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PASCHAL GREETING IN MULTIPLE LANGUAGES

English: Christ is Risen! Indeed He is risen!

Albanian: Khrishti unjal! Vertet unjal!

Aleut: Khristus anahgrecum! Alhecum anahgrecum! Alutuq: Khris-tusaq ung-uixtuq! Pijii-nuq ung-uixtuq!

Amharic: Kristos tenestwal! Bergit tenestwal! **Anglo-Saxon:** Crist aras! Crist sodhlice aras! Arabic: El Messieh kahm! Hakken kahm!

Armenian: Kristos haryav ee merelotz! Orhnial eh

harootyunuh kristosee!

Aroman: Hristolu unghia! Daleehira unghia!

Athabascan: Xristosi banuytashtch'ey! Gheli

banuytashtch'ey!

Bulgarian: Hristos voskrese! Vo istina voskrese! Byelorussian: Khrystos uvaskros! Sapraudy uvaskros!

Chinese: Helisituosi fuhuole! Queshi fuhuole!

Coptic: Christos anesti! Alithos anesti!

Czech: Kristus vstal a mrtvych! Opravdi vstoupil! Danish: Kristus er opstanden! I sandhed Han er

Opstanden!

Dutch: Christus is opgestaan! Ja, hij is waarlijk

opgestaan!

Eritrean-Tigre: Christos tensiou! Bahake tensiou!

Esperanto: Kristo levigis! Vere levigis!

Estonian: Kristus on oolestoosunt! Toayestee on oolestoosunt!

Ethiopian: Christos t'ensah em' muhtan! Exai' abher eokala!

Finnish: Kristus nousi kuolleista! Totisesti nousi!

French: Le Christ est ressuscite! En verite il est ressuscite!

Gaelic: Kriost eirgim! Eirgim!

Georgian: Kriste ahzdkhah! Chezdmaridet!

German: Christus ist erstanden! Er ist wahrhaftig

erstanden!

Cont. on page 14

RESURRECTION PASTORAL LETTER 2010

+ NATHANIEL

By the Mercy of God, Archbishop of Detroit and the Romanian Episcopate

To our beloved clergy, monastics and pious faithful of our God-protected Episcopate, Grace, Mercy and Peace from God, and from us our fatherly love and hierarchal blessing.

"The Lord God says this: I am now going to open your graves and raise you from your graves, my people. And I shall put My spirit in you, and you will live ... it is the Lord God who speaks."

Ezekiel 37:12,14

Christ is risen! Truly, he is risen!

Dearly Beloved:

What a glorious day this is! The mercy of God is great and his love is everlasting! He has looked upon his people and smiled on us and put his spirit into us to celebrate this day of brightness which surpasses the light of the celestial bodies. Today, darkness is no more, and death has been crushed and annihilated, for God has opened our graves and raised us into unending life! For his love is everlasting!

In the Book of Genesis, we hear it stated that "God said, 'Let us make man in our own image, in the likeness of ourselves...'. God created man in the image of himself, in the image of God he created him, male and female he created them" (Gen. 1:26, 27). This man, made in the image of his Maker, however, chose to think of himself as self-sufficient (he and his wife); and thus putting themselves in place of their Creator, they found themselves, in fact, insufficient and mortal.

Having turned from God who is Life and the Source of life, man and his wife found that the result of turning from the source of life is death. Hearing from the mouth of God these words, "For dust you are and to dust you shall return," man travailed his days on earth under the quest of restoration with his Creator God (Gen. 3:19). God, however, did not leave man alone in his quest but bowed the heavens to come and carry this burden for his children.

The Messiah, Christ the Eternal Word of God, came to restore that image of God in all humanity and to raise mankind up from the dust from which it is taken, to eradicate, to pull out from its roots, the "sting" of death, and to bestow on humanity a new and unending existence in the presence of him "through whom all things were made." The Resurrection from the dead of our Lord and God and Savior, Jesus Christ is the true triumph of Life over death. Jesus, Only-begotten Son of the Father, born of the Holy Virgin Mary, took on our human nature, so that he could "refashion in us the image broken by passion," meaning, the passion or failing of the first man. "And finding the wayward sheep lost in the mountain, he (Jesus) took it on his shoulders and carried it to the Father."

God, through his prophet Ezekiel stated: "I am now going to open your graves and raise you from your graves." Saint Constantine the Great, the first Christian Emperor, in the early 4th Century (To the Assembly of the Saints), reflects this prophecy of Ezekiel when he speaks about the "renovation of bodies long since dissolved." He says: "That light which far outshines the day and sun, first pledge of resurrection, and renovation of bodies long since dissolved, the divine token of promise, the path which leads to everlasting life ... is arrived ... and the predictions of the prophets were all fulfilled."

Saint Ambrose of Milan in the same century, reflecting on the death of his brother, says: "What grief is there which the grace of the Resurrection does not console? What sorrow is not excluded by the belief that nothing perishes in death?...So, then, if death frees us from the miseries of this world, it is certainly no evil, inasmuch as it restores liberty and excludes suffering... For now we know in part, and understand in part, but then it will be possible for that which is perfect to be grasped, when not the shadow but the reality of the Divine Majesty and eternity shall begin to shine so as to be gazed upon by us with unveiled face."

The Divine Majesty is of course the Holy Trinity in whose image we were made and to which we shall return in the presence of God in the reality of his "unveiled face"; and we will "live again, it is the Lord who speaks." Through his boundless mercy, this fellowship with God is an unending relationship in love.

This is the relationship which the first man and woman rejected. This is not simply a restored relationship, but a new relationship based on the obedience of Christ to the Father.

Saint Cyril of Alexandria in his 4th Lecture (On the Ten Points of Doctrine On the Resurrection of the Lord), says: "Did Jonah come forth from the whale on the third day, and has not Christ then risen from the earth on the third day? Is a dead man raised to life on touching the bones of Elisha, and is it not much easier for the Maker of mankind to be raised by the power of the Father?"

The reality of the resurrection of Jesus Christ is hereto testified in reference to the Old Testament experiences of the Prophet Jonah and to the raising of the dead man through contact with the bones of the Prophet Elisha (2 Kings 13:21). Both of these events took place not through any power of the prophets but through the power of God working through them.

In a long poem (On Pascha), only a few lines of which are here quoted, Melitios of Sardis makes the analogy that there is only one perfect sacrifice to God the Father: Jesus Christ the "Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world"... "a speechless lamb was precious, but it is worthless now because of the spotless Son; the temple below was precious, but it is worthless now because of the Christ above... The Jerusalem below was precious, but it is worthless now because of the Jerusalem above; the narrow inheritance was precious, but it is worthless now because of the widespread bounty."

The sacrifices of the Old Law are no more; the one and only ever true sacrifice, the Lamb who came forth from the Virgin's womb, once and for all time, for all the "ends of the inhabited earth." Who is most precious to the Father but the Son through whom the Spirit of Truth came upon the apostles on the Fiftieth Day after the Resurrection? Jesus reaches into the earth, into the graves to raise our fallen nature to the heights of heaven. When God promised to open the graves and to empty them, he was promising in Christ Jesus who is the "first fruit of those rising from the dead," whose grave was the first opened to the universal resurrection. Look at the icon of the Resurrection! See the Lamb of God, Christ the Destroyer of Death reaching down into Hades, grasping out of its clutches Adam and Eve and the righteous as he tramples greedy Death!

Leo the Great of Rome (Homily 71: On the Lord's Resurrection, Great and Holy Saturday) reminds us that we must all become partakers in Christ's Resurrection life. "We must strive to be found partakers also of Christ's Resurrection, and 'pass from death unto life' while we are in this body. We must die, therefore, to the devil and live to God: we must perish to iniquity that we may rise to righteousness. . . . As we have borne the image of the earthy, so let us also bear the image of Him Who is from heaven; we must greatly rejoice over this change, whereby we are translated from earthly degradation to heavenly dignity through His unspeakable mercy, Who descended into our estate that He might promote us to His." Thus has Christ fulfilled Adam's quest for restoration.

Being thus encouraged by the words of the prophets of old and being satisfied by the reality of the empty tomb, confirmed by the witness of the apostles and great cloud of saints through the ages, we are called by God to remember daily that we are individual and collective witnesses to the Resurrection and graced to live a new life through baptism in the death and resurrection of our Lord, anointed by the Spirit and sustained by his glorious and precious Body and Blood.

St. Leo continues: "Let God's people then recognize that they are a new creation in Christ, and with all vigilance understand by Whom they have been adopted and Whom they have adopted. These thoughts, dearly beloved, must be kept in mind not only for the Paschal festival, but also for the sanctification of the whole life ... so that rising ever anew from all downfalls, we may deserve to attain to the incorruptible Resurrection of our glorified flesh in Christ Jesus our Lord. . .".

This day's celebration of the Resurrection must be a daily celebration for those who put their hope in God. This hope gives us joy in our daily lives. Our daily lives lead us to eternal life. Eternal life is bestowed on us by him who said: "I am now going to open your graves and raise you from your graves, my people. And I shall put My spirit in you, and you will live ... it is the Lord God who speaks." Amen!

Christ is risen! Truly he is risen!

Accept our fatherly love and archpastoral blessings on those near and those far away.

+ Nathanie

+NATHANIEL, Archbishop

THE RESURRECTION AND THE MOTHER OF GOD

by Rev. Hieromonk Calinic (Berger)

ORTHOBOX

THOUGHT

and life

From the beginning of the Church, Christian thinkers have sought to harmonize the Gospel accounts of the resurrection of Christ. From their work and from the Gospels themselves, it is evident that there was more than one group of women who visited Jesus' tomb in the very early hours of that first Pascha, "while it was yet dark" (John 20:1). This begs the

question: was the Mother of God among these women? After all, the women at the cross were there not only for Jesus' sake, but to comfort his mother (as was the custom of the era), whose presence at the crucifixion is made explicit by John (19:25-7).

Among the more interesting efforts of harmonization is that of Saint Gregory Palamas, whose goal was to

support the belief that it was the Mother of God who first received news of the resurrection and who alone first witnessed the risen Christ.

A clear exegesis is far from easy. To illustrate: even though the second ending of Mark's Gospel tells us "that when Jesus was risen early the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene" (16:9), it is obvious from the accounts of the other Gospels that she was not the first to receive the news of the resurrection from the angels. For example, John is explicit that Mary first saw the stone removed, ran and told Peter "that they have taken away the Lord ... and we do not know where they have laid Him" (John 20:2). Here, as Palamas points out, she is "speaking about a corpse" – hardly an explicit knowledge of the Resurrection. Only after this does Mary Magdalene return to the tomb where she encounters Christ.

Mary Magdalene's words in John 20:2 have another significance: she uses the pronoun "we." So, whereas the longer ending of Mark (16:9) says that Jesus first appeared first to Mary Magdalene, the shorter ending of Mark says that three women went to the tomb (Mk 16:1), Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Salome – which concurs with her use of "we" in John 20:2.

This apparent confusion, says Palamas, becomes understandable when upon closer scrutiny we realize that there were multiple groups of myrrh-bearers, who made several trips to the tomb. We can summarize these differences in the Gospels: Only Matthew mentions the "other Mary" and the earthquake with angels, and then the departure of the women. In Mark and Luke, the women encounter the empty tomb, then

see angels and then depart. In John, they encounter the empty tomb and then depart, and only later *return* and see angels.

Using such comparisons, Palamas goes on to state that the "the other Mary" mentioned in Matthew, who witnesses the earthquake and is addressed with the words, "Fear not!" (Mt 28:1-4) – is in fact the Mother

of God. Moreover, since the Gospel of John is clear that Mary Magdalene saw the stone removed from the sepulcher but did not receive an angelic salutation on her first visit, it is obvious that she was not a witness of the earthquake and descent of the angel. The person who witnessed these things was "the other Mary."

