized, but do not criticize. When you do all this, then the Son of God, along with the Father and the Holy Spirit, will dwell in your soul. Fight the good fight; overlook the deeds of this person, just as our Christ has overlooked your sins.

Counsels from the Holy Mountain, Elder Ephraim of the Holy Mountain (Athos)

*Mark Hanna is the son of my good friend Father Augustinos Hanna and the nephew of my good friend George Guirguis. Mark graduated and became a lawyer a few years ago. Soon he discovered that he has Multiple Sclerosis disease. He did not give up his service to the Almighty, but, had to give-up his service as lawyer. I am presenting this article which he posted in the magazine of Saint John. I ask everyone of my family and of my friends to **sincerely pray for his recovery**, and that the Lord gives him the power to restart servicing the church again. Also, for those who are not familiar Multiple Sclerosis, here is a description by MS Active Source. Multiple sclerosis (MS) is a chronic, progressive illness that affects the nerves in the brain, spinal cord, and other parts of the central nervous system. MS is an autoimmune disease, which means the body's immune system targets itself, attacking cells, tissues and organs.*

Rafik M. Khalifa

From Good Friday by Mark Hanna

This "article" was an email that I had Emailed to a couple of my law school professors in 1996. The subject line was the title of this article. This email was a brief summary of just how awesome our Church is in commemorating the passion of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and in celebrating His triumphant Resurrection. Both professors were in awe.

Today was Good Friday for all the Orthodox Churches all around the world. In my church, the Coptic (Egyptian Orthodox Church) the entire day is spent in Church. Service begins from 8:00 AM and ends at 6:00 PM. The church follows Christ hour by hour through the day of his crucifixion from the trial to His crucifixion and burial.

The Old Testament prophecies of all these events are read event by event and their fulfillment in the Gospel readings out of the four Gospels, event by event according to the hour the church is commemorating. Throughout the service, the chanters chant hymns in Coptic, Greek, English and Arabic in sorrowful tunes.

All Holy Week is the same as Good Friday in the sense that the church follows the events of Christ's final week on earth event by event, reading the prophecies and their corresponding fulfillment's in the Gospels. Throughout the Holy Week services the main hymn chanted every hour proclaims:

"Thine is the Power and the Glory, the blessing and the might forever Amen, Emmanuel our God and our King. Thine is the Power and the Glory and blessing and the might forever Amen, my Lord Jesus Christ my Good Savior. The Lord is my strength, my praise and has become my salvation. Thine is the Power and the Glory, the blessing and the might, forever, Amen."

This hymn is chanted in Coptic, English and Arabic. During all of Holy Week the church is draped in black linens and coverings on the lecterns, pillars, etc., to show that this is a sorrowful time when created humanity killed its Creator and Redeemer.

The Good Friday service ends with the Priest taking the Icon of Christ being taken down from the Cross, and puts it in white linen. The Priest then takes all the flowers that were brought by the believers to decorate the church on this occasion and puts them on the icon. He adds spices, ointments and fragrances to the flowers on top of the icon and then wraps the Icon with the Linen as Christ was buried and His body put in a shroud. Two lit candles are placed on the right and left of the Icon and kept lit until the Midnight Resurrection Liturgy past midnight on Sunday (just past midnight on Saturday).

At the end of the Good Friday Service everyone goes home for a few hours and return again at 11:00 PM for The Apocalypse Vigil where all the congregation stay in Church with Christ while He is in the tomb. The book of Revelation is read by the entire congregation during this vigil along with processions around the Church, chants and praises. The focus of this service is on Christ's final victory over Satan and the everlasting home of the believers in the New Jerusalem where the Crucified Christ reigns victoriously. Of special significance is Christ's message to each of the angels of the seven churches of Asia Minor.

The Apocalypse Vigil service concludes with a Liturgy which begins at 4:00 A.M. Saturday morning and ends at 6:00 A.M. This Liturgy is a commemoration of a miracle which occurred during the Ottoman domination of the middle-east in the late 1800's. One of the Muslim rulers (Ibrahim Pasha), disbelieved the events of the resurrection of Christ and wanted to stop the annual pilgrimage to the Holy Land. It happened one morning that he went himself to see what the big deal was about and as he tried to enter into the Church of the Resurrection in Jerusalem, where Christ's tomb is, a blinding light and fire shown out of the two huge pillars at the entrance of the Church close to the Holy Tomb. Since then this Saturday has been called in the Orthodox Churches as Bright Saturday.

