



ST. NICHOLAS NEWS

April 2017

St. Nicholas Orthodox Church

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*Orthodox Church
in America*

Diocese of the West

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**Christ is Risen!
Indeed He is Risen!**

**Χριστός Воскресе!
Воскресе!**

**Χριστός Ανεστη!
Αληθώς Ανεστη!**

DID JESUS REALLY RISE FROM THE DEAD?

By Father Alexander Schmemmann

In this world Christ's resurrection can never be made an 'objective fact'. The risen Lord appeared to Mary and 'she saw Him standing and knew not it was Jesus.' He stood on the shore of the Sea of Tiberias 'but the disciples knew not it was Jesus.' And on the way to Emmaus the eyes of the disciples 'were kept from recognizing Him.' The preaching of the resurrection remains foolishness to this world, and no wonder even Christians themselves somehow 'explain it away' by virtually reducing it to the old pre-Christian doctrines of immortality and survival. And indeed, if the doctrine of resurrection is just a 'doctrine,' if it is to be believed in as an event of the 'future,' as a mystery of the 'other world,' it is not substantially different from the other doctrines concerning the 'other world' and can be easily confused with them. Whether it is the immortality of the soul or the resurrection of the body – I know nothing of them and all discussion here is mere 'speculation'. Death remains the same mysterious passage into a mysterious future. The great joy that the disciples felt when they saw the risen Lord, that 'burning of heart' that they experienced on the way to Emmaus were not because the mysteries of an 'other world' were revealed to them, but because they saw the Lord. And He sent them to preach and to proclaim not the resurrection of the dead – not a doctrine of death – but repentance and remission of sins, the new life and the kingdom. They announced what they knew, that in Christ the new life has already begun.

All Christianity is the experience of faith repeated again and again as if for the first time, through its incarnation in rites, words, music, and colors. To the unbeliever, it may indeed seem like a mirage; he sees only incomprehensible ceremonies, and he understands them only outwardly. But for believers, all of this radiates from within, and not as proof of their faith, but as its result, as its life in the world, in the soul, in history. Therefore the darkness and sadness of Holy Friday is for us something real, alive, contemporary; we can cry at the cross and experience everything that took place in that triumph of evil, treachery, cowardice, and betrayal; we can contemplate the life-bearing tomb on Holy Saturday with excitement and hope. And therefore, every year we can celebrate Easter, Pascha, the Resurrection. For Easter is not the remembrance of an event in the past. It is the real encounter in happiness and joy, with Him whom our hearts long ago knew and encountered as the life and light of all light. Easter night testifies that Christ is alive and with us, and that we are alive in Him.

The entire celebration is an invitation to look at the world and life, and to behold the dawning of the mystical day of the Kingdom of light. "Today the air is filled with the fragrance of Spring," sings the church, "and all creation rejoices in its renewal..." It rejoices in faith, in love and in hope.

Pastoral Reflections concerning Confession during the Last Days of Lent

As we said last month, one of the essential aspects of the Lenten journey is the Sacrament of Penance. This is the season of repentance and therefore **every** Orthodox Christian prepares to make a good confession during these days. I'm addressing this again because so many of us tend to procrastinate, not realizing the tremendous pressure this puts on the parish priest during the busiest time of the year.

So...once again: **Please make every effort to come to confession during the 40 days of Lent which end on April 7, the eve of Lazarus Saturday. Holy Week is reserved only for emergencies, catechumens and students returning home for Pascha.**

Now, some practical considerations. When I do come during these days, what should I say? What should I not say? When is the best time to come?

First of all, a good rule of thumb is to confess your **own** sins without elaborate explanations or rationalizations. Another very important consideration is if there is a need to discuss anything at length, it would be better to schedule a time when there is not a queue of penitents. We all need that venue at certain times, but it's better to request a confession by appointment which is convenient both for you and the priest. These few weeks are definitely not the time to ruminate on various problems of the past week or to have a "spiritual chat."

I can't stress enough how important it is to actually set aside time to prepare for this Sacred Mystery. Actually, Great Lent itself should be a huge part of this process. Personally I find it helpful to first look at a printed "examination of conscience" in order to prepare myself for this Holy Sacrament. I highly recommend two booklets: *Preparing for Confession* by L. Joseph Letendre and *If We Confess Our Sins* by Fr. Thomas Hopko. They are both available in the parish bookstore. I can provide you with an electronic copy of the latter if you email me at svyatnikolai@yahoo.com.

However, just reading something from someone else's list is not the best alternative. Making your own list as a reminder can be a very helpful tool, ever mindful that true repentance comes from the depth of one's heart and said in one's own words.