Such a conclusion based on the Gospel accounts is far from conclu-

sive. Palamas himself realized this and therefore sought to substantiate his argument with some circumstantial evidence, which is by no means implausible. For example, the Mother of God did not abandon her Son at any point during His passion on the Cross and death. The other women were there to support her, not the other way around. She was present for the burial of her Son, and therefore it would be normal for her to go to the tomb to finish a proper burial on Sunday morning. Since it was *her* Son that was buried, it is not unreasonable that she was the first to go there.

Much more interesting than this circumstantial evidence is Palamas' theological rationale for his exegesis of these texts. First, he says, no man witnessed the creation of Adam. The first to see him was Eve – the first woman. Likewise, no man saw the new Adam rise from the dead. The first to see him was His mother – the new Eve.

Secondly, the angel that announced the resurrection was Gabriel – the bringer of tidings. He had already spoken to the Mother of God at the Annunciation, and she knew from experience the truth of his words. There he said "fear not, Mary" (Lk 1:30). Here he says "Fear not... He is risen" (Mt 28:5-6). This makes more sense when we recall that in the early church the Annunciation and Resurrection were believed to have happened on the same day, and in both events the same angel brought the glad tidings. So it was that the Mother of God herself, Palamas says, became the "Apostle to the Apostles."

We can extend St. Gregory's rationale with further parallels: whereas Adam "died" (sinned and was de-Cont. on page 11

Preparing for God's Mercy

by Psa. Janene Wey

"Lord have mercy!" I say this countless times in my prayers and in my thoughts, throughout the day and night, as we do in the services of the Church. But what really are we asking for? Fr. Thomas Hopko, in his book *The Lenten Spring*, describes the mercy of the Lord as simply God "being Who He is – merciful, gracious, kind, generous, compassionate, bountiful, loving...". By imploring God to have mercy, we are simply asking Him to be "all that He is" to us. Truthfully, how can God be anything other than Who He is

– and therefore merciful?

If it is true, as Christ told the multitudes who encamped on the mountain to hear Him teach, that "He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust" (Matt. 5:45), then is it not also true that God's mercy, like the rain, is continually poured out upon all and at all times, whether one is aware of it or not? And if so, how is His mercy, which is poured out upon all and at all times, to be perceived and received in me?

Once a year, in the wis-

dom of the Church, we hear the Gospel of the Prodigal Son. We are all familiar with the story of the son, who takes all that is his and which is freely given by his father, and leaves home, only to end up in a foreign and friendless land, far removed from those who truly love him. He is heedless of all the wealth he possesses and wastes it in riotous living. He is brought low, bereft and in need, remembering all that was once his in his father's house. For me, one of the most poignant statements in the parable is that the son, in the midst of the pigpen, finally "came to himself" (Luke 15:17). Of all the things that could have been said of his situation, I find this appraisal of his mindset most interesting. It doesn't say he changed his mind; it doesn't say he began to miss everyone at home; it doesn't even really say that he repented, although I am sure he did all of those things and more. Christ says simply that he "came to himself." And it is this "coming to himself" which set him back upon the journey of healing, return and restoration.

In my journey, what must I, like the Prodigal Son, do in order to "come to myself"? And what is it about

"coming to myself" that is truly necessary, healing, and salvific? The prodigal son began his journey as an outward journey, away from the father, coming into a foreign land; but it was not until he journeyed inward that he found that for which he was truly seeking. Our journey must also be an inward journey – a journey into the heart, the place where God dwells in each of us. It may require that we put away the distractions of the outward journey, the riotous living going on around us in this world, as we seek out the place where He

dwells. But we are aided in this journey through that which the Church provides: confession, spiritual direction, fellowship, communion, and the selfdenial learned and acquired through ascetic practices.

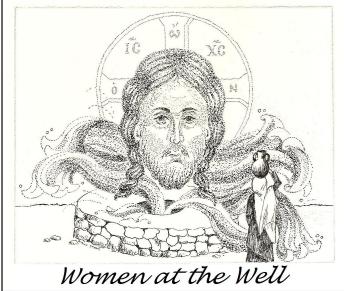
The act of "coming to oneself" brings the realization that we are broken, through our own fallenness and disobedience, both willful and ignorant, and that we have wasted what has been given to us by the Father's loving hand." Only by "coming to oneself" — making a journey within

"coming to oneself" –
making a journey within
– can we realize anew, that we are in need. Then we
desire the Father's healing and restoration of integrity
– above all else, so that His image which we possess
(all clouded over and barely discernable as it has
become), may once again be restored and shine forth.

By "coming to himself," the Prodigal Son once again realized that he was to be like His Father, though he had lost the worthiness of so doing. And so with us: we are made aware once again that we were created in the image and likeness of God; that He made us "a little lower than the angels" (Ps. 8:5) and that He has "taken up abode" in us (John 14:23), and that He desires our healing and our communion with Him restored.

Finally, in "coming to himself," the Prodigal Son found that he was incapable of restoring himself. That was up to the Father. And here is where *mercy* comes in. So with us: when we realize afresh that we are first of all in need of God's mercy, He restores us, for He is truly "merciful, gracious, kind, generous, compassionate, bountiful, loving...".

Cont. on page 11



FROM PASCHA UNTIL SAINT THOMAS SUNDAY

PASCHA

This Feast day is the most important in the entire Church calendar. We remember that it is this day that our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ brought us "from death to life and from the earth to Heaven" (1st Katavasia of Easter). His conquering death and the Devil gives all of humanity the chance to become citizens of His eternal Kingdom. We rejoice in the Resurrection, and always remember the love of God present in our lives on this feast day. The service of the Holy Feast of Pascha begins at about 10:30-11:00 p.m. with the chanting of the Canon. These hymns are the exact same ones we chanted Holy Friday evening. At about 11:40 p.m., the lights are all shut off in the Church and the Priest comes out with one lit candle. He joyously proclaims: "Come receive the light, from the unwaning Light, and glorify Christ who is risen from the dead!" The Church becomes illuminated and all proceed outside (led by the Priest) for the Gospel reading to proclaim the Resurrection of Christ (Mark 16:1-8). After this Gospel, all Christians chant the hymn that is so beloved by all: "Christ is risen from the dead, trampling down death by His death, and bestowing life to those in the tombs!" After this, the Festal Matins and Divine Liturgy are chanted, all hymns so joyful of the Resurrection of Christ. At the end of the Resurrectional Liturgy, the Catechetical Homily of St. John Chrysostom is read, followed by the blessing of the Easter eggs. At the end of the Liturgy, these red Easter eggs are given to the faithful.

The Bible readings for the day are: Gospel of the Resurrection: Mark 16:1-8; Divine Liturgy Readings - Epistle: Acts 1:1-12; Gospel: John 1:1-12.

VESPERS OF LOVE

With the celebration of the Resurrection finishing into the early hours of the morning, the Church finishes Holy Week with a Vespers service. This Vespers is called "The Vespers of Agape". In this Vespers, we chant the hymns of the Resurrection, and also read the Gospel (John 20:19-25) in various languages. This Gospel is read by the Priest and the people, and says how Christ appeared in front of His disciples, and how Thomas did not believe. At the end of the service, we chant the famous hymn of the Resurrection, which is to be repeated every single Sunday until the Ascension:

The day of Resurrection; let us be radiant for the festival, and let us embrace one another. Let us say, brethren, even to those that hate us, 'Let us forgive all things on the Resurrection', and so let us cry, 'Christ is risen from the dead, trampling down death by His death and bestowing life to those in the tombs'. At the end of the service, all are given red Easter eggs (of the same that were blessed the previous night) as a blessing. If Easter falls on or after April 23rd, we also commemorate at this Vespers service the memory of St. George the Great Martyr.

FEAST DAYS OF BRIGHT WEEK

The week of Pascha is called "Bright Week", (the new week). There are various feastdays during this week, which is celebrated as "one day" (because Pascha is seen as "the eighth day of Creation," fulfilling God's Divine Plan). On **Bright Tuesday**, the Church commemorates the newly-found martyrs of Mytilini, Sts. Raphel, Nicholas and Irene. They were actually martyred on April 9th, but it was also that year's "Bright Tuesday"; therefore, the Church decided their memories should be celebrated that day. On Bright Friday, the Church commemorates the consecration of a Church dedicated to the Theotokos, "the Life-Giving Font" by Emperor Leo (5th century). Before he became Emperor, he had met a blind man who was thirsting for water. Leo felt compassion for him but found no water. Leo then heard a voice telling him there was water nearby. He was told a second time to look and take some water and anoint the blind man's eyes with it. After finding it, he did this and the blind man received his sight. After Leo became Emperor as the most holy Theotokos had prophesied, he raised up a church over the font, whose waters worked many healings and cured maladies by the grace of the Theotokos.

Gospels for Bright Week

Bright Monday: John 1:18-28; Bright Tuesday: Luke 24:12-35; Bright Wednesday: John 1:35-52; Bright Thursday: John 3:1-15; Bright Friday: John 2:12-22; Bright Saturday: John 3:22-33.

THOMAS SUNDAY

For some of us, it is quite difficult to believe if we don't see the truth with our eyes. The saying "seeing is believing" has been put into our systems, and we think that it's true. Now, what would Jesus have to say about that? Thomas Sunday is the Sunday after Pascha, and continues the story of the Agape Vespers. Thomas said to the disciples that he did not believe Jesus rose from the dead: "Unless I see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe" (John 20:25). The week after, Jesus appeared again to His disciples (this time, with Thomas). Jesus told Thomas, "Reach your finger here, and look at My hands; and reach your hand here, and put it into My side. Do not be unbelieving, but believing.' And

Understanding the Resurrection Through Christ's Descent into Hades

By Rev. Dr. George D. Dragas

The Resurrection of Christ and the Universal Resurrection of Humanity



The celebration of Pascha prompts us to consider the great doctrine of the Resurrection which is embedded in it as its very essence, and constitutes a basic article of Orthodox Christian belief. This doctrine has two basic aspects, both of which appear in that summary of Orthodox Christian belief known as the Ecumenical Creed, or Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed, initially affirmed at the First Ecumenical Council of Nicaea in 325 AD and in its expanded and final form at the Second Ecumenical Council of Constantinople in 381 AD.

The first aspect of Orthodox Christian belief in the Resurrection appears in the second article of the Creed, concerning Christ and especially the doctrine of the Incarnation. It simply confesses Christ's Resurrection as the basis of the universal Resurrection of all human beings: "For us men, and for our salvation, He came down from Heaven... He was incarnate. He was crucified for us... He suffered... He was buried... On the third day, He rose according to the Scriptures... He ascended into Heaven... He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead and His Kingdom will have no end."

The second aspect relates to the universal Resurrection of all humanity, which was implicit in the previous aspect, but is now explicitly confessed as an event which will definitely take place at the end of time: "I expect the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come."

It is clear from this creedal context that Christ's Resurrection presupposes not only His death, but also His Incarnation (taking up our humanity) and becoming man, though He was God (Word and Son of God) through Whom both humanity and the entire world were created.

On the other hand, the universal resurrection of all humanity at the end of time presupposes not only the universal range and effect of Christ's Resurrection, but also the unity of all humanity in the single humanity of Christ.

In line with this, Saint John Chrysostom said that the flesh which the Son of God assumed at his Incarnation was the flesh of the Church; i.e., the entirety of human nature. Saint Paul the Apostle had written that when Christ died, all humanity died, and He rose again so that all humanity may rise again. Christ as the Last Adam has radically changed the destiny of humanity. Saint Athanasios the Great affirms that when we die, we do not die as condemned, but in order to rise again.

To open up the deeper meaning of this dual doctrine of the Resurrection, we may turn to the Icon of the Resurrection, the Anastasis, and to the teaching of the Fathers of the Church.

The Icon of the Anastasis, or the Harrowing of Hell. In the Orthodox iconographic tradition, there is no icon depicting the moment of the Resurrection of Christ as such. The icon depicting Christ alone, rising from the grave and holding a flag with a red cross while the soldiers and angels appear on the sides is Western, and was introduced to Orthodoxy later, in post-Byzantine times. Some Orthodox scholars consider this Icon unacceptable (e.g., Kontoglou and Uspenski), probably because it is naturalistic and Christomonistic and, strictly speaking, not "according to the Scriptures."