Prior to the Apocalypse Vigil, the black linens which covered the church all week are taken down and replaced by white ones with red crosses in the center. White

stands for the color of purity, joy, victory, peace, as Christ bestowed those on all humanity. The red crosses in the center remind us that our salvation was bought at the costly price of Christ's own precious blood and offered freely to all those who believe in Him. These white linens remain hung until Pentecost 50 days later. Again, everyone goes home after this service and return to the church once more for the Easter Liturgy which begins at 8:00 P.M. on Saturday.

At 9:00 P.M. the lights are turned off in the church. All the congregation hold candles in their hands and the Resurrection Drama is reenacted between the priest who stands in the sanctuary and one of the chanters who stands outside the sanctuary (in all Orthodox Churches an Inconstasis or Icon-bearer separates the sanctuary and the nave of the church — the Royal Gate is in the center of the Inconstasis and is shut at this point in the service).

The Resurrection Drama is chanted by a chanter who begins by saying, in Greek "Khristos Anesti" and in English, "Christ is Risen," — the Priest replies "indeed He is Risen" (3 times). The Chanter then chants the words of Psalm 24: 7-10:

"Lift up your gates, you princes, and be lifted up you everlasting doors; and the King of Glory shall come in (repeated 3 times)."

The priest responds by asking, "who is this King of Glory?" Finally the chanter responds, "The Lord who is strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in war, He is the King of Glory."

At this point a loud noise is heard in the Church (this sound commemorates the rolling of the heavy stone at the door of the tomb and the earthquake which occurred at that

time), the lights are turned on, the curtain is opened and the entire choir of deacons and chanters begin the Resurrection Procession two and one half times around the inside of the Church. The Priests at this time open the shroud which had been placed on the altar since Good Friday and take out the Icon which had been buried under the fragrant ointments and flowers. The Icon's bottom side is another Icon of the Christ's resurrection. The Priest holds it up and gives it to one of the deacons who walks just ahead of the priest holding the icon. The priest walks behind the deacons censing the resurrection icon as he goes around the Church. This procession is conducted while the congregation along with the Chanters chant the Greek hymn "Xhristos Anesti" or:

"Christ is Risen from the Dead, by His death conquering death, and to those in the tombs He bestowed eternal life."

This is an extremely ancient hymn sung in every Orthodox Church around the world. The Gospel of the Resurrection account according to St. John is chanted, followed by

the sermon, the liturgy of the faithful, and finally the congregation partakes of Christ's Holy Body and Precious Blood in Holy Communion. For the following fifty days until the Feast of Pentecost, the church chants jubilant tunes which replace the sorrowful tunes of Holy Week and the 40 days of Lent. All Orthodox believers greet one another only by saying, "Khristos Anesti" or "Christ is Risen," response to which is, "Alithos Anesti" or "He is Risen indeed."

This method of greeting has been used by all the Christians since the first century, today only Orthodox Churches still practice this. The Church says, "Christ is Risen" rather than "Christ has Risen," since Christ's Resurrection is everlasting, it is a continual victory over death and sin which had overtaken all humanity.

This is merely a summary of the events of Holy Week and the Glorious Feast of the Resurrection. In my opinion, the Orthodox Church is nothing short than Heaven on Earth.

Christ is Risen, indeed He is Risen!

a word from the desert

Christ incarnate makes me worthy of God,
Christ humbled for me, raises me high,
Christ, the giver of life, suffering in human nature, frees me from the passions.
And so, I sing a hymn of thanksgiving, to Him who is glorified.
Christ crucified raises me high,
Christ who is slain makes me rise again with Him;
Christ gives me life.
And so, clapping my hands with joy, I sing to the Savior a hymn of victory, to Him who is glorified.

*Cosmas of Maiuma (foster-brother of John of Damascus) 8th century
icon and troparion at: <http://www.comeandseeicons.com/c/ynk12.htm>*

a word from the desert

There were two natural brothers, and the devil came to separate them from one another. One day the younger lit the lamp, and the demon got involved and turned over the lampstand. The lamp also was overturned, and his brother struck him in anger. The other apologized, saying, "Be patient, my brother, I will light it again." And behold, the power of the Lord came and tormented the demon until morning. The demon went and told the one who ruled him what had occurred. The priest of the

pagans heard the demon's tale and went off, became a monk, and from the start persevered in humility.

And he used to say, "Humility takes away all of the enemy's power," just as he himself heard from the demon, "When I agitate the monks, one of them turns around and apologizes to the other, and destroys my power."