

A Voice in the Wilderness

The Newsletter of St. George Orthodox Christian Church



Rev. Matthew P. Binkewicz, Pastor

Christ is Risen! Indeed He is Risen! Al Masih Kham! Hakken Kham



Volume 13 Issue 614

3rd Sunday after Pascha-The Myrrh-bearing Women

April 14, 2024



They followed Jesus and the Twelve Apostles during their public ministry, and served them in the needs of daily life. St. Luke the Evangelist notes that the women who accompanied Jesus provided for His needs from what they had (see Luke 8:3). Some of them were wealthy, such as Joanna, the wife of Chuza, who was an official for King Herod.

When reading the Holy Gospels, one of the most striking things we see is that after the Lord's Resurrection, His Disciples were not the first to see Him. Instead, it was the women who had anointed Jesus' dead body with myrrh, who would receive the blessing to see the Lord first. These pious women, who remained faithful to Him without fail, kept the flame of devotion constantly burning in their hearts.

What is most remarkable about the Myrrh-bearers is their dedicated love for Christ, which was constant. They were there from the start, and remained with Him always. They were not only there with Him when He was speaking, doing miracles and attracting crowds, but also when He was abandoned by everyone else. They were there when He was arrested and crucified on the Cross as a criminal. They remained at the foot of the dow
(continued p.3)

+++ 3rd Sunday of Pascha +++

+St Martin the Confessor of Rome

Epistle: Acts 6: 1-7

Gospel: Mark 15:43-16:8

St. George Orthodox Christian Church is a community of believers who strive to live a life according to the Gospel of Christ and teachings of the Church.

We worship God in Trinity - Father+Son+Holy Spirit.

We are dedicated to Christ's commandment, *Love the Lord your God with all your heart, ad with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself.*

Homily on the Beatitudes by St. John of Kronstadt

Besides, it is always easier to do any task when your soul is meek; it always hard when you feel angry and annoyed. The anger with your neighbor turns prayer into sin and condemnation. Meekness gives us love, respect, and a good attitude of other people; meekness makes our prayers pleasing to God, turns God's grace to us, it brings forgiveness of our sins.

While rage, anger and implacability humiliate the dignity of every man and Christian, deprive us

of the peace of soul and mind, love, respect of neighbors, the God's goodwill and cause nothing but troubles and misfortunes.

We are inspired to be meek with the example of the apostles, all early Christians, and especially the Holy Martyrs. Despite the pagans» unheard cruelty and oppression, they never took a weapon to protect themselves. Still, they suffered like lambs for three centuries, looking up to their divine teacher, who, "when he was abused he did not

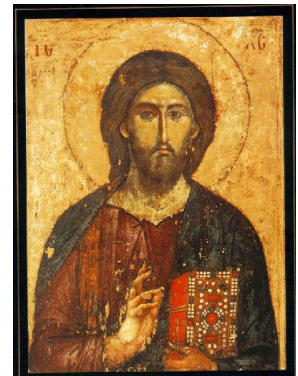
retaliate, when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed Himself to him that judges righteously" (1 Peter 2:23).

To avoid anger and irritability, we should look at ourselves, not the sins of others. We need to come to know our own hearts, our sins and our faults. Only then we will find out that the major part of strife and disagreement comes from ourselves, our self-love, pride, irritability, negligence, carelessness, distrust of others, and we
(continued on p.2)

We invite all to worship in our services. Sunday Divine Liturgy begins at 9:30 AM

If you have any questions about the church or would like to speak with our pastor, please call Fr. Matthew at 607-280-1586

Glory be to Jesus Christ.
Glory be Forever.





As the deliverer
of captives
and defender
of the poor,
healer of the infirm
and champion of kings,
victorious great
martyr George
intercede with Christ
our God that our souls
may be saved.

News and Notes

We welcome all who are with us today and invite you to join us for the blessing of Easter foods and breaking the fast following the Divine Liturgy.

Pray without ceasing (1 Thess. 5:17)

Please keep the following in your prayers: Mother Onufria, Larissa, Jack, Evan, Ryan, Anatoly, Alexey, Heidi, Mackenzie, Lisa, Jeff, Bonnalee, David, Carol, Norris, Debbie, Linda, Daniel, Michael, Abraham, George, Rochelle, Brianna, Catherine, Chuck, Theresa, Sally Lou, Mason, the homeless, the hungry, victims of abuse and violence, & those persecuted for their faith in Christ

Consolation in the Cross

We have been given the Cross. Isn't this the highest form of consolation? Don't we continually draw enormous strength from this source of consolation? Holy Scripture is full of this consolation—only draw from it, only turn to Holy Scripture, to the Cross of Christ; and then you will receive the only true and eternal consolation.

Read carefully the words of the apostle

Paul: *Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; Who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God* (2 Cor. 1:3–4).

I testify with all my heart to you the profound truth of St. Paul's words, from my own experience, for the Lord comforted me in my great sorrow. I can say that to the measure of the multiplication of your sorrows in Christ, will your consolation in Christ multiply. The greater your sorrows, the greater will be your consolation. Only Christ can console us, we will seek consolation only in Him, only in the Cross of Christ will we root out faintheartedness, sorrow, and despair.

This is why the Cross of Christ is brought to us, in order to draw you all to Him, to the One Who was crucified on the Cross. With great joy we see how crowd after crowd of people hasten to see the exalted cross and hear the hymn, "Before Thy Cross, we bow down, O Master."

Homily on the Beatitudes, cont'd from p.1

will learn to be lenient to others, forgive their weaknesses and drawbacks, to be gentle and patient with everyone.

We need to know how to control our hearts at the moment of insult, how to oppress rage and displeasure as soon as it appears. We must make a law to ourselves never to speak or act immediately when insulted by others, but cool down first. "Let us stop evil from the start," says St. Basil the Great, destroying anger by all means. When we learn it, we will be able to undercut all the evil at the very beginning, at its root. Did someone reproach you? Bless him then. Did he beat you? Just take it. Does he despise and dishonor you? Bring yourself to the thought that of dust you were made and there you will return. he who shields himself with such reasoning will find that every dishonor is less than it may seem at first.

Show your enemy that his reproach does not sting you, and the revenge would be impossible then. Get wiser through the rage of others, and you

will weave yourself a wreath of patience. Every time you feel confused by the temptation to say a word of reproach, think that this is the moment to decide whether you choose to approach God with your patience or surrender to your rage and take the



side of the enemy. Give your mind some time to make the right choice. But above all, it is crucial to pray sincerely to God to give us the spirit of meekness and patience and strengthen our hearts in mildness.

These virtues are gifts the Holy Spirit sent down by God to people

who are worthy and able to accept them. "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth." But what do we mean by inheriting the earth? It means that the meek will enjoy the longevity and other benefits in this life, just like the meek and long-suffering Job, David, or the meek patriarch Jacob, and many other saints who shone with meekness in the New Testament, and most importantly, that they will receive the blessings promised by God here, in the land of the living, in Heaven. May the merciful Lord grant us all these blessings with his grace, generosity and love for mankind. Amen.

Homily 5. "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled." The days of fasting, repentance and preparation and partaking of the Holy Mysteries of Christ, are the best to say a word about those who hunger and thirst for righteousness. Who of us is righteous, and who does not languish with spiritual hunger? Who therefore does

(continued p.4)

Homily on the Myrrh-bearers, (cont'd from p.1)

Cross, and stood by as He was taken down. They were there for His burial by Joseph and Nicodemus, and then returned to the tomb on Sunday morning to offer myrrh in their worship of Christ. They would not allow fear or any threats to keep them away from the Lord. What a great example for all of us! To maintain our devotion to Christ to the very end, and to His Holy Body, the Church.

Sadly, sometimes there are many who have been with Christ in the Church for a long time, believing in Him and following Him, but are later separated from the Church. They can be clergy or laypeople, and it happens for a variety of reasons. What this reveals is that these people have not really understood who Christ is, or what the Church is. Some view the Church of Christ in a human way, as if it was just a club that people go to in order to see friends on a Sunday morning. If those "friends" stop coming to Church, they also do not come. They forget that the Church is where we go to meet Christ, Who is the best and most faithful friend we could ever have.

What other friend is there who sacrificed for us, loves us and embraced the Cross for our salvation? It is Christ alone, Who also calls us His friends. Not only do we rejoice in our fellowship and conversation with Him, but we also unite with Him and commune with Him in the Holy

Mysteries! Our Lord Jesus Christ waits for us in His Holy Church with love, to relieve us of our burdens. All hardship, pain, sorrow and anxiety are healed in His loving embrace, curing us of the anguish caused by our sins. We are nourished by His Holy Body and Blood, and receive strength, peace of mind and the joy that enables us to continue to struggle towards the Heavenly Kingdom. If a person fails to realize this, then it will be easy for them to fall away for some frivolous reason. Perhaps they stay away because of a personal conflict with someone in the Church, it could even be their priest or bishop.

On the other side, when we see the steadfast love of the Myrrh-bearers to Christ, we are inspired. Even though we do not have Jesus Christ with us physically as

He was then, we know that "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever" (Hebrews 13:8). He Himself told us, "I will always be with you to the end of the age" (Matthew 28:20). This constant living presence of the Lord among us comes through the Church, which the Lord Himself founded (Matthew 16:18), Himself being the Head (Ephesians 5:23), and "the Church is the Body of Christ" (Ephesians 1:23).

There have been countless women of great faith associated with the Resurrection of Christ and His Church through the centuries, even to today. They too are "myrrh-bearers," offering their service to the Church in many ways. This includes charity, catechism, missionary

work and serving the needs of others. They know that whatever they do for the poor, hungry, sick, and the stranger, the Lord accepts it as an offering to Him. Just as the Resurrected Lord appeared to the Myrrh-bearers, so too will He be revealed in all His glory to call upon those who have loved Him, and remained united with Him through His Church, to enjoy His eternal blessing.

NOTE: We do not know the names of all the pious women who accompanied Jesus from Galilee to Calvary, and brought their gifts to the Tomb that morning of the Resurrection. St. Luke the Evangelist writes that along with the Virgin Mother of the Lord there were many others who had come to adorn Him (see Luke 8:3). Of these, only seven are mentioned in the Holy Gospels: St. Mary Mag-



dalene, who was possessed by demons before being healed by the Lord. She followed Him with gratitude and devotion to the very end. St. Mark the Evangelist writes that after His Resurrection, Jesus first appeared to her (see Mark 16:9). St. Mary, the wife of Alpheus and mother of St. James the Less, as he was called, in order to distinguish him from St. James the Greater, both Apostles. St. Salome, wife of Zebedee and mother of the Apostles James and John. St. Mary, wife of Cleopas. St. John the Evangelist call her "Jesus' Mother's Sister" (John 19:25). This is because her mother was the wife of the brother of St. Joachim, the father of the Theotokos). St. Joanna, wife of Chuza, who was a Commissioner of King Herod. Sts. Mary and Martha, the sisters of St. Lazarus, who was resurrected by the Lord.

Homily on the Beatitudes, cont'd from p.2

not seem to hunger and thirst after seeing right through the faith in Jesus Christ, who does not crave after righteousness, reformation, spiritual renewal?

However, despite our innumerable wrongs, despite all the time we set aside to fasting, repentance and partaking of the holy, immortal, life-giving and dreadful Mysteries of Our Savior Jesus Christ, the genuine hunger and thirst after righteousness cannot be seen in many people, in their cold and formal confessions that lack the hearty warmth and their negligence of this annual Christian obligation. Can we conclude instead that there are more righteous among us than sinners? Has the kingdom of God already come to us, have we lost any connection to sin, are we the chosen ones, are we the people reformed by word and deed?

Oh, I wish it was true! Oh, I wish we were all saints as benefits Christians who are called the children of the Heavenly Father! Alas... Keep me, God, from deluding you and myself. There are so few of us hungry and thirsty for righteousness, because there are so many sinners sleeping in sinful slumber, so many spiritual dead, those dead to the truth, but unfortunately alive for the sin; there are so many sleeping consciences that need to be shaken and awakened, and, after all, so many unaware of the right of God and of being hungry and thirsty for righteousness. So, my fellow sinners, among whom I am the first, hear the word of those

who hunger and thirst after righteousness. Oh, how I wish this word could arouse hunger and thirst after righteousness in any of you through the grace of God!

"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness"... Have you ever seen anyone suffering from physical thirst and hunger, or have you felt hunger and thirst yourself? Where do hunger and thirst come from? Why do some people – those who are sick – not feel the need for food or drink? These are the questions to ask ourselves to explain spiritual hunger through the physical one. All of us have felt hungry and thirsty to a greater or lesser extent. A man tormented by hunger or thirst cannot think of anything else but how to quench them as soon as possible. As soon as he finds food or drink or is offered it, he quenches his bodily need with yearning and joy. After that, he feels a pleasant comfort for having filled the emptiness, surge of energy and physical

strength.

If for some reason, this hunger and thirst cannot be quenched for a long time, he would suffer greatly; if this need cannot be satisfied at all, he begins to swell and dies in terrible torments. Such hunger and thirst come from a bodily need and a lack of the elements required to live; hunger and thirst normally occur in a healthy body. On the contrary, a long-standing lack of hunger and thirst indicates sickness and other dangerous states of the body, for it is caused by disorders of the internal organs. Now let us see what spiritual hunger and thirst for righteousness are. What causes them?

Why do many people not hunger after righteousness, is it a good sign?

To explain spiritual hunger and thirst, let us ascend to the origin of man, the creation of man by God, and the story of his fall, for this is where the reason for his hunger after righteousness lies. How was man created?

Man was made after the image and likeness of God, or, as the holy apostle says, "in righteousness and true holiness" (Eph. 4:24). Man was created righteous, holy and pure; he bore the source of the life-giving water, for he was in unity with God. Back then, the spiritual food and drink for man were righteousness, and the ever-current source of righteousness was our Lord God. This is the true realm of the soul; this is its food and drink! In unity with God, man did not know what hunger and thirst after righteousness were,

for he had always been filled. Those living in abundance have no idea of thirst or hunger.

Man got to know this hunger when, through sin, he lost the righteousness and fell away from the source of truth, from God where he could find eternal fulfillment. He turned from simplicity to deceit, from goodness to malice, from humility to pride, from meekness to anger, from holiness to impurity, from love of God to love of this world and self-love, from spiritual, Heavenly love to fleshly and earthly addictions. Having lost its native righteousness, its actual essence, the soul began to suffer from deprivation, hunger and thirst, grief and constriction from the lack of the spiritual food it needed.

So, having taken some poison, by negligence or carelessness, one is tormented by internal fire; he hungers and thirsts after the saving remedy or antidote.

(continued next issue)