The lack of an Orthodox Icon of the moment of Resurrection is in accordance with the Gospel narratives, which state what happened, but do not explain how it happened. Thus, the inexplicable mystery of the Resurrection of Christ is piously maintained as lying beyond human comprehension, in a similar way as the mystery of his Incarnation. Nonetheless, there

is an icon of the Resurrection which bears the name, "Anastasis," and is used as the characteristic icon for the feast of Orthodox Pascha, just as there is an icon of the Incarnation and bears the name, "The Birth of Christ."

According to art historians, the Icon of the Anastasis first appeared in the 8th Century (after the end of Iconoclasm) and reached its final form by the 11th Century (the Palaiologan period). The chief characteristic of this icon is that Christ is not alone in His victory over death, but has with Him figures which represent our humanity. The two aspects of the Resurrection which we see in the Creed are pictorially presented in this sacred icon.

The traditional form of the Anastasis depicts Christ in frontal view, or turning on the one or the other side, holding the cross and rising from Hell (Hades), which is burst wide open (harrowed), with its gates broken and bolts and hinges flying over its dark background, and into which Hades sometimes appears personified and bound by chains. Then Christ is either flanked by two open graves, from which Adam and Eve emerge, being pulled out by Christ, Who is either extending his hands to them or has taken hold of their wrist; or by a single grave from which Adam and Even are brought out by Christ. To these, other figures are added, which sometimes include Abel on the one side, and David and Solomon together with John the Baptist on the other (there are further elaborations).

The depicting of the primogenitors of mankind signifies the fact that Christ did not rise for Himself, but to open the way for the resurrection of all humanity. The other figures are there as antitypes of Christ: Abel as the first antitype of Christ's sacrifice on the Cross; David and Solomon, His human ancestors, as antitypes of His royal office; and Saint John the Baptist as the prophet and precursor of His Passion and Resurrection. They partake in the first Resurrection, which involves the destruction of Hell and the opening up of Paradise.

Where does this theme of "Harrowing of Hell" come from (for there is no reference to it in the four canonical Gospels)? Customarily, art scholars have tended to explain this icon on the basis of the so-called Apocryphal Gospel of Nicodemus or Acts of Pilate (4th/5th Century), in which Christ's descent into, and harrowing of, Hell is described quite dramatically. There is, however, clear evidence in the Bible which relates to Christ's descending into Hell and delivering the spirits of the dead which had been imprisoned there.

Scriptural Evidence. There are several Old Testament texts prophetically depicting the Resurrection in its two aspects. Here, we recall only those associated with the harrowing of Hell by way of example: Psalms 15.10 ("For You will not leave my soul in Hell, neither will You suffer to see Your Holy One to see corruption"); Psalms 106.14-16 ("And He brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death, and broke

their bonds asunder... For He broke to pieces the brazen gates and crushed the iron bars"); and Isaiah 45.2 ("I will break to pieces brazen doors, and will burst iron bars").

The New Testament witness comes from Saint Peter the Apostle's first sermon on the day of Pentecost, which recalls David's prophecy about the delivery of Christ's soul from Hades and Christ's flesh from corruption by the Lord (Acts 2.27, reminiscent of Psalms 15.10) and from Saint Paul's sermon at the synagogue in Antioch of Pisidia, which is also focused on the same prophesy (Acts 13.16, 13.32-37).

Saint Peter said: "Brethren, I may say to you confidently of the patriarch David... being a prophet... foresaw and spoke of the Resurrection of Christ, that he was not abandoned in Hell, nor did his flesh see corruption." In his First Catholic Letter, Saint Peter also further points about Christ's descent into Hell: "Christ went and preached to the spirits in prison, who formerly did not obey when God's patience waited in the days of Noah (I Peter 3.19-20).

In the book of Acts, Saint Paul also refers to David's prophecy: "Men of Israel and you God-fearers... we bring to you the good news that what God promised to the fathers, this He has fulfilled to us, their children, by raising Jesus... and as for the fact that He raised Him from the dead, no more to return to corruption, He spoke in this way: 'I will give the holy and sure blessings of David.' Therefore, He also says in another Psalm, 'You will not let Your Holy One see corruption... David fell asleep, and was laid with his fathers and saw corruption, but He Whom God raised up saw no corruption." In Ephesians 4.9-10, Saint Paul also alludes to Christ's descent into Hell when he says that Christ "descended into the lower parts of the Earth."

In the Gospel of Nicodemus we read, "Again the voice sounded. Lift up the gates. When Hades heard the voice the second time... he said: 'Who is this King of Glory?' The angels of the Lord said: 'The Lord strong and mighty in battle [Psalms 23.8].' And immediately at this answer, the gates of brass were broken in pieces; the iron bars were shattered; and all the dead who were bound were loosed from their chains, and we with them. And the King of Glory entered in like a man, and all the dark places of Hades were illumined. The King of Glory stretched out His right hand and took hold of our forefather, Adam, and raised him up. Then He turned also to the rest and said: 'Come with Me, all you who have suffered death... I raise you all up again through the tree of the Cross" (V, viii).

These points are also most eloquently expressed by certain hymns of the Services of Great Saturday and Pascha Sunday: "Today Hades cries out groaning: 'My power has been swallowed up. The Shepherd was crucified, and He raised up Adam; I have been deprived of those I have ruled and those I have swallowed in my strength I have disgorged. He who was crucified has emptied the tombs, and the power of

death no longer avails (Great Saturday Vespers)... You did descend, O Christ, into the deepest parts of the Earth and did shatter the everlasting bars, which held fast those who had been fettered; and on the third day, like Jonah from the whale, You did rise from the tomb (Paschal Sunday)."

The case of Jonah as a precursor sign of Christ's Resurrection was given to the Jews by Christ Himself (Matthew 12:39-40).

Patristic Evidence. The Fathers of the Church, from the very beginning, preached Christ's descent into Hell and the destruction of its power over the human souls which had been kept captive there.

In his Letter to the Tralleans, Ignatius of Antioch speaks of Christ's confrontation with the powers of the netherworld at His death. In his Letter to the Magnesians, Ignatius also states that "He raised from the dead the prophets of old, who were His pupils in spirit and waited for Him, when He visited them [in Hell] " (9.3).

Melito of Sardes speaks of Christ as "a unique sun from Heaven Who appeared to those dead in Hell and to those living in the world" (Fragment VII).

In his Dialogue with Trypho the Jew, Justin refers to a prophesy of Jeremiah, which was in some of the scrolls in the Synagogues, but which had been cut out because it provided evidence for the Christ's descent into, and preaching to those in, Hell. According to I Peter 3.19f: "The Lord God remembered His dead from the people of Israel, who had fallen asleep in the soil of the Earth, and descended to them and preached to them His salvation that they might be saved" (ch. 72). The same text is quoted by St. Irenaeus in his book, Against the [Gnostic] Heresies (Book IV, 22.1). The same St. Irenaeus, commenting on the incident of the wood which Elisha threw into the River Jordan and pulled up a lost piece of iron (described in IV Kings 6.6) writes: "This was a sign of raising up the souls through the wood of the tree, on which He died, He Who was able to raise up the souls who would follow His ascent. For this wood (of the cross), too, had the characteristic of raising many souls which made their appearance in bodies, when the Holy Soul of Christ made Its descent (into Hell)."

Saint Hippolytus (commenting on Deuteronomy 33.26) says: "He is the One Who pulled up from the lowest Hell the first man who was from the Earth and had been lost, having been held captive by the bonds of death. He is the One Who descended from above and brought above him who was down below. He is the One Who preached the Gospel to the dead and redeemed the souls, Who became the resurrection of those that had been buried... He was the Helper of the man who had been conquered; the One Who assimilated Himself with him... the Noble One Who wants to restore the slave to freedom through His Own obedience" (quoted in Theodoret's *Eranistes*).

In another interesting text from Hippolytus, which has been preserved by Nicetas the Deacon in his Catena of Patristic exegesis on the Gospel according to Luke, it says, "This is why 'The Portals of Hell quaked when they saw you (Job 38.7)," and the gates of brass were broken to pieces, and the iron bars were shattered. For behold, the Only-Begotten entered in as a Soul among souls; God the Word clothed with a soul; for the Body was laid in a grave, not emptied of the Godhead, but being present in Hell, He was in His essence with the Father, and thus, He was both in the body and in Hell; for the Son is uncontained, like the Father, and contains all things; but He willed to be contained in a soul-endowed body, so that he might go into Hell with His own soul, and not with His bare Godhead."

Particularly interesting in this connection is a chapter in Clement of Alexandria's *Stromateis* (Miscellanies), which explains that "the Gospel was preached to Jews and Gentiles in Hades" (VI, 6). Here, Clement speaks of an economy which took place in Hell so that "all the souls might listen to the Gospel message and either believe and repent in order to be saved, or reject it and be justly condemned." Clement is not the only one that says so. Irenaeus and other Fathers repeat the same point.

There is a plethora of Patristic texts which shed light on the mystery of the Anastasis. All the Fathers of the Church touched on this most important subject in their writings.

Suffice it to recall that Canon 9 of the Fifth Ecumenical Council (Constantinople 553) condemned anyone who denied the descent of Christ into Hell and ascended from it as Victor into the Highest Heaven. Also, the Seventh Ecumenical Council (Nicaea 787) accepted the Synodikon of Patriarch Theodore of Jerusalem, which "confessed that Christ... spoiled Hell and delivered the captives who were kept there from all ages."

Saint John Damascene has summed up this dual doctrine of the Resurrection of Christ and our humanity as follows: "Christ descended into Hades with a deified soul so that, as He appeared on Earth as Sun of Righteousness, He might likewise shine as the Light to those who were kept in the underworld in darkness."

The harrowing of Hell by Christ through His saving Death and Resurrection marks the consummation of the Mystery of Salvation, which His Incarnation was designed to accomplish. As time and history press onto their final conclusion, the Church continues to preach and to celebrate this Mystery, which will end with the universal resurrection and appearance of all human beings before the judgment seat of Christ.

Christ is Risen the Savior of the world. Whoever partakes of the first resurrection will also partake of the final one.

The Rev. Dr. Dragas was professor of Patrology at Hellenic College, Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology in Brookline, Massachusetts.

Originally appeared in The National Herald, April 29, 2005.

Resurrection and Mother of God

Cont. from page 5

prived of grace - Gen 3:3,8) in a garden, so the new Adam, Christ, died and was buried in a garden (John 19:41: "Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden; and in the garden a new sepulcher, wherein was never man yet laid"). Similarly, the first Eve believed a fallen angel in the garden, the tidings of death; and the New Eve, the Mother of God, believed a good angel in a garden, bringing her tidings of life.

Finally, Palamas ponders why the Evangelists simply did not mention Jesus' Mother as a witness to the Resurrection - an interesting question, since she is obviously a member of the Church (Acts 1:14). His answer here is also plausible: because mothers cannot be taken as witnesses defending their sons. They are never impartial. The point of the Gospels was to record the events that witnesses provided for the resurrection of Jesus. According to St. Gregory, a mother's testimony would give "unbelievers grounds for suspicion."

All this shows that, though not explicit in the Scriptures, the early Christian belief that the Mother of God was the first to encounter the risen Christ is not implausible. Moreover, it is significant: it shows that Christ is always the Son of His Mother and always attentive to her, evident from His first "sign" in Cana (Jn 2:1) to His concern for her while on the Cross (Jn 19:26), and so also after His Resurrection. Similarly, she was and is always to be found near her Son. Hence, her abiding presence among us and our continual commemoration of her in our divine services. For this reason, the Orthodox Church in its Great Paschal Celebration completes the parallel between the Annunciation and the Resurrection at no less a moment than at the climax of the Paschal Matins, when it sings Gabriel's resurrectional tidings to the Mother of God: Rejoice! For your Son is risen from His three days in the tomb! (9th Ode; cf. Lk 1:28). What began at the Annunciation (the re-creation of Adam) is completed in the Resurrection (Adam's justification from the law of death), restoring mankind to its original state of angelic purity. And both events were told by the Angel to the Virgin.

Preparing ... Cont. from page 6

The story of the Prodigal Son illustrates mercy in a powerful manner. It helps us realize once again, with sober joy, that God's mercy does fall upon all. But like the Son who "came to himself," or like the rain which falls on fertile soil, His mercy must find a heart which is made ready to receive it. We have to do our part. We need to do that inner work — that journey to the heart — which is necessary for us to wake up, or to prepare ourselves to be that fertile ground. Then God will be merciful; He will be "all that He is" to us. And we will be all that we are.

A.R.F.O.R.A. Congress Convocation

In conformity with Article II, Section 2 of the By-Laws, we hereby convoke the

62nd Annual A.R.F.O.R.A. Congress

+NATHANIEL, Archbishop

Lucy Pop President

Deborah Moga Secretary

June 4 - 6, 2010

Hosted by:

Protection of the Holy Mother of God Orthodox Church

7223 Roosevelt Avenue Falls Church, VA 22042-1625 (703) 280-0770

Schedule of Events

Frida	ay, J	une	4
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4:00 pm – 6:00 pm	Executive Board Meeting
	at St. Marv's

6:00 pm – 9:00 pm Registration/ Reception at St. Mary's for Clergy,

Preotese, Delegates,
Past Presidents

Saturday, June 5

3)	
8:00 am – 9:00 am	Registration for Delegates

at Hotel 9:00 am – 11:00 am Brunch Buffet

9:30 am – 1:30 pm Congress Session Begins 1:30 pm – 2:00 pm Recess Refreshments &

Photograph

2:00 pm - 3:30 pm 5:00 pm - 6:00 pm Congress Reconvenes Parastas & Great Vespers at St. Luke Serbian

Orthodox Church
Dinner Reception

+ JONAH, Metropolitan

Guest Speaker

Sunday, June 6

6:00 pm - 9:00 pm

9:00 am Matins at St. Mary's

9:45 am Entrance & Vesting of Hierarch 10:00 am Hierarchal Divine Liturgy

12:00 pm Lunch & Farewell

Hotel: Marriott Fairview Park, 3111 Fairview Park Drive, Falls Church, VA 22042.

For reservations: phone (800) 228-9290 or (703) 843-3400 mention **ARFORA** or online http://cwp.marriott.com/wasfp/arforaconference use discount code **ARFARFA** to receive special discounted rate of \$85 plus tax per night. Please make reservations no later than May 21, 2010.

HIERARCHAL SCHEDULE

2010

January 1. Rives Junction, MI. Dormition Monastery. Hierarchal Divine Liturgy.

January 3. Detroit, MI. Ascension Monastery. Hierarchal Divine Liturgy.

January 6. Rives Junction, MI. Dormition Monastery. Hierarchal Divine Liturgy for Epiphany. Great Blessing of Water.

January 10. Grand Rapids, MI. Annunciation. Hierarchal Divine Liturgy. Pastoral Visit.

January 15-17. Philadelphia, PA. St. Stephen Cathedral (OCA). Saturday: Michael Jones Wedding. Great Vespers. Sunday: Hierarchal Divine Liturgy.

January 19-22. Washington, DC. Metropolitan's Residence. Tuesday-Wednesday: Holy Synod Meeting. Wednesday: Meetings with Senators. Evening: St. Nicholas Cathedral (OCA) - Vespers. Friday: Hierarchal Divine Liturgy at St. Nicholas Cathedral. Annual March for Life.

January 23. Falls Church, VA. Protection of the Mother of God. Great Vespers.

January 24. Alexandria, VA. Holy Cross. Hierarchal Divine Liturgy.

January 31. Southfield, MI. St. George Cathedral. Hierarchal Divine Liturgy.

February 2. Rives Junction, MI. Dormition Monastery. Hierarchal Divine Liturgy for feast of Presentation of Our Lord in the Temple.

February 7. Detroit, MI. St. Raphael of Brooklyn. Divine Liturgy.

February 10-20. Miramar, FL. Holy Trinity. February 13: Afternoon – Naples, FL. St. Polycarp of Smyrna Mission. Pastoral Visit. Evening – Hollywood, FL. Holy Cross. Great Vespers. February 14: Miramar, FL. Holy Trinity. Hierarchal Divine Liturgy. Banquet. February 17: Southern Deanery meeting.

February 21. Rives Junction, MI. Dormition Monastery. Hierarchal Divine Liturgy.

February 26. Grass Lake, MI. V.D. Trifa Romanian-American Heritage Center. Annual Meeting.

February 28. Detroit, MI. St. Raphael of Brooklyn. Divine Liturgy.

March 2-5. Syosset, NY. OCA Chancery. Lesser Synod and Metropolitan Council Meeting.

March 7. Southfield, MI. St. George Cathedral. Hierarchal Divine Liturgy concelebrated with Bishop Mark of Toledo and Bishop Irineu. Evening: Pan-Orthodox Vespers.

March 10-11. Toronto, ON. Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Toronto. Meeting of Canadian Orthodox Bishops.

March 12-14. New York, NY. St. Dumitru. Saturday: Atlantic Deanery Clergy Meeting. Holy Unc-

tion service. Sunday: Hierarchal Divine Liturgy.

March 15-18. Syosset, NY. OCA Chancery. Holy Synod Spring Meeting.

March 21. Rives Junction, MI. Dormition Monastery. Hierarchal Divine Liturgy.

St. Stephen's Course of Theological Studies

The St. Stephen's Course is a 3 year course. During the Fall semester, the student reads for 3 subjects, the exams are mailed mid-January, and the student then has 6 weeks to write the essay answers. During the Spring semester, the student reads for 2 subjects and does one ministerial project in the parish in conjunction with the Parish Priest. The tuition is \$400 per semester plus your books. The student is also required to attend the Residency Program at the Antiochian Village for one week after each year of study. It is held during the week before Labor Day and the week of Labor Day, which falls on the first Monday of September. It is similar to attending an Orthodox Seminary where the student will meet with the faculty and other students from different parts of the world. The cost is only room and board at the Village.

After completing the 3 years of study with no failures, the 3 projects and the 3 weeks of the Residency Program, the student may apply for the Masters Degree Program. The Masters Degree is granted by the St. John of Damascus School of Orthodox Theology of the University of Balamand of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch in Lebanon. The Department of Education of the Republic of Lebanon has recognized the St. Stephen's Course as a pre-requisite for the Masters Degree. It only consists of writing a 50 page thesis with footnotes & bibliography.

The applicant must have a BA or BS degree in any field. This is the only Orthodox Theological School in the Middle East.

Below are the requirements to be sent with your application.

- 1. An autobiography showing your relationship with the Church (not a CV).
- 2. Statement for taking the Course
- 3. A Recent full face photograph
- 4. A letter of recommendation from your parish priest which may be included with your application.
- 5. A complete application form which may be obtained from the address below.
- 6. A \$50 Application fee payable to the *St. Stephen's Course*, and in the memo write *application fee*. For an information packet, contact: St. Stephen's Course, 385 IVY LN, BERGENFIELD, NI 07621-

Course, 385 IVY LN, BERGENFIELD, NJ 07621-4508 or email Fr. Deacon Peter Boulukos at Theoedu1@ aol.com.

Ohio-Western Pennsylvania Deanery Mission Vespers



Clergy at the Mission Vesper Service in Cleveland (L-R): VR D. Kristoff, Hmk C. Berger, VR R. Grama, VR P. Stanciu, VR I. Pac-Urar, Rev I. Dumitrascu; Dcn N. Neagoe.

Cleveland, Ohio - During Great Lent, the parishes of Northeast Ohio and Western Pennsylvania came together in worship for the traditional "Mission Vespers." The first of the services was held on the second Sunday of the Fast and hosted by the Presentation of Our Lord parish in Fairlawn, Ohio. The clergy of the local Clergy Association joined us, and we were spiritually edified by Abbot Joseph Morris of St. Gregory Palamas Monastery, Hayesville, Ohio (Greek Archdiocese). The Very Rev. Fr. Ian Pac-Urar, parish priest, and the Ladies Auxiliary of the church greeted us with warmth and hospitality. The second service was held at St. Mary Cathedral, Cleveland, on the Sunday of

the Holy Cross. The homily was offered by the V. Rev. Fr. Dennis Kristoff of St. Nicholas Ukrainian Pro-Cathedral in Lakewood. The Very Rev. Fr. Remus Grama offered us brotherly hospitality and the Ladies Auxiliary of the parish offered us a great dinner. Following the service, under the presidency of the Very Rev. Fr. Panteleimon Stanciu, the Deanery held a brief organizational meeting. Following the resignation of our treasurer, Fr. George Treff, Fr. Ian Pac-Urar accepted to take over this office. We wish to thank Father George for his many years of service and pray for the improvement of his health.

Fr. Remus Grama

From Pascha

Cont. from page 7

Thomas answered and said to Him, 'My Lord and my God!' Jesus said to him, "Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed" (John 20:27-29). Jesus blesses us who have not seen Him with our physical eyes, but see Him every day with the eyes of our hearts and souls. We see Him at every Divine Liturgy, when we commune the awesome Mysteries;

we see Him when we are kind to our neighbor; we see Him when someone is kind to us. This passage also tells us that if we are unbelieving, Jesus will not leave us this way; He will give us plenty of opportunities to repent and see the Truth. It's up to us to choose the right path or not.

Biblical Readings: Epistle: 1 John 1:1-7; Gospel: John 20:19-31.

Excerpts from "From Pascha to Pentecost: The Pentecostarion Period" published by the Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Toronto Youth Department.

Easter Oration of St. Gregory the Theologian

Yesterday I was crucified with Him; today I am glorified with Him.

Yesterday I died with Him, today I am made alive in Him.

Yesterday I was buried with Him; today I am raised up with Him.

Let us offer ourselves to Him who suffered and rose again for us.

Let us become divine for His sake, since for us He became human.

He assumed the worse that He might give us the better.

He became poor that by His poverty we might become rich.

He accepted the form of a servant that we might win back our freedom.

He came down that we might be lifted up. He was tempted that through Him we might conquer. He was dishonored that He might glorify us. He died that He might save us.

He ascended that He might draw to Himself us, who were thrown down through

the fall of sin.

Let us give all, offer all, to Him who gave Himself a ransom and reconciliation for us.

We needed an incarnate God, a God put to death, that we might live.

We were put to death together with Him that we might be cleansed.

We rose again with Him because we were put to death with Him.

We were glorified with Him because we rose again with Him.

A few drops of blood recreate the whole creation!

St. Gregory the Theologian was from Nazianzus (where his father was Bishop), and was Archbishop of Constantinople from 379 to 382.

Paschal Greeting Cont. from page 2

Greek: Christos anesti! Alithos anesti!

Hawaiian: Ua ala hou 'o Kristo! Ua ala 'I 'o no 'oia! **Hebrew:** Ha Masheeha houh kam! A ken kam! (*or* Be emet quam!)

Icelandic: Kristur er upprisinn! Hann er vissulega upprisinn!

Indonesian: Kristus telah bangkit! Benar dia telah bangkit!

Italian: Cristo e' risorto! Veramente e' risorto!
Japanese: Harisutosu Fukkatsu! Jitsu ni Fukkatsu!
Javanese: Kristus sampun wungu! Saesto panjene ganipun sampun wungu!

Korean: Kristo gesso! Buhar ha sho nay! **Latin:** Christus resurrexit! Vere resurrexit!

Latvian: Kristus ir augsham sales! Teyasham ir augsham sales vinsch!

Lugandan: Kristo ajukkide! Amajim ajukkide! **Malayalam (Indian):** Christu uyirthezhunnettu! Theerchayayum uyirthezhunnettu!

Nigerian: Jesu Kristi ebiliwo! Ezia o' biliwo!

Norwegian: Kristus er oppstanden! Han er sannelig oppstanden!

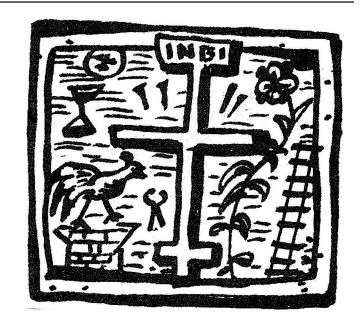
Polish: Khristus zmartvikstau! Zaiste zmartvikstau!
Portugese: Cristo ressuscitou! Em verdade ressuscitou!
Romanian: Hristos a inviat! Adevarat a inviat!
Russian: Khristos voskrese! Voistinu voskrese!
Sanskrit: Kristo'pastitaha! Satvam upastitaha!

Serbian: Cristos vaskres! Vaistinu vaskres! Slovak: Kristus vstal zmr'tvych! Skutoc ne vstal! Spanish: Cristo ha resucitado! En verdad ha resucitado! Swahili: Kristo amefufukka! Kweli Amefufukka!

Swedish: Christus ar uppstanden! Han ar verkligen uppstanden!

uppstanden:

Syriac: M'shee ho dkom! Ha koo qam!



Solia Calendar 2010

The Solia Calendar 2010 was mailed to parishes and all parish members during the week of March 15, 2010. To receive an extra copy call 517-522-4800 or email calendar@roea.org.

Tlingit: Xristos Kuxwoo-digoot! Xegaa-kux Kuxwoo-digoot!

Turkish: Hristos diril-di! Hakikaten diril-di! Ugandan: Kristo ajukkide! Kweli ajukkide! Ukranian: Khristos voskres! Voistinu voskres! Welsh: Atgyfododd Crist! Atgyfododd yn wir! Yupik: Xris-tusaq Ung-uixtuq! Iluumun Ung-uixtuq!

Zulu: Ukristu uvukile! Uvukile kuphela!

FINANCIAL REPORT

EPISCOPATE SUPPORTERS
Marina Ficken, McLean, VA\$300.00
Dan Miclau, Naples, FL
V Rev Fr Daniel & Psa Alice Nenson,
Regina, SK\$100.00
V Rev Fr Dimitrie Vincent, Redford, MI \$100.00
M/M George Cantor, Parma, OH\$60.00
M/M William Murray, Regina, SK\$60.00
Marie George, Regina, SK
Kathleen Podoba-Lind, Willoughby, OH
Helen Popa, Monaca, PA\$20.00
GENERAL DONATIONS
St Mary of Magdala, Houston, TX\$561.80
(Hierarch Travel Expenses)
Holy Cross, San Jose, CA\$500.00
(Hierarch Travel Expenses)
M/M Leonard Jones, Philadelphia, PA\$310.00
(Hierarch Travel Expenses) St Andrew, McKees Rocks, PA\$300.00
(Hierarch Travel Expenses)
Holy Nativity, Chicago, IL\$200.00
(Hierarch Travel Expenses)
Ana Jonascu, Westland, MI\$130.00
M/M Nicolae Fedorovici, Livonia, MI\$120.00
M/M Nicholas Vasu, Southfield, MI\$65.00
Erna Harrington, Shelby Twp, MI\$55.00
+Mary Sekedat\$50.00
M/M Joseph Totan, Canton, MI\$50.00
Florence & Bobby Westerfield, Warren, MI \$30.00
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Iustina Cantor, Commerce Twp, MI
Mary Jane Quinn, Bloomfield Hills, MI
Maria Hunciag, Center Line, MI
Ioan Lupu, Livonia, MI\$10.00
M/M Ioan Braescu, Redford, MI\$9.00
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Floarea Subu, Bloomfield Hills, MI
MEMORIAM
Marie Farca, Yardley, PA\$50.00
(IMO George Radu - Museum Fund)
Jones-Maximo Families, Philadelphia, PA
(IMO Theodore Antoneskou)
Jones-Maximo Families, Philadelphia, PA \$50.00
(IMO George Radu)
Vasile & Maria Banceu, Canton, MI\$20.00
(IMO George Jonascu)
M/M Viorel Nikodin, Farmington Hills, MI \$40.00
(IMO Kristinel Neda)
EPISCOPATE ASSESSMENT
Holy Trinity, Miramar , FL\$13,440.00
Holy Nativity, Chicago, IL\$10,000.00
St George Cathedral, Regina, SK
Descent of the Holy Spirit, Elkins Park, PA \$6,660.00
St Mary , St Paul, MN
St John, Toronto, ON \$6,240.00 St George, Toronto, ON \$6,000.00
St George , Toronto, ON
5. Linus 1411551011, 711111011, QC

St John the Dontist Clandels A7	\$4.560.00
St John the Baptist, Glendale, AZ	
St John the Baptist, Kitchener, ON	
Descent of the Holy Spirit, Ridgewood, NY	\$3,960.00
St Nicholas, Alliance, OH	
Sts Michael & Gabriel, Sacramento, CA	
St Raphael of Brooklyn, Detroit, MI	
Holy Cross, London, ON	\$2,760.00
St Mary of Magdala, Houston, TX	
Sts Constantin & Elena, Lilburn, GA	\$2,500.00
Annunciation, Grand Rapids, MI	\$2,160.00
Sts Michael & Gabriel, Palm Springs, CA	\$1,920.00
Holy Confessors of Transylvania,	
Oakville, ON	\$1,830.00
St Dimitrie, Easton, CT	
Sts Constantine & Elena, Indianapolis, IN	
Holy Cross, Hermitage, PA	
Ascension Mission, Montreal QC (2009)	. \$1,440.00
St John the Hozevite Mission, Denver, CO	
St Mary, Laval, QC	\$1,350.00
St Joseph of Maramures, Hazleton, PA	
St Panteleimon Mission, Terrebonne, QC	
St Mary Mission, Chelsea, MA	
Transfiguration Mission, West Hartford, CT	
Three Hierarchs, Ridgewood, NY	
St John the Baptist, Woonsocket, RI	
St Dimitrie the New Mission, Boulder, CO	
St Mary Mission, Las Vegas, NV	
Sts Michael & Gabriel, Deltona, FL	
Sts Peter & Paul Mission, Quebec City, QC	
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ROMANIAN-AMERICAN CELEBRATES 100th Birthday



Mary Păcora Dancu

On February 24, 2010, after the Pre-Sanctified Liturgy, the oldest living member of the Holy Cross parish (Hermitage, PA), Mary Păcora Dancu, celebrated her 100th birthday with a special Thanksgiving Service and a reception attended by her children, family and friends. This 100-year-old woman lives alone, balances her own checkbook, travels the U.S. to see her family, until recently drove her own car, has an iPod... and if anyone wants to discuss current events,

they better be ready to hear some pretty strong opinions from her!

Mary was born in the Shenango Valley in 1910, to Sam and Mary Păcora, the second of six children. Her parents arrived in Pennsylvania from Romania in 1905 and attended Holy Cross when it was still in rented space at the corner of Spearman and Union in Farrell. Her father was one of the first cantors in the church, and since his early repose (at age 44) in 1928, Mary has reverently saved his leather-bound *Ceaslov* (Book of Services) printed in Sibiu in 1901.

In 1915, her parents bought a farm in Wheatland, and she remembers going to church in a "two-horse drawn buggy," often arriving full of dust. Services were sung with two choirs, on the left and on the right, with two lead cantors in each. The church had a potbelly stove in the middle and there were no pews, only *strana* along the sides. The children stood for the entire service in front. All the children learned their prayers in Romanian by heart, which Mary has recited her entire life to the present day.

When her father died, Mary suddenly had to drop out of the 8th grade to help around the farm. Her mother arranged for her to be a domestic servant in order to provide income for the distraught family. When Mary was married to Ioan Dancu in 1927, she and her husband then struggled through the Great Depression. Her husband passed away in 1963, leaving her a widow at age 53.

Through her years, Mary worked full-time, often leaving home at 4 am to provide for herself and her

children. She has always been devoted to her family, her parish, and to the Episcopate, cooking at Vatra camps and Congresses. To the present day, she is in church every Sunday – weather permitting – and if not, faithfully lights a candle Saturday evening at 6 pm (when Vespers starts at Holy Cross) and recites the Creed on Sunday at 10:45am (approximately when it is read during the Liturgy).

Mary has been richly blessed by God with six children, 22 grandchildren, 53 great-grandchildren, and 14 great-great-grandchildren – 95 in all! She knows the names and birthdays of all of them - this includes five sets of twins and one set of triplets. Such a blessing! Mary herself continues to be a blessing not only to her loving family but to her parish community and all who know her, through her faith, piety and goodnatured disposition in all things.

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Scrisoare Pastorală la Sf. Paşti 2010

+ NATHANIEL

Din milostivirea lui Dumnezeu, Arhiepiscop al Detroitului și al Episcopiei Ortodoxe Române din America

Iubitului nostru cler, cinului monahal și dreptcredincioșilor creștini ai Episcopiei noastre de Dumnezeu-păzite,
Har, Milă și Pace de la Hristos Domnul Cel Înviat, iar de la noi părintească dragoste și arhierești binecuvântări.

"Aşa grăieşte Domnul Dumnezeu: Iată, Eu voi deschide mormintele voastre şi vă voi scoate pe voi, poporul meu, din mormintele voastre... şi voi pune în voi duhul meu şi veţi învia ... şi veţi şti că eu, Domnul, am zis acestea şi am făcut." (Iezechiel 37: 12, 14)

Hristos a Înviat! Adevărat a Înviat!

Iubiți credincioși,

Ce zi mărită este aceasta! Mila lui Dumnezeu este mare şi dragostea Sa este veşnică! El a căutat la poporul său şi a zâmbit asupra noastră şi a pus Duhul Său întru noi pentru ca să sărbătorim această zi a strălucirii care depăşeşte lumina corpurilor cereşti. Astăzi nu mai este întuneric, iar moartea a fost zdrobită şi anihilată, pentru că Dumnezeu a deschis mormintele noastre şi ne-a ridicat la viață veşnică! Pentru că dragostea sa este veșnică!

În cartea Facerii, citim: "A spus Dumnezeu: "Să facem om după chipul şi după asemănarea noastră, ...". Şi a făcut Dumnezeu pe om după chipul său; după chipul lui Dumnezeu l-a făcut; a făcut bărbat şi femeie." (Facere 1: 26, 27) Acest om, creat după chipul Ziditorului său, a ales să creadă despre sine ca fiind de sine stătător (el şi soția sa); şi punându-se astfel în locul Creatorului lor, s-au descoperit, de fapt, dependenți și muritori.

Îndepărtându-se de Dumnezeu care este izvorul vieții, omul şi soția lui au descoperit că rezultatul îndepărtării de izvorul vieții e moartea. Auzind din gura lui Dumnezeu aceste cuvinte: "Pământ eşti şi în pământ te vei întoarce", omul a muncit din greu în zilele sale pe pământ căutând împăcarea cu Creatorul său, Dumnezeu (Facere 3:19). Dumnezeu, nu l-a lăsat pe om singur în această strădanie, ci, a aplecat cerurile pentru a veni şi a purta această povară pentru copiii săi.

Mântuitorul Hristos, Veşnicul Cuvânt al lui Dumnezeu, a venit să restaureze chipul lui Dumnezeu în întreaga umanitate şi să ridice omenirea din praful în care era, să distrugă, să smulgă din rădăcinile ei "boldul" morții şi să dăruiască umanității o nouă existență veşnică în prezența celui "prin care toate s-au făcut." Învierea din morți a Domnului, Dumnezeului şi Mântuitorului nostru Iisus Hristos este adevăratul triumf al vieții asupra morții. Iisus, Unul-Născut Fiu al Tatălui ceresc, născut din Fecioara Maria, a luat natura noastră omenească, pentru ca "să refacă în noi chipul stricat de păcat", cu alte cuvinte, păcatul căderii primului om. "Şi găsind oaia cea pierdută în munți, el (Hristos) a luat-o pe umerii săi şi a aduso la Tatăl său."

Dumnezeu, prin proorocul Iezechiel spune: "Eu voi deschide mormintele voastre şi vă voi scoate pe voi, poporul meu, din mormintele voastre." Sf. Constantin cel Mare, primul împărat creştin, la începutul secolului al 4-lea, a reflectat la această profeție atunci când a vorbit despre "restaurarea trupurilor de mult dispărute." El a spus: "Lumina aceasta care e mai strălucitoare decât ziua şi soarele, prima făgăduință a învierii şi restaurarea trupurilor de mult dispărute, dovadă dumnezeiască a promisiunii, drumul ce duce la viața veșnică... a sosit... şi prezicerile profeților s-au împlinit."

Sf Ambrozie al Milanului, în acelaşi secol, reflectând la moartea fratelui său, spune: "Ce durere există care să nu poată fi consolată de harul învierii? Ce suferință nu este exclusă de credința că nimic nu piere în moarte?... Şi, atunci, dacă moartea ne eliberează de suferințele lumii acesteia, cu siguranță nu este rea, întrucât ne restaurează libertatea și exclude suferința... Pentru că noi acum cunoaștem doar parțial și înțelegem parțial, dar atunci va fi posibil ca ceea ce este perfect să fie înțeles, când nu umbra, ci realitatea Maiestății Divine și veșnicia vor începe să strălucească pentru a fi privită de către noi cu fața fără văl."

Maiestatea Divină este, desigur, Sfânta Treime după chipul căreia am fost zidiţi şi la care noi ar trebui să ne întoarcem în prezenţa lui Dumnezeu în realitatea "feţei sale fără văl"; şi noi, "vom trăi din nou, aşa zice Domnul." Prin mila sa fără hotar, această prietenie cu Dumnezeu este o relaţie veşnică în iubire. Aceasta este relaţia pe care primul om şi soţia sa au respins-o. Aceasta nu este simplu o relaţie restaurată, ci o nouă relaţie bazată pe ascultarea lui Hristos fată de Tatăl.

Sf. Chiril al Alexandriei în Cateheza a 4-a (Asupra celor 10 puncte de Doctrină Despre învierea Domnului), spune: "Oare nu a ieşit Iona din pântecele chitului în ziua a treia şi oare nu a Înviat Hristos din pământ în ziua a treia? Dacă un om mort a fost Înviat prin atingerea oaselor lui Elisei, atunci nu este cu mult mai uşor pentru Creatorul omenirii să fie ridicat prin puterea Tatălui?"

Realitatea învierii lui Iisus Hristos este deci mărturisită în referință cu experiențele din Vechiul Testament ale Profetului Iona și a învierii unui om mort prin atingerea de oasele profetlui Elisei (2 Regi 13: 21). Amândouă aceste evenimente au avut loc nu prin puterea profeților, ci prin puterea lui Dumnezeu care a lucrat prin ei.

Într-un lung poem din care menţionăm numnai câteva versuri aici, Meletie al Sardei face o analogie prin care exprimă faptul că există un singur sacrificiu perfect adus lui Dumnezeu Tatăl: Iisus Hristos, "Mielul lui Dumnezeu care ridică păcatele lumii"... " un miel care nu-şi dechide gura e preţios, dar e fără valoare acum datorită Fiului fără de păcat; templul de jos e preţios, dar e fără valoare acum datorită lui Hristos cel de sus... Ierusalimul pământesc a fost preţios, dar e fără valoare acum datorită Ierusalimului ceresc; moştenirea cea strâmtă a fost preţioasă, dar acum e fără valoare datorită bogăţiei largi."

Jertfele Vechiului Testament nu mai sunt; singura şi adevărata jertfă, Mielul care a ieşit din pântecele Fecioarei, o dată pentru totdeauna şi pentru toate "marginile pământului." Cine este mai de preţ Tatălui decât Fiul prin care Duhul Adevărului a venit asupra Apostolilor în a Cincizecea zi după înviere? Iisus a intrat în pământ, în morminte, pentru a ridica natura noastră căzută, la înălţimile cerului. Atunci când Dumnezeu a făgăduit să deschidă mormintele şi să le golească, el făgăduia lui Iisus Hristos care este "întâiul fruct al celor ridicaţi din moarte," a cărui groapă a fost prima care s-a deschis pentru învierea cea de obşte. Uitaţi-vă la icoana învierii! Vedeţi Mielul lui Dumnezeu, Hristos Distrugătorul Morţii pogorânduse în iad şi smulgînd din încleştarea iadului pe Adam şi Eva şi pe toţi cei drepţi şi călcând moartea cea hapsână!

Leo cel Mare al Romei (Omilia 71: Despre învierea Domnului, Sfânta şi Marea Sâmbătă) ne aminteşte că noi trebuie să devenim părtaşi ai vieții în învierea Domnului. "Noi trebuie să ne străduim să fim părtaşi ai învierii lui Hristos şi să trecem de la moarte la viață, în timp ce suntem încă în acest trup. Noi trebuie să murim, aşadar, pentru păcat şi să trăim lui Dumnezeu: noi trebuie să pierim pentru nedreptate şi să ne ridicăm pentru dreptate... Aşa precum purtăm chipul celor de pe pământ, tot aşa să purtăm chipul Celui Care este din ceruri, şi să ne bucurăm mult pentru această schimbare, pentru că suntem trecuți de la degradarea pământească, la demnitatea divină prin mila Sa cea nemăsurată, a Celui ce a pogorât în locul nostru pentru a ne ridica la locul Său." Astfel a împlinit Hristos încercarea lui Adam de restaurare.

Fiind astfel încurajați de cuvintele profeților și fiind satisfăcuți de realitatea mormântului gol, confirmat de mărturia apostolilor și a marelui nor de sfinți de-a lungul veacurilor, noi suntem chemați de Dumnezeu să ne amintim zilnic că suntem martori individuali și colectivi ai învierii și hărăziți să trăim o nouă viață prin botez, în moartea și învierea Domnului nostru, unși fiind de către Sfântul Duh și susținuți de măritul și prețiosul Sânge și Trup.

Sf. Leo continuă: "Să lăsăm poporul lui Dumnezeu să recunoască că ei sunt o nouă creație în Hristos, și cu toată vigilența să înțelegem prin Cine am fost înfiați și pe Cine am înfiat. Aceste gânduri, iubiți credincioși, trebuie să fie ținute minte nu numai pentru sărbătoarea Paştilor, ci și pentru sfințirea întregii vieți ... pentru ca ridicându-ne din toate căderile, să fim vrednici să obținem incoruptibila înviere a trupului preamărit în Iisus Hristos Domnul nostru...".

Această sărbătorire de astăzi a învierii trebuie să fie o sărbătorire zilnică pentru cei care își pun nădejdea în Dumnezeu. Această nădejde ne dă bucuire în viețile noastre de zi cu zi. Viețile noastre zilnice ne conduc către viața veșnică. Viața veșnică ne este dăruită de către Acela care a spus: "Iată, Eu voi deschide mormintele voastre și vă voi scoate pe voi, poporul meu, din mormintele voastre... și voi pune în voi duhul meu și veți învia ...și veți ști că eu, Domnul, am zis acestea și am făcut." Amin!

Hristos a Înviat! Adevărat a Înviat!

Primiţi dragostea noastră părintească şi binecuvântări arhiereşti către cei de aproape şi către cei de departe.

+NATHANIEL

+ Nathaniel

Din milostivirea lui Dumnezeu, Arhiepiscop al Detroitului și al Episcopiei Ortodoxe Române din America

Cuvânt de Suflet

Sfintele Paşti 2010 Hristos pe Cruce (Meditatie)

Iubiți Frați Preoți și Iubiți Frați și Surori în Hristos Domnul Cel Înviat.

În ultimul meu cuvânt de suflet editat în Solia din Ianuarie - Februarie 2010, am prezentat cum trebuie să fim fiecare dintre noi în fața Domnului Hristos, acum când ne aflăm în perioada de pregătire spirituală de a întâmpina și prăznui învierea Domnului din morti, m-am gândit la această meditație care nădăjduiesc să fie folositoare multora dintre cei care o citesc și să ne ajute să fim mai cu luare aminte la tot ce a pătimit și suferit Domnul Iisus pentru noi și pentru a noastră mântuire.

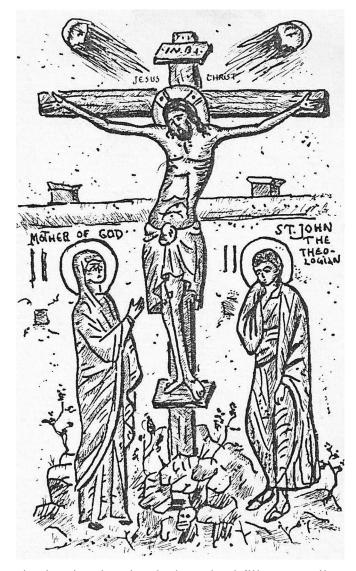
Să ne suim împreună, pe Golgota și să ne adâncim în contemplarea Domnului pe cruce, după pilda Apostolului Pavel: "Că n-am socotit că-ntre voi să știu alceva decât pe Iisus Hristos: și pe Acesta răstignit...."(1Corinteni 2,2). Să ne ocupăm, în ceasul acesta și în această perioadă, numai de întrebarea: Ce face Dumnezeiescul Mântuitor pe cruce? Şi să ascultăm răspunsul: El suferă, suferă mult, nesfârșit de mult, adâncit într-o mare de suferințe, fiecare din ele fiind nemărginite.

El suferă din toate părțile trupului Său -la cap, la mâini, la picioare- toate membrele Sale sunt supuse unei grele torture. De la frunte până la talpa picioarelor este numai o rană. El suferă cu toate simțurile; ochii văd bucuria răutăcioasă, triumful nerușinat al vrăşmaşilor Săi; urechile aud cuvintele de badjocură, vorbele de ocară și de hulă și, de pe urma pierderii de sânge, suferă de o sete grozavă, pe care nimeni nu Io poate potoli.

El suferă din toate părțile, de la toți; totul s-a unit împotriva Lui - puterea spirituală, ca și ce lumească, știința, cultura, autoritățile, batrânii poporului, cărturari și farisei, întreg poporul pe care l-a iubit atat de mult și care acum nu-L mai recunoaște, ci-L huiduie și badjocorește. Suferă de la prieteni și de la cei mai apropiați ai Săi, căci nimeni nu se expune pentru El, suferă de la ucenicii Săi care, mai puțin unul, ceilalți L-au părăsit, ba unul s-a lepădat, iar altul dintre ei chiar L-a vândut.

Suferă, simțindu-Se părăsit de Dumnezeu însuși: "Dumnezeul Meu, Dumnezeul Meu, de ce M-ai părăsit?" (Matei 27, 46).

El suferă în tot felul cum nimeni nu-și poate închipui; de pe urma nerecunoştinţei, a trădării, a dispreţului, badjocurii și ocării; I se atribuie toate răutățile pe care le poate iscodi o minte omenească, mai bine zis drăcească. Astfel suferă dumnezeiescul Mântuitor: "nu are chip şi nici mărire; noi L-am văzut, dar El n-avea nici chip, nici frumusețe. Ci îi era chipul nevrednic de



cinstire și mai prejos decât acela al fiilor oamenilor. El era un om în suferință și obișnuit să rabde slăbiciune; că fața și-a întors-o; defăimat a fost, iar nu îmbrăcat în cinste. El păcatele noastre le poartă și pentru noi rabdă durere..."(Isaia 53, 2-4)

Ce face dumnezeiescul Mântuitor pe cruce? El se roagă și ne învață și pe noi să ne rugâm, căci în ceasul morții ne părăsesc toate, nimeni nu ne mai poate ajuta, în afară de Dumnezeu - și în acel ceas, omul are nevoie mai mare ca oricând de ajutor de mângăiere, cu atât mai mult cu cât vrășmașul mântuirii nostre le încearcă pe toate ca să ne piardă.

Ce face Mântuitorul pe cruce? El ne iubește și se jertfește pe Sine pentru noi. Iată, numai din iubire pentru noi a murit pe cruce. Cu cât se arată mai mult

Cont. la pag. 21

Învierea Domnului în Poezia Românească



Învierea din morți a Domnului nostru Iisus Hristos este cea mai importantă, mai înaltă și mai strălucitoare sărbătoare din tot calendarul creștin. Înainte de învierea Sa, Domnul mai înviase din morți pe fiica lui Iair, pe fiul văduvei din Nain și pe Lazăr. Acum, însă, este vorba de învierea Celui ce-a spus despre Sine: "Eu sunt învierea și viața. Cel ce crede în mine, chiar de va muri, va trăi" (Ioan 11,25), chezașia învierii noastre, după cum mărturisește Sfântul Apostol Pavel, "Căci dacă Hristos n-a Înviat, zadarnică este atunci propovăduirea noastră, zadarnică și credința noastră" (I Cor. 15, 14). Şi dacă Părinții Bisericii și teologii ei au dedicat pagini nenumărate acestui mareț praznic, poeții - acești zefiri ai slovelor - nu puteau rămâne mai prejos și, cu atât mai puțin, poeții români.

Luceafărul poeziei românești, **Mihai Eminescu**, prezintă în poezia "înviere" viziunea cosmică a nespusei bucurii pascale.

"Un clopot lung de glasuri vuii de bucurie/ Colon altar se uită și preoți și popor/ Cum din mormânt răsare Christos biruitor/ Iar inimile toate s-unesc în armonie/ Cântări și laude-nălțăm/ Noi, ție, Unuia,/ Primindu-L cu psalmi și ramuri/ Plecați-vă neamuri, cântând Aleluia./ Christos a Înviat din morți/ Cu cetele sfinte/ Cu moartea spre moarte călcând-o/ Lumina ducând-o/ Celor din morminte"

George Cosbuc, în poezia "La Paşti" dă glas exploziei de bucurie şi speranță pentru primăvara învierii "Prin pomi e ciripit şi cânt/ Văzduhu-i plin de-un roşu soare/ şi salciile-n albă floare - E pace-n cer şi pe pământ/ Răsuflul cald al primăverii/ Adus-

a zilele-nvierii/ şi cât e de frumos în sat!/ Creştinii vin tăcuţi din vale/ şi doi de se întâlnesc în cale/ îşi zic: Hristos a Înviat./ şi râde - atâta sărbătoare/ Din chipul lor cel ars de soare ...''

Poezia "Hristos a Înviat", Alexandru Vlahuţă surprinde pe stăpânii lumii, înspăimântaţi: "S-au cutremurat stăpânii lumii/ La glasul blândului Profet/ şi-un duşman au văzut în Fiul/ Dulgherului din Nazaret/ El n-a venit să răzvrătească/ Nu vrea pieirea nimănui/ Desculţ pe jos, colindă lumea/ şi mulţi hulesc în urma lui! / arătând că "El orbilor le dă lumină/ şi muţilor le dă cuvânt/ Pe cei infirmi îi întăreşte/ Pe morţi îi scoală din mormânt" Poezia se încheie cu un îndemn "Voi toţi ce-aţi plâns în întuneric/ şi nimeni nu v-a mângâiat, Din lunga voastră-ngenunchere/ Sculați ... Hristos a Înviat!"

Mobilizatoare este și poezia "Christos a Înviat" de Vasile Alecsandri, în care afirma "Christos, zeul credinței, ieșit-a din mormânt/ și-a Sa înviere/ Nearată că nu piere/ Dragostea, credința și adevărul sfânt./ Christos e viu! Ca Dânsul, o, voi ce suferiți/ în lanțuri de robie/ Curând la viața vie/ Din umbra trista morții veți fi cu toți ieșiți!

Octavian Goga, în poezia "E sărbătoare" face o paralelă între învierea Domnului și cea a neamului românesc cel obidit: ''E sărbătoare pe câmpie/ și-n suflete e sărbătoare/ învie firele de iarbă sub ploaia razelor de soare.' Sunt Paştile cele frumoase și-n fire zvonul lor străbate/ Clopotniţa-şi îndoaie trudnic încheieturile uscate ... Voi toţi ce suferiţi și plângeţi sub larga-ntindere albastră/ Veniţi, veniţi căci va să vie curând împărăţia voastră ... Voi, cei ce fruntea de sudoare, cu genele de lacrimi ude,' Eu cerului vă strig durerea şi Dumnezeu din cer aude! Aduc lumina care sparge şi sfarmă capiţe de păcate/ Zăvoarele mucegăite din temniţe întunecate! Eu celor orbi dezleg azi taina înfricoşată de-a vedea/ şi prăznuiesc, că-n a lor suflet învie învierea mea ...

În poezia "Noaptea învierii", poetul Nichifor Crainic prezintă minunea când un tâlhar, venit cu toporul să fure şi să ucidă, cade-n genunchi cerând iertare în fața icoanei la care o bătrână infirmă se roagă şi cântă Hristos a Înviat.

"E noaptea-nvierii. Tresaltă făptura/ Tămâie e-n codrii şi smirnă-n grădini,/ Spre mare iubire se-nalță natura/ Cu ierburi și arbori schimbați în lumini ... Ce caldă blândețe, ce miere cerească/ E-n glasul bătrânei că omu-a-mpietrit/ Se năruie brațul ce vru să lovească/ Toporul îi cade cu zgomot ignit ... Zdrobit îngenunche și cere "Iertare,/ Iertare, iertare", cu glas sugrumat,/ Bătrâna-l priveste cu-adâncă mirare/ Iar glasul ei cântă "Christos a Înviat!"

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Cuvânt de Suflet

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ura şi răutatea vrăjmaşilor Săi, cu atât sporea dragostea Lui, aşa după cum focul se aprinde mai tare când torni benzină pe el.

Da, pe cruce, iubirea lui atinge apogeul! Căci se roagă, chiar pentru cei ce-l chinuiau. Şi cu cuvinte dulci: "Părinte, iartă-le lor, că nu ştiu ce fac." (Luca 23, 34).

şi câtă bunătate arată Domnul, tâlharului pe cruce! După ce trăise o viață întreagă în fărădelegi, în câteva cuvinte se roagă acum: "Pomeneşte-mă, Doamne..." fără să concretizeze momentul, ci "când voi veni în împărăția Ta". Iar Domnul îi răspunde: "astăzi", nu mai târziu, nu peste ani de zile, ci "astăzi vei fi cu mine în rai". Răspunsul întrece orice aşteptare, orice închipuire pe care şi-ar fi putut-o face tâlharul. Ce, nu poți aştepta, şi tu, de la Hristos? Nu i-ai slujit, ani dea rândul, cu râvnă şi credință?

Ce face Domnul pe cruce? El ne învață -și ce minunată și bogată învățătură prin pilda Lui. Ne putem închipui noi o mai desăvârșită supunere decât cea pe care El a dovedit-o pe cruce? "S-a smerit pe Sine, făcându-Se ascultător până la moarte- și încă moarte pe cruce" (Filipeni 2,8). Poate fi, oare, o mai mare durere ca cea a Domnului, care moare pentru tine, pentru mine, pentru noi, oamenii, pentru iubitorii și vrasmașii Săi?; care murind, se roagă pentru toți; "Părinte, iartă-le lor, că nu știu ce fac!"

Învățătura Lui de pe cruce este înțeleasă de toata lumea, de tineri și bătrâni, de învățați și neînvățați, de bogați ori săraci, deopotrivă, căci dacă Fiul lui Dumnezeu a fost atât de supus, la fel putem, și trebuie să fim, și noi. Dacă El, Domnul, i-a iertat pe vrăjmașii Săi, la fel trebuie să ierți și tu, fratelui tău. Dacă El, pe care nu-L apasă nici o vină, a avut atâta răbdare, la fel, nici noi nu trebuie să cârtim vreodată, în suferințele meritate de care avem parte. Învățatura Lui este atrăgătoare: orice ne-ar cere Cel răstignit, nu-L putem refuza, trebuie să ne plecăm în toate și să plinim tot ce ne-ar cere. Ne cere, El, umilința? Cum să ne simțim, prin aceasta, jigniți noi păcătoșii, care nu suntem decât praf și cenușă, față de "El, strălucirea slavei Tatălui Său în ceruri" (Evrei1,3). Dacă umilința noastră pleacă din dragoste pentru Mântuitorul, nu ne va fi prea greu acest lucru. Cine n-ar fi gata să ierte semenului său, dacă Mântuitorul, l-ar îndemna de pe cruce: iartă fratelui tău din iubire pentru Mine, cum am iertat Eu vrăsmașilor Mei, care M-au chinuit atât de mult? Cine ar fi cu inima de piatră și să nu împlinească această dorință a Celui ce moare pe cruce? Așa devine orice jertfă în fața crucii, orice frângere de sine, orice dovadă de virtute uşoară, plăcută. Aşa vom înțelege cum Sf. Ap. Pavel prețuiește atât de mult predica de pe cruce, de scrie Corintenilor: "Că n-am socotit că-ntre voi să știm alceva decât pe Iisus Hristos; și pe Acesta, răstignit.."

Ce face dumnezeiescul Mântuitor pe cruce? El moare!

Cine? Însuşi Fiul lui Dumnezeu! Nici-o mirare dacă soarele s-a ascuns şi s-a făcut întuneric peste tot pământul, s-a rupt catapeteasma templului în două, de sus până jos, dacă s-a cutremurat pâmântul şi pietrele s-au despicat. Şi pentru ce moare Domnul? Pentru păcatele mele şi ale tale. Ce rău nemărginit trebuie să fie păcatul, dacă Fiul lui Dumnezeu trebuie să sângereze ca să-l spele! şi pentru cine moare? Pentru tine şi pentru mine, căci "m-a iubit şi pe Sine însuşi S-a dat pentru mine" (Galateni 2, 20).

Să ne întoarcem acum, şi noi, de pe Golgota, "împreună cu poporul care venise la acea privelişte şi care se întorcea bătandu-şi piepturile lăudându-se cu ceea ce văzuseră" (Luca 23,48). Sa ne batem şi noi piepturile, în recunoașterea vinovăției noastre prin care am pricinuit atâtea suferințe Domnului, ruşinați că am simțit atât de puțin din școala crucii Sale, că am făcut atât de puțin pentru El. Să apucăm, de-acum drum nou, pentru o viață nouă în Iisus Hristos cel Înviat.

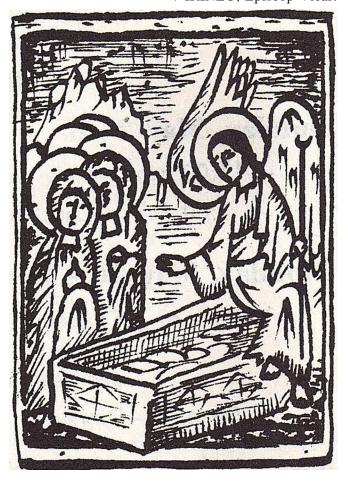
Aceste rânduri să fie de folos tuturor celor care le vor citi şi medita în aceste zile a Mântuitoarelor Patimi a lui Hristos, iar bucuria învierii să reverse peste sufletele tuturor nădejde, biruință, unitate şi mângăiere prin Cel ce ne-a făgăduit: "Eu sunt cu voi până la sfârșitul veacurilor".

Sărbători fericite și binecuvântate tuturor.

HRISTOS A ÎNVIAT!

Cu părintești binecuvântări.

+ IRINEU, Episcop Vicar.



Învierea Domnului în Poezia ...

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Alt mare poet interbelic, **Radu Gyr**, în poezia "Săptămâna Patimilor" afirmă : "Dă-ne iubirea Ta! Dă-ne putere! Din clipa încleştării-nsângerate! Să ne primim cuiele și fierea! Ca Tine-n marea Ta singurătate".

Tot el, în poezia "Iisus în celulă" are într-o noapte viziunea intrării Mântuitorului în celula unde fusese întemnițat sub aberante motive acuzatorii. "Azi noapte Iisus mi-a intrat în celulă.] O, ce trist și ce-nalt părea Christ! Luna venea după El în celulă! și-l făcea mai înalt și mai trist!... S-a asezat lângă mine pe rogojină! Pune-mi pe răni mâna ta!! Pe glezne avea urme de cuie și de rugină! Parcă purtase lanțuri cândva ... Unde ești, Doamne? Am urlat la zăbrele! Din luna venea fum de cățui! ... |M-am pipăit ... Şi pe mâinile mele! Am găsit urmele cuielor Lui".

Sensibilul Vasile Voiculescu, în poezia "Pe cruce" arată durerea Sfintei Fecioare, a ucenicilor și a naturii pentru crucificarea Domnului. "Iisus murea pe cruce, Sub arşiţa grozavă/ Pălea curata-i frunte ce-o sângerase spinii/ Pe stâncile Golgotei tot cerul Palestinei/ Părea că varsă lavă/ și chiar în clipa morții huliră cărturarii/ Cu fierea oţeţită îi adăpau străjerii./ Râdea în hohot gloata de spasmele durerii/ şi-L ocărau tâlharii .../ Zdrobită, la picioare-i zăcea plângând Maria/ şi-adânc zbugnea durerea din inima-i de mamă/ Alături Magdalena, în lunga ei maramă/ ţipa văzând urgia ..."

Preotul basarabean Alexe Mateevici apoteozează minunea şi lumina sfintei învieri în poezia "Hristos a Înviat". "Lumini lucesc la gura mormântului deschis! întunecimea piere o clipa-n toată firea ...! Hristos învie!... Paznici, să fie vouă vis! Lumina vă orbeşte, v-a înlemnit uimirea.! Lumina din lumina cerescului cuprins! Lucește-acum pe chipu-I. Îl-nalță biruința.! Şi, lepădând pământul îl lasă foc nestins! Pe calea mântuirii; nădejdea şi credința.! Cu moartea Sa pe cruce, murind nevinovat,! Ne-a dat El nouă pilda a marei jertfi de Sine! Cu moartea Sa pre moarte călcând a Înviat! Spre învierea vieții în faptele de bine ..."

- C. Z. Buzdugan, în poezia "Clopote de Paşti", redă dialogul clopotelor în sfânta zi a învierii : "De departe-n lungi ecouri, mii de sunete de clopot/ îşi amestec- armonia în acest feeric ropot./ Primăvara lung răsună prin văzduhuri, cadenţat,/ Iar ecoul blând răspunde "Adevărat a Înviat!.../ şi când templele sfinţite deschid vechile lor porţi/ E-ntr-un gând întreg pământul : A-nviat Chistos din morţi..."
- **D. Zamfirescu**, în poezia "Ghetsimani" imaginează ultima rugăciune a Mântuitorului în grădina Gethsemani, adresată cerescului Tată.

"Părinte, tu ce toate cele! Le duci pe dreapta lor cărare,! Ce cârmuiești prin haos stele,! Talazuri pe pustiu de mare ... Părinte, Tu ce-ai pus în mine! Senin din sfânta Ta ființă,! Mărește-mi sufletul spre bine,! Puterile spre suferință.! Şi cade pe genunchi. Eteric!



Sclipeşte luna peste dealuri/ Lăsându-I chipu-n întuneric,/ Iar gândul sus, în idealuri'

Vasile Militaru, în poezia "Hristos a Înviat" explică necesitatea îndepărtării zgurei păcatului prin spovedanie pentru apropierea de Domnul cel Înviat. "Simţi tu, topită-n suflet vechea ură! Mai vrei pierzania celui plin de har?! ţi-ai pus zăvor pe bârfitoarea gură? ! Iubirea pentru semeni o simţi jar?! O, dac-aceste legi, de-a pururi sfinte! în aur, măcar azi, te-au îmbrăcat! Cu Serafimii-n suflet, imn fierbinte! Ai drept să cânţi "Hristos a Înviat".

D. Bolintineanu, în "Iisus pe cruce", uneşte suferința cu iubirea. Panait Cerna, în poezia "Trei zburătoare", prezintă rotirea păsărilor care veghează ultimele clipe din viața pământească a Domnului pe cruce. Maria Cunţan, în poezia "Ouă roşii" prezintă evlavioasă, simbolul eternizării vieții prin suferinţa însângerată a Domnului Iisus.

Spaţiul nu ne mai permite decât să amintim şi pe alţi poeţi români care au imortalizat în versuri minunea învierii ca Tudor Arghizi, I. Pillat, A. Manciu, M. Codreanu, R. Niger, M. Popescu. I. I. Onu, E. Zegreanu, Pan M. Vizirescu, Ovidiu Papadima, Ion Siugariu, Mircea Streinu şi mulţi alţii. Ca şi poeţii clasici, ei şi-au muiat pana în azurul Harului pentru a transpune în versuri incredibila minune a învierii Mântuitorului Iisus Hristos.

Hristos a Înviat! Pr. Prof. Dr. Cezar Vasiliu



Educarea Creștină a Familiei

Sfântul Mucenic Pionie, presbiterul Smirnei și cei împreună cu dânsul 11 Martie

Sfântul Mucenic Pionie a trăit în Smirna în vremea împărăției prigonitorului Deciu. Pionie, împreună cu alți doi creștini, Asclipiad și Sabina, aflând că vor fi arestați s-au legat singuri cu lanțuri în așteptarea prigonitorilor. Iar in ziua de Sfântul Policarp au venit soldații și i-au luat și mulțime de oameni mergeau, curioși, după ei. Duși în mijlocul cetații, la judecată, celor 3 li s-a cerut să jertfească zeilor, dar ei au refuzat. Si Pionie a vorbit atât de frumos încât pe mulți i-a pus pe gânduri, dar alții, furioși, cereau să fie pedepsiți cu asprime. Cei 3 au fost duși în pușcărie unde se mai aflau doi pătimitori pentru Hristos: presbiterul Lin și o credincioasă, Macedonie. Aici, in închisoare veneau să vorbească cu dânșii tot felul de oameni și Sfântul Pionie le vorbea cu dragoste și întelepciune, învățându-i. În special îi era milă si se ruga pentru cei ce, de frica chinurilor, jertfiseră zeilor. Şi le spunea lor: "... pocăiți-vă cu adevărat și din toată inima și vă întoarceți iarăși la Hristos, Dumnezeul nostru, că este milostiv si gata de a primi cu bucurie și pe voi ca pe niște fii ai săi." (Viețile Sfinților pe Martie).

După un timp mucenicii au fost duși cu forța la capiştea zeilor, iar pe Sfântul Pionie îl trăgeau cu un ștreang de gât să-l ducă acolo. După ce au fost bătuți, mucenicii au fost batjocorâți și aruncați înaintea zeilor să jertfească, dar ei s-au zbătut și nu au jertfit, deci au fost iarăși bătuti și duși în închisoare. Un soldat i-a dat o lovitură tare în cap lui Pionie și trupul soldatului s-a umflat umplut de bube. După aceea Sfântul Mucenic Pionie a fost judecat de antipatul Cvintilian si condamnat să fie răstignit pe cruce și ars de viu. Şi când a venit vremea pedepsei, Pionie s-a întins singur pe cruce pentru a fi răstignit. Apoi soldatii au fixat crucea și la bază au făcut foc mare pentru ca sfântul să ardă de viu. Aşa şi-a dat sufletul Sfântul Pionie. © Iar după ce s-a stins focul, s-a aflat trupul lui cu totul întreg și nici un fir de păr din capul lui n-a ars. Iar fața îi era lumnioasă, stălucind de dumnezeiescul dar.. 1 (Viețile sfinților pe Martie).

Ceilalţi ce erau în temniţă cu Pionie au avut, de asemenea moarte de martiri. Sfântul Mucenic Pionie, presbiterul Smirnei şi cei împreună cu dânsul se sărbătoresc pe 11 Martie în fiecare an.

Întrebări pentru părinți:

Cuviosul Pionie, deşi ştia că va fi arestat, nu s-a ascuns ci de bună voie s-a legat cu un lanţ. Pe noi, acum, nimeni nu ne persecută pentru religia noastră şi totuşi, avem noi totdeauna îndrăzneală să spunem că suntem creştini, avem curajul să ne apăram principiile creştine şi avem curajul să le cerem să înceteze celor ce spun blasfemii în prezenţa noastră? Copiii noştri, când sunt într-un grup de prieteni



care fac glume proaste la adresa creştinismului, au tăria de a-şi corecta prietenii sau, dacă aceştia continuă, au destulă înțelepciune să părăsească grupul? Când ne uităm la televizor la un film şi la un moment dat observăm blasfemii avem noi tăria să închidem televizorul? Avem noi curajul să purtăm cruciuliță la gât? Câți dintre copiii noștri au cruciuliță la gât? Câți dintre copiii noștri se închină când trec prin fața unei biserici? Câți dintre copiii noștri se închină când trec prin fata bisericii şi câți, măcar știu că ar trebui să facă aceasta?

- Apărăm, noi, întotdeauna drepturile creștinilor? Întro zi, un tânăr mi-a spus: "Şeful cel mare a întrebato pe șefa mea dacă e de acord să lucreze în ziua de Paște. Sefa a spus că ea nu vrea să lucreze, dar o săși întrebe subalternii dacă ei vor. Eu nu vreau să lucrez, dar ce să fac; știi ce greu am găsit serviciul acesta, sunt nou și nu vreau să-i supăr...". L-am sfătuit să spună "nu". Dacă el acceptă să lucreze anul acesta se va creea un precedent și anul viitor nu-l va mai întreba ci-i va obliga, pe el și pe colegi să lucreze în ziua de Paște. În plus, țara în care trăim, consideră ziua de Paște sărbătoare legală deci tânărul are legea de partea lui. Apoi l-am întrebat: Ce crezi că e mai important: să întărești legătura dintre tine și Dumnezeu respectând Paștele sau să arați bine în fața unui șef care astăzi este, mâine nu este și care, dacă vrea, oricum te dă afară.
- Este impresionantă dragostea și mila pe care o avea Sfântul Pionie pentru cei ce căzuseră din credința lor și râvna cu care încerca să-i aducă înapoi. Avem noi, pentru frații noștri pierduți, măcar o fărâmă din dragostea pe care Pionie o avea? Sau măcar, avem noi răbdare să ne ascultăm copiii când vin cu

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FLUTURELE

... iar dis-de-dimineață
în ceasul prim al învierii
Iisus se plimba în grădina,
învăluind a strămăturilor de freamăt
şoptit deasupra mormântului gol
Pe un ostrov de nouri
înfloriră din coasta soarelui
toți merii.
Primele au fost păsările oamenilor
Care I-au adus și cerul
întru întâmpinare,
păsări cu pana ieftină,
dar nu cele din colivii,
ci din ulcioarele de cuib
de la streașina Sântei Mării.

Iarba îi ieşise cu fânarele de rouă în care soarele aprinse seminţe noi, proaspete.

Iisus se opri şi pe mâna lui – primul oaspete – un fluture. Stătea în nemişcare de parcă asculta, cu urechile de frunză și iască, urma de rană, încă roză, să se desfacă, să înflorească precum ceasul din sâmbete. ... şi se rotea ca la o cină de har să soarbă și el măcar un strop din pahar.

Iisus îl privea şi nu ştiu dacă fost-au zâmbete, dar plin de milă parcă-ar fi vrut să zică:
Sărmane, pui de heruvim, cu flori de măr aripa ta aduce, de vrei să te hrăneşti din cina pădurină schimbă nectarul cu sorbul de lumină - balsamul florilor ce-am strâns din cuie, de pe cruce.

DUMITRU ICHIM



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Educarea Creștină Cont. de la pag. 23

tot felul de idei "moderne" şi le explicăm, fără să ne enervăm şi cu dragoste, adevăratele valori creştine? Cei care au copii în liceu sau universitate ştiu bine la ce mă refer. Sărmanii copii! într-o ţară unde, material, li se oferă multe, din punct de vedere spiritual sunt bombardaţi cu multe informaţii false şi cu idei complet opuse eticii şi moralei creştine. Înţelegem noi cât de greu este să fii tânăr în ziua de azi?

Maica Preoteasă