Community Corner

During these Holy Days of Great Lent and Pascha we are reminded by our Lord Himself to "first clean the inside of the cup" (Mat. 23:26). As a part of our Lenten tithe to increase prayer, fasting and almsgiving, an absolute priority is given to worship. Nevertheless, the "outside of the cup" often has to be cleaned as well.

We will need all our ministry volunteers this month to help with cleaning, decorating, general preparations and "after the party" clean-up.



Additional details will be posted on bulletin boards in both the fellowship hall and the narthex of the temple.

Spring Cleanup Day

Thursday, April 6th - 9am - 3pm

Volunteers will meet
in the Parish Hall
to receive assignments.



Fall Festival Kick-off

During lunch on Sunday, April 30th

Please plan to attend the kick-off event where we'll form working groups in preparation for our parish's annual fundraiser to be held Saturday, October 7, 2017. Please hold the event date on your personal calendar.

In order for St. Nicholas Parish to host a Fall Festival this year, we need to know that *every* member of the community is committed to lending a hand. Many hands (*and* early planning) will make this possible.

If you are unable to make the kick-off, please contact Margaret Scott at margaret-scott3@gmail.com to offer your support.

Holy Week and Bright Week Schedule of Services

Lazarus Saturday, April 8

Divine Liturgy, 9:30 a.m.

Palm Sunday Vigil- blessing of palms and willows, 6:00p.m

Palm Sunday, April 9

Divine Liturgy, 9:30 a.m.

Vespers and Bridegroom Matins, 6:00 p.m.

Great and Holy Monday, April 10

Bridegroom Matins, 7:00 p.m.

"Behold the Bridegroom comes at midnight..."

Great and Holy Tuesday, April 11 Lenten hours and Gospel, 5:15 p.m.

Presanctified and lenten meal, 6:00 p.m. (*Hymn of Cassia*)

Great and Holy Wednesday, April 12

Matins & anointing 7:00 p.m.

Great and Holy Thursday, April 13

Divine Liturgy (Institution of the Eucharist), 10:30 a.m.

Matins (12 Passion Gospels), 7:00 p.m.

Great and Holy Friday, April 14

Royal Hours, 9:00 a.m.

Vespers and bringing out of the Holy Shroud, 2:00p.m.

Jerusalem Matins--praises and procession, 7:00 p.m.

Homily of St. Epiphanius of Cyprus, 10:30 p.m.

Great and Holy Saturday, The Great Vigil of Pascha, April 15

Vespers and Divine Liturgy of St. Basil, 11:00 a.m.

Nocturns and removal of the Holy Shroud, 11:15 p.m.

Great and Holy Pascha - The Feast of Feasts, April 16

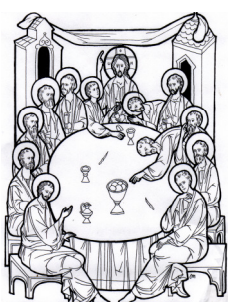
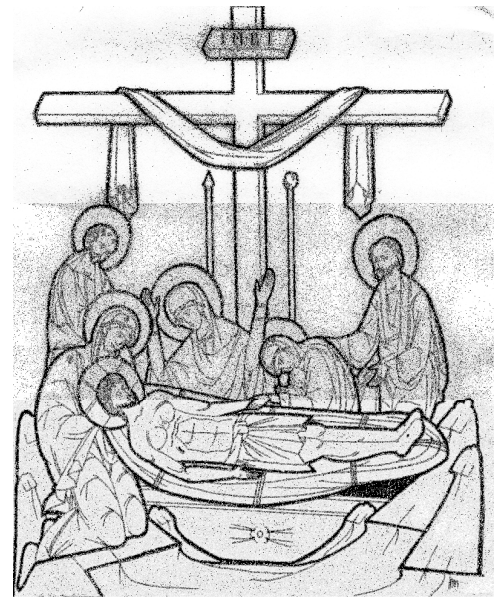
Procession, Paschal Matins and Divine Liturgy, 12:00 midnight

(followed by blessing of foods now permitted to be eaten and parish Agape Festal Meal)

Vespers of Pascha (Gospel in many languages), 1:30 p.m

Bright Monday, April 17

Paschal Divine Liturgy, Procession and 4 Resurrection Gospels, 10:00 a.m.



Holy Communion

To truly celebrate Pascha is to partake of Holy communion at the Divine Liturgy that blessed night. Christ Himself is the *Paschal Lamb* who was slain for the sins of the world. To "eat of the Pascha" then is not to eat of blessed bread or cheese (kulich and synaya pascha) but to receive the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ. If you have made a sincere confession and repented of your sins during Lent, and have not fallen into any "mortal" sin afterwards, then abstain from all food and drink from sunset on Holy Saturday, hear the sermon of St. John Chrysostom and prepare to receive.