

Postscript

Priest John Brown, an Army Reserve Chaplain had arrived with his unit in Kuwait at the stroke of Pascha midnight. Army Chaplain Fr. Joseph Velez was able to conduct a service in his own unit. To my relief, back at Camp Doha, Air Force Chaplain Fr. Timothy Ullman held Pascha services for my former flock of now over 120 personnel and even had an Agape meal with red-dyed eggs to boot. Further away, Navy Chaplain Archpriest Mark Koczak of USNS COMFORT held Pascha services for three Orthodox crew members on the island of Diego Garcia. And at my chapel members from Camp Pendleton were welcomed by parishes throughout the San Diego area. Later, to my tremendous joy, Army Chaplain Fr. Peter Baktis was able to join me to concelebrate at Mid-feast.

In the days and weeks ahead, Orthodox Soldiers did find me and to our mutual contentment found that Pascha was undiminished by our tardiness. We celebrated as those who labored from the eleventh hour, received with all graciousness as we entered into the joy of our Lord.

CHRIST *IS* RISEN!

How the Grinch Stole Pascha

by Fr. Lawrence Farley

The year 2020 will be remembered by Orthodox as the year without Pascha. At the beginning of the year, and even at the beginning of Great Lent, it hardly seemed possible. I remember the second Sunday of Great Lent here at St. Herman's. We had served the Liturgy of St. Basil and commemorated St. Gregory Palamas. We were looking forward to the coming Sunday when we would venerate the Cross, and I gave our little hand-cross into the care of one of our people asking her to decorate it with flowers as she did so beautifully last year. She accepted the cross and the assignment and I looked forward to receiving the decorated cross from her skilful young hands the next Saturday. Then a day or so later a letter came to all of us Canadian clergy from our bishop informing us that he very reluctantly was closing the churches at least until the end of the month. There would be no beautiful cross to venerate this year.

But we all still set our hearts on Pascha and looked forward to gathering again then, processing around the church with our candles, gathering at the front door at midnight and crying "Christ is risen!" and then feasting after Matins and the Liturgy in the church hall until the wee hours of the morning. Such optimism now seems hopelessly naïve. We imagined the Covid 19 storm would blow itself out in a week or two. At time of writing, it seems as if the storm might last on into the summer. But on the Sunday of St. Gregory Palamas the thought of losing all of Lent was horrific. The thought of losing Pascha was unthinkable. How could we survive without it? I am not the only one to mourn 2020 as the year without Pascha. All over the world Orthodox are grieving and struggling to cope.

My wife, as usual in our house, found just the right words to describe the feeling. It was, she said, something like "How the Grinch Stole Pascha"—the Grinch being the faceless Covid virus that stalks the land like an invisible enemy. And hidden in that characterization is perhaps the Orthodox answer to our grief, a way of seeing our situation in its true light so that we can better cope and survive.

Let us return to the Grinch—not the 2000 film with the talented Jim Carrey, but the real Grinch—the animated short film voiced by the immortal Boris Karloff, created in 1966. In that story, the Grinch hated the annual celebration of Christmas with all its joyful noise, and he was determined to stop the whole thing. He decided therefore to steal Christmas from the inhabitants of Whoville who lived at the base of his mountain home. He disguised himself as Santa Claus and, with coerced help from his hapless dog Max, entered every home in Whoville and stole all their Christmas presents, their Christmas trees, their Christmas decorations, and their Christmas food. In the famous ending to the short tale, after his night of Grinchy work he ascended to the top of his mountain to dump all the stolen Christmas swag into the deep valley below. But before he did so, he waited gleefully to hear the mournful lamentation of the Whos down in Whoville below who, he felt sure, would all cry out in grief when they discovered that he had stolen Christmas from them.

Who can forget the ending? *Con't Next Page*

Fr. Lawrence Con't

“The Grinch put a hand to his ear. And he did hear a sound rising over the snow. It started in low and it started to grow. But this sound wasn't sad. This sound sounded glad. Every Who down in Whoville, the tall and the small, was singing—without any presents at all. He hadn't stopped Christmas from coming—it came! Somehow or other, it came just the same.”

The Grinch puzzled and puzzled til his puzzler was sore. How could it be so? The answer, as the Grinch finally discovered, was contained within the song the Whos sung as they gathered in the public square: “Christmas Day is in our grasp, so long as we have hands to clasp.”

Dr. Seuss, that theologian of childhood's joy, gives us insight into our current situation, and a new way to understand our Paschal deprivation. Pascha in Orthodoxy is not dependent upon our assembled Eucharist and feasting any more than Christmas in Whoville was dependent upon the presents and the decorations. Pascha is the inextinguishable hope that Christ kindles in the hearts of His people, a hope that we who have been united with Him in His Church will finally share His triumph over death. Christ is risen from the dead, trampling down death by death, and upon those in the tombs bestowing life.

And it is not as if Christians have never before been forced to cope with liturgical deprivation through extraordinary circumstances. I remember the story of some Orthodox Christians imprisoned for their faith and political dissent after 1949 in Romania. In one such prison in Jilava, the prisoners lived fifteen meters underground in dampness and darkness, the single window there sealed against light and fresh air. They were hungry, hemmed in, living in semi-darkness during the day and pitch blackness during the night, forty-five Orthodox men in the stench of mold, urine and excrement waiting in a tomb.

As Pascha approached, they were determined to keep Pascha. They calculated when the midnight hour would arrive because they remembered that the nearby train blew its whistle at 11.40 p.m. as it left the station. When midnight finally arrived, they all raised the cry, “Christ is risen!”, and led by the two deacons among them, sang Paschal Matins from memory at the top of their lungs. Outside their cell, the guards went crazy, running up and down and banging on the doors, yelling at them to be quiet. But nothing could quench their joy and stop their mouths, and all the

Jilava prison rang with the hymns of the Resurrection. Circumstances prevented the prisoners from serving the Paschal Eucharist and keeping the feast as they had done in happier days. But no circumstances could separate them from Christ and from their Paschal hope.

That hope remains in our hearts as well, even as Christ's presence remains with us, whether or not we can gather together physically on Pascha night to serve the Eucharist and keep the Paschal feast. Christ remains in our midst, and we have still Him, because we still have each other. For now, we must meet together separately, and share the Paschal celebration virtually through our computer screens at home. Soon enough we will join together and clasp hands physically as well. For now, from our homes on Pascha night let us rejoice in our risen Lord. We Orthodox Whos, the tall and the small, will sing to the Lord this Pascha. Pascha is within our grasp, so long as we have hands to clasp. Covid 19 cannot grinchily steal Pascha from us. Somehow or other, it will come just the same.

Homily of His Beatitude Metropolitan Tikhon for Holy Thursday

On April 16, 2020, Holy Thursday, the Day of Remembrance of the Last Supper, His Beatitude Metropolitan Tikhon celebrated the Divine Liturgy of St. Basil the Great at the Monastery of Saint Tikhon of Zadonsk. At the conclusion of the Divine Liturgy, His Beatitude offered these words to the faithful.

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

We all experience isolation. The feeling that no one loves us, that no one cares for us, that no one desires to be with us. At the same time, we all have the capacity to love others, to be kind to others, to be generous to others. When these two experiences collide, we experience loneliness: that sense that we have all this love in ourselves that we want to share, but no one will reciprocate that love to us.

Even in a close family, in a marriage, in a community, we often find our minds trapped in this overwhelming sense of loneliness, as if we were alone on an island. *Con't Next Page*

Holy Thursday Sermon Con't

A real and trusted friend is there for us at every moment, not just the good moments but the bad moments.

A real and trusted friend stays with us even when he is disappointed in us.

A real and trusted friend loves us even when we betray him.

Such a friend do we find in Christ, who was a friend to Lazarus even in death, who washed the feet of the very disciples who would later flee from him, who prayed for those disciples even though they could not watch with Him one hour. Only to such a friend can we say, with the psalmist:

O Lord, thou hast searched me, and known me. Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off. Thou compasses my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether. Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it. Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me." Psalm 139:1-10

Christ did not conclude his Passion with the institution of the Mystical Supper, but entered into his passion with it. The moment that we celebrate today is the most intimate moment that our Lord will have with His Disciples, with us, until the time that He returns in glory. It is the moment in which he gives us the hope and the consolation of knowing that even as He is smitten on the back, even as He is lifted up upon the tree of the cross, even as he descends into hades, even when the only evidence of his rising are the grave clothes in the empty tomb, even when he fleetingly comes to the disciples behind closed doors, even when he is lifted up into heaven, He is here with us.

Our Communion with Christ is not limited to our

partaking of his precious body and blood, but is made perfect by it.

Our communion with Christ takes place at our baptism, when we are clothed with Him, when we put on Christ.

Our communion with Christ takes place in confession, when he lifts from our hearts the heavy stone of despair and despondency and sin, which are the true causes of loneliness.

Our communion with Christ takes place when we recognize, not that he is our friend, but that we are His friends, and become amazed and humbled and overjoyed in receiving such grace and such love from the only Friend of Man.

Now is the time, not to forsake the Lord and to flee, but rather to watch and pray, so that we might say, with the Apostle Paul:

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, [One might add: nor civil directives, nor social distancing measure, nor threat of contagious illness] shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Romans 8:35-39. Amen.

Homily of His Beatitude Metropolitan Tikhon for