

April 2017



SAINT INNOCENT ORTHODOX CHURCH

7301 Rivoli Road, Macon, GA 31210

Fr. Theophan #478-538-8161, email fr.theophan@st-innocent.org

www.st-innocent.org

April 2017 Newsletter

Resurrection Victory ***by Metropolitan Anthony of*** ***Sourozh***

In the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Every Sunday throughout the year, century after century, the Orthodox Church proclaims the Resurrection of Christ. Each Sunday we relive once again our joy that Christ is risen. And that joy is so deep, so profound, that it bears witness of itself: we rejoice not only because the Lord is risen, but because his Resurrection is for us the beginning of new, renewed life. In the Sermon of John Chrysostom which is read on the night of Christ's Resurrection each year, it is said that, '*Christ is risen, and there is none dead in the tomb...*' And we ourselves continue to pass on this message from one century to the next.

Yet is it true? Do we not see that death continues to reap its harvest around us? Are there not graves beside Christian churches as well? How can we say that 'there is none dead



in
the

tomb', that Christ has conquered death by death?

We can say this because death has two completely different meanings, and the tombs are indeed empty. Until the coming of Christ, every human being, when he died – whether he was righteous or not – was deprived of the joy of meeting God. According to the Old Testament story of the primal sin of our ancestors, Adam and Eve, the whole human race was deprived of the radiance, the joy, the

April 2017

glory of God. Everyone who died thereafter entered into an abyss of horror, of separation from God and, as a result, of separation from those closest to him.

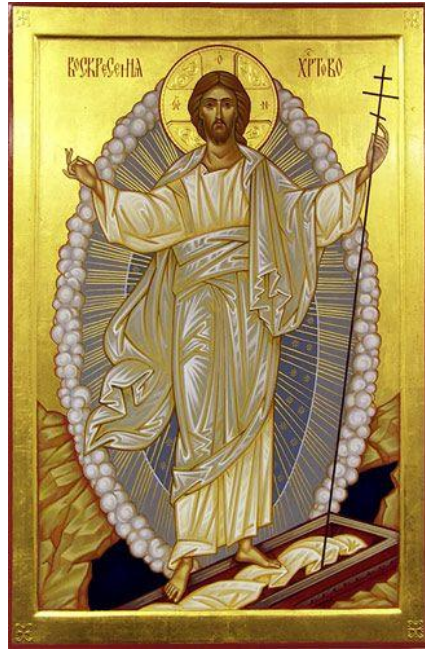
And his death was twofold: not just an earthly death when the soul, separated from the body, flies upward towards God and worships at the throne of the Lord, who consoles it for its earthly sorrows. There was another death as well, a second separation. While someone lived on this earth, he could, in one way or another, with just the tip of his soul, touch at least the border of the Lord's garment. But after death, any separation became final, definitive, dreadful. And age after age people waited for the Saviour, for the one who would unite heaven and earth, God and creation. But until the Lord came, our Saviour Jesus Christ, that separation remained dark and terrible.

And then the Lord came and died on the Cross the death of every man, having first shared in the dreadful loneliness and torment that precedes death. Remember the garden of Gethsemene: 'O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me...' He shared in the horror of that separation when he cried out to God from the Cross: 'My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?' And he descended into hell... into hell!

And hell opened wide with joy in the hope that now the enemy whom it had found invincible on earth had been overcome and taken prisoner. Hell opened up, as John Chrysostom says, to take in flesh – and opened itself to God. Hell opened to imprison the incarnate Son of God become man – and before him stood, into him entered the Living God who fills all things, entering hell and destroying it for ever. Hell was no longer that former terrible hell of separation, because in it was the living God.

The Prophet David in his mysterious vision said: 'Whither shall I go then from thy presence? If I go up into heaven, thou art there: If I go down to hell, thou art there also'.

For us this seems simple, because for us that eternal, hopeless hell of the absence of God no longer exists. But for the man of the Old Testament this was a puzzling statement: how can God be where God is not? How can he be in the place of separation from God? But David foresaw – and prophetically foretold – the coming of the Lord and the end of that final separation. Today death has become for us something else. Now it is a falling asleep. In the body we fall asleep to the anxieties of the earth, and peace descends upon our flesh. Our body now lies there like an icon of Christ lying in the grave on that mysterious, blessed Saturday when the Lord ceased from his works, from the work of saving mankind, from the labour of suffering, from the Cross, from crucifixion. Everyone who



dies now, falls asleep in Christ, he falls asleep until the day his body rises at the last trumpet, on the day of the resurrection of the dead. 'Blessed are they who die in the Lord', as John the Theologian says in the Apocalypse.

This is why for the Christian, death is not something terrible. This is why someone who meant a great deal to me was able to say to me: 'Wait for your death as a young man waits for his bride'. With the same kind of trembling, with the same rejoicing of soul we can say to death: 'Come, open for me the doors of eternal life, so that my rebellious flesh may find peace, and my soul may soar up to the eternal dwelling place of God'. This is why we can say truly and rightfully proclaim that 'there is not one dead in the tomb'. For the grave has ceased to be a prison, a place of final and terrible captivity. It has become a place where the body awaits

April 2017

resurrection while the soul grows, to the extent it can, into eternal life.

Yet death, the separation of death, is none the less still present on earth to a certain extent. It has been defeated even in its own kingdom, yet man himself continues, by cutting off others from the mystery of love, to prolong that separation on earth. Just look at our human society. There is no need to look far: just look at your family, at those closest to you, at your friends, your parish, at the Church. Can we really say that we are so linked together by love that death, that separation, that separation from God, that separation from one another doesn't exist on earth? Sadly, God has conquered death everywhere, but in the heart of man it must be conquered by man himself.

Death and love are inseparable from one another. And it is because of this that it is such a fearsome thing to love. To love just a little, to love irresponsibly, to love in such a way that a relationship is begun and then allowed to end when it becomes painful or difficult or dangerous – we can all do this. But to love as the Lord loved – this we seem unable to do. The Apostle Paul says to us: 'Accept one another, love one another as the Lord loved you...' But do we realize how the Lord loved us? He loved us so much that he did not want to be a stranger to us and became one of us, one among many others – and not just temporarily, but for eternity, for ever – with all the pain, with all the horror of that union.

The glory of God was extinguished when the Word became Flesh. No one knew him. His victory appeared to be defeat. He became the one whom the Holy Scriptures declared would be 'a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief'. He became one with us forever. Can we become one with each other in this way? Can we so love one another that we can say: 'Forever? In sorrow and in joy, in horror and in exultation, whatever happens, I will stand by you forever'? If this were the case, how marvellous our world would be, how marvellous our Church would

be, what parishes we would have, what families, what friends! But our meetings are like two ships meeting on the sea: they meet and pass on.

We haven't enough depth, not enough faithfulness, not enough readiness to do what Christ did: to descend into hell, into the hell of suffering of someone whom we love, into the hell of his temptations, into the hell of his pain, into the hell of his destruction. Instead, we stand on the shore and call out: 'Save yourself, swim over here to me – I will reach out my hand to you!' But we ourselves do not enter that hell, and so it is terrible for us to talk about love, it is so difficult to love – because we should love only as the Lord has loved us. Death and love are bound up together because to love means to forget oneself until one doesn't exist, not to remember oneself. The other becomes so dear to one that to think about oneself gets in the way. We need to say to ourselves what Christ said to Peter when he stood in front of him on the way to Golgotha: 'Get behind me, Satan; you are thinking about earthly things, and not about heaven'. Can we forget about ourselves to that extent, can we love like that, can we die like that?

At the same time, so long as we cannot do this, we are touching only the border of the Lord's garment, we are joined only to the outer edge of the light, the radiant light and brilliance of the Resurrection of Christ. To live the Resurrection is possible only for someone who has passed through death and is on the other side of death, not the death of this world, not material, bodily death, but the death which is also called love, when a person forgets about himself and loves so much that he lays down his life for his friend. Moses is called a 'friend of God' in the Scriptures, and what does he say? '*Lord, if you do not forgive your people their sins, then strike out my name from the book of life. I do not wish to live, if others go to their death*'.

The Apostle Paul says that he would prefer, if possible, to be separated from Christ,

April 2017

rather than see the destruction of the people of Israel. These are nonsensical words – nonsensical in the sense that when a man experiences such love, he is already on the other side of death. But humanly speaking that is all we are able to say: *'Yes, it is better that I should perish, than that I should be separated from anyone'*. This is the standard shown us by the Cross – and by the Resurrection, for one is inseparable from the other. And so, from Sunday to Sunday, when you hear the news that Christ has risen, remember that we are all called to be, on this earth, people risen from the dead in love. But for this to take place, we must so love each other as to pass through the gates of death, to descend through the Cross into hell, to share through Love in the suffering of the other, to forget ourselves – and then suddenly discover that I am alive, alive with the life of Christ! Amen.
<http://www.pravmir.com/resurrection-victory/>

Announcements

- Please see the Holy Week Schedule below.
- Fr. Theophan will be offer the last part of the series of bible-study classes focusing on Genesis 1-3 -Finding Ourselves in the Fall on Palm Sunday.
- The Parish Council is scheduled to meet on Thursday the 20th at 7pm.
- On St. Thomas Sunday we will serve the Radonitza Panikhida immediately after the Divine Liturgy. Please bring any names of the reposed loved ones you would like us to remember.
- On Friday, April 26th at 6pm we will serve the Paraklesis service for our prayer group. Please bring any names of the living you would like us to pray for.
- Confessions are heard *every Saturday after Great Vespers* or before Sunday Liturgy between 9:15- 9:40am. There is no need to schedule an appointment unless it is outside of the above times.

Many Years!

Birthdays 1--Diana Gratigny
2--Mili Haynes
3--Ruxanda Malcoci
5--Andrew Lloyd
6--Elijah Lee
12--A'нна Wilcox
20--Steven Davis
27--Jeremy Plummer
28--Daniela Gaidau
29--Gheorge Codreanu

Anniversaries

23--Igor and Olha Osobov

Great Lent and Confession

"Enter the Church and wash away your sins. For here there is a hospital and not a court of law. Do not be ashamed to enter the Church; be ashamed when you sin, but not when you repent."
~ St. John Chrysostom

The Holy Mystery of Confession is an important and vital part of the Christian life. Confession is about healing. The Lord urges us to flee sin and gives us His commandments not to burden us with "rules", but to free us from that which truly burdens us; sin. Our Lord loves us and knows that sin causes things to break in our lives and causes us needless suffering. We break relationships with others when we sin against them, we separate ourselves from God when we sin and do not repent. Sin leads to a constant burden of shame, guilt and a troubled conscience. Sin builds upon itself, and can lead us into isolation and despair. The enemy always seeks to break those good things in our lives, Our Lord always seeks to heal and restore. In Holy Confession we have the opportunity to honestly and fully tell God our troubles, to cast our burdens on Him, and to bring our spiritual wounds and illnesses to the Great Physician, Who is willing and able to heal us.

In Confession we stand in front of the icon of Christ, signifying His invisible, but very

April 2017

real presence among us. The priest stands as witness, on behalf of the Church, fulfilling a role to which he is ordained. Confession and absolution are not magic, and are only effectual when approached in faith, honesty, and a real desire to be healed.

At St. Innocent Confessions are heard on Saturday's after Great Vespers, on Sunday mornings before the Liturgy (9:15-9:40am). If these times do not work you can make an appointment during the week. Participation in the Sacrament of Confession is expected for those who desire to be anointed with Holy Unction on Holy Wednesday. Receiving the Eucharist on Pascha assumes that one has confessed their sins recently, that is, during Lent. As you think about making your confession for Lent please make every effort to have your confessions heard before the beginning of Holy Week.



You can view the directory from your iPhone, iPad, Android or Kindle Fire by downloading the free Members App. Search for "Instant Church Directory" in the Apple App Store, Google Play, or Amazon App store or you can follow this link this link:

<https://www.instantchurchdirectory.com/app>. After you download the app they will ask you to sign in using your email and creating your own password. This is an in-house directory which mean only those who Fr. Theophan gives access can use the directory.

Holy Week Services briefly explained

Bridegroom Matins

Beginning on the evening of Palm Sunday and continuing through the evening of Holy Tuesday, the Orthodox Church observes a special service known as the Service of the Bridegroom. Each evening service is the Matins service of the following day (e.g. the service held on Sunday evening is the Matins service for Holy Monday). The name of the service is from the figure of the Bridegroom in the parable of the Ten Virgins found in Matthew 25:1-13.

Holy Monday Evening

This evening's theme is the need for watchfulness and preparation, lest we be called unprepared before the awesome judgement seat of Christ to render an account of ourselves. The gospel reading contrasts the efforts of the Pharisees to trick and discredit Jesus with the forceful resistance which Christ mounts against their evil. The hymns remind us of the parable of the Ten Virgins, in which the faithful Christian is exhorted to vigilance. Scripture readings for this service are taken from: Matthew 22:15-46; 23:1-39.

Holy Tuesday Evening

The need for true repentance is the concern of Tuesday evening's service. This transformation from the life of sin to a life of faith and obedience is exemplified for us in the person of the sinful woman who received the gift of forgiveness when she anointed Jesus with myrrh and washed His feet. The highlight of this service is the hymn written in honor of this woman by St. Kassiani. The Gospel meditation foretells of the coming suffering of Christ and recalls His inner struggles and agony. Scripture readings for this service are taken from: John 12:17-50.

Holy Wednesday Evening - The Mystery of Holy Unction

April 2017

The primary theme of Holy Wednesday is our human need for the healing and forgiveness that comes into our lives when we establish a relationship with God through Jesus Christ. We are reminded that the way to this relationship is to be found, above all else, through the life of prayer. In the Sacrament of Holy Unction, the faithful are anointed and thus, healed both physically and spiritually. They are also reconciled to God and one another so that they might receive the gift of the Holy Eucharist instituted by Christ at the Last Supper.

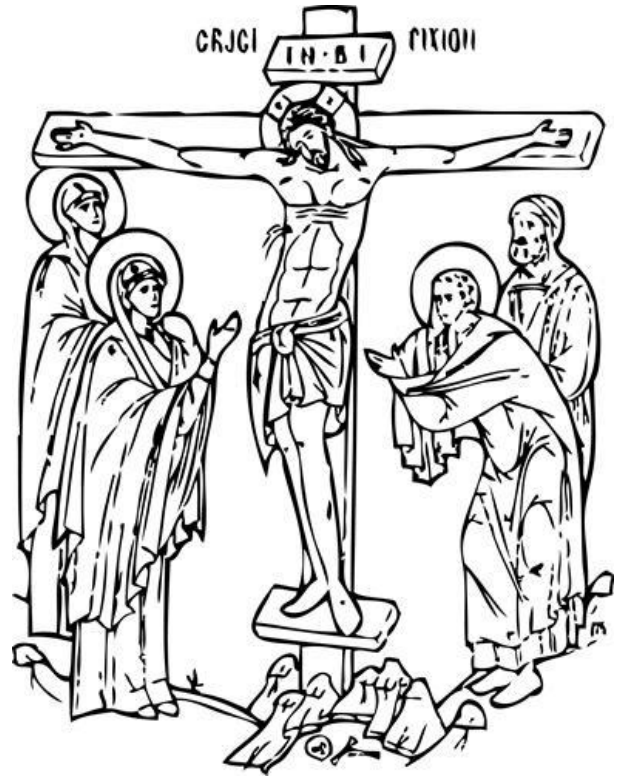
Holy Thursday Morning

“On the night when He was betrayed, or rather when He gave Himself up for the life of the world, He took bread in His holy, pure, and blameless hands, gave thanks, blessed, sanctified, broke, and gave it to His holy disciples and apostles saying...” – Taken from the Divine Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom On Holy Thursday morning, we ascend Mt. Zion with Christ and the Twelve, and enter into the upper room. Once there, we witness the awesome moment when, at the Last Supper, Christ abolishes the ritual practice of the Old Covenant and establishes the ritual of the New Covenant, prophesied by Jeremiah, through the Sacrament of Holy Communion. The faithful receive Holy Communion at that Holiest of Liturgies. Scripture readings for this service are taken from: Matthew 26:2-20, John 13:3-17, Matthew 26:21-39, Luke 22:43-45, and Matthew 26:40-27:2.

Holy Thursday Evening - The 12 Passion Gospels

In this service, we commemorate the undeserved suffering of Jesus Christ, endured for our sake, so that we might be reconciled anew to God our Father. The Gospel readings witness for us the betrayal and arrest of Jesus, his trial and conviction, and finally his torture, crucifixion and death at the hands of a sinful

humanity. This evening's service also includes the procession representing Christ carrying His own cross along the Via Dolorosa, and ends when we see before us the King of Glory crucified.



Holy Friday Mid-Day Vespers with the placing of the Shroud

In this service, we are once again reverent witnesses to the undeserved suffering of Christ, to his terrible passion and death. What is remembered in a special way through liturgical commemoration and procession, is the faithfulness and love of Joseph of Arimathea who tenderly removed Christ's body from the cross, wrapped it in clean linen, and carried it to his own unused tomb for burial.

As the priest proclaims the Gospel, “And Joseph took the body, and wrapped it in a clean linen shroud, and laid it in his own new tomb...” he removes the Body of Christ from the Cross, wraps it in a new white cloth and takes it to the altar. The choir then chants the hymn: “When Joseph of Arimathea took You, the Life of all, now dead, down from the Cross, he buried You

April 2017

in fine linen, after anointing You with myrrh. He yearned with desire, humbly contained by awe, rejoicing, he cried out to You: Glory to Your condescension, O merciful God!". The priest then processes and places the Epitaphios, the cloth on which the Body of Christ is painted or embroidered, on the bier which symbolizes the Tomb of Christ.

Holy Friday Evening – The Lamentations at Christ’s Tomb

On Holy Friday evening, the theme is Christ’s descent into Hades during which the Gospel of repentance and reconciliation with God is shared with those who died before Christ’s saving dispensation in the flesh. The service begins with lamentations sung as we stand before the tomb of Christ commemorating His unjust punishment and the shedding of His innocent blood. But the service ends on a note of joy and hope, with the reading of the Prophet Ezekiel in which he describes his vision of our resurrection yet to come; in the midst of despair, we are told there is hope, for not even death can separate us from the unfailing love and power of God. Death is about to be conquered and faithfulness rewarded. Scripture readings for this service are taken from: Ezekiel 37:1-14, I Corinthians 5:6-8, Galatians 3:13-14, Matthew 27:62-66.

Holy Saturday Morning

On Holy Saturday morning we celebrate the theme of faithfulness receiving its reward. The crucifixion is over, Christ is buried, the twelve apostles and other disciples are scattered and defeated. And yet, three myrrh-bearing women come in faithfulness to perform the last act of love—to anoint Jesus according to the Jewish burial custom. Their unwavering devotion is rewarded—they are the first to share in Christ’s triumph over evil and death. They are the first witnesses to the Resurrection. This joy is commemorated through the scattering of bay leaves and rose petals by the

priest. Scripture readings for this service are taken from: Romans 6:3-11 and Matthew 28:1-20.

Great and Holy Pascha



HOLY WEEK 2017

Holy Monday & Tuesday April 10, 11
6:30pm Bridegroom Matins

Holy Wednesday April 12
6:30pm Holy Unction

Holy Thursday April 13
10am Vesperal Liturgy of St. Basil – The Mystical Supper
6:30pm Matins with 12 Passion Gospels

Holy Friday April 14
10am Royal Hours
3pm Vespers with the placing of the shroud
4:30pm Decoration of the tomb of our Lord
6:30pm Matins with the Lamentations

Holy Saturday April 15
10am Vesperal Liturgy of St. Basil – Descent into Hades
Holy Pascha 11:30pm Midnight Office
12am Paschal Matins & Divine Liturgy of St. John
Chrysostom followed by the blessing of Paschal baskets

Sunday April 16 1pm Agape Vespers

April 2017

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<p>Now we are in the period of life which we call spiritual spring. If a farmer is late in sowing, then there will be no harvest and, therefore, no bread. Likewise, if a person is late in acquiring sobriety, attention to his inner man, his heart, then he will be left without spiritual nourishment, in spiritual hunger. And if there is some kind of passion in his heart and he realizes it, then he will also understand that no one can drive out this passion except He Who created man. But for this to happen, preparation is needed. And this preparation is fasting and prayer. (Rymarenko, A. <i>The One Thing Needful</i> (pp. 48-49). The St. John of Kronstadt Press)</p>						<p>1 10-3pm Lenten Retreat 6pm Great Vespers 6:45pm Confessions</p>
<p>2 St. Mary of Egypt 9:40am 3 & 6th Hours 10am Divine Liturgy 11:45am Agape</p>	<p>3 <i>Fr. Theophan's day off</i></p>	<p>4</p>	<p>5 6:30pm Presanctified Liturgy</p>	<p>6</p>	<p>7 6:30pm Small Compline for Lazarus Saturday</p>	<p>8 10am Baptismal Divine Liturgy for Lazarus Saturday 6pm Vigil for Palm Sunday</p>
<p>9 Palm Sunday 9:40am 3 & 6th Hours 10am Divine Liturgy 11:45am Agape</p>	<p>10 6:30pm Bridegroom Matins</p>	<p>11 6:30pm Bridegroom Matins</p>	<p>12 6:30pm The Sacrament of Holy Unction</p>	<p>13 10am Vespereal Divine Liturgy 1-4pm Central State Prison Ministry 6:30pm Matins with the 12 Passion Gospels</p>	<p>14 10am Royal Hours 3pm Vespers w/ the placing of the Shroud. 4:30 decor the tomb 6:30pm Matins w/ the Lamentations</p>	<p>15 10am Vespereal Divine Liturgy 11:30pm Midnight Office, Paschal Matins & Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom</p>
<p>16 Great and Holy Pascha 1pm Agape Vespers</p>	<p>17 <i>Fr. Theophan's day off</i></p>	<p>18</p>	<p>19 No Fast 6pm Paschal Vespers</p>	<p>20 7pm Parish Council</p>	<p>21 No Fast</p>	<p>22 6pm Great Vespers 6:45pm Confessions</p>
<p>23 St. Thomas Sunday 9:40 Hours 10am Divine Liturgy 11:45am Radonitza Panikhida</p>	<p>24 <i>Fr. Theophan's day off</i></p>	<p>25</p>	<p>26 6pm Daily Vespers</p>	<p>27</p>	<p>28 6pm Paraklesis (Prayer Group)</p>	<p>29 6pm Great Vespers 6:45pm Confessions</p>
<p>30 9:40am 3 & 6th Hours 10am Divine Liturgy 11:45am Agape Parish Update</p>						

May 2017

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1 <i>Fr. Theophan day off</i>	2	3 6pm Daily Vespers	4 1-4pm Central State Prison Ministry	5	6 6pm Great Vespers 6:45pm Confessions
7 Paralytic 9:40am 3 & 6 th Hours 10am Divine Liturgy 11:45am Agape	8 <i>Fr. Theophan day off</i>	9	10 6pm Daily Vespers	11 1-4pm Central State Prison Ministry	12	13 6pm Great Vespers 6:45pm Confessions
14 Samaritan Woman 9:40am 3 & 6 th Hours 10am Divine Liturgy 11:45am Agape	15 <i>Fr. Theophan day off</i>	16	17 6pm Daily Vespers	18 1-4pm Central State Prison Ministry 7pm Parish Council	19	20 6pm Great Vespers 6:45pm Confessions
21 Blind Man 9:40am 3 & 6 th Hours 10am Divine Liturgy 11:45am Agape	22 <i>Fr. Theophan day off</i>	23	24 6pm Great Vespers for Ascension	25 9am Divine Liturgy for Ascension 1-4pm Central State Prison Ministry	26 6pm Paraklesis (Prayer Group)	27 6pm Great Vespers 6:45pm Confessions
28 9:40am 3 & 6 th Hours 10am Divine Liturgy 11:45am Agape	29 <i>Fr. Theophan day off</i>	30	31 6pm Daily Vespers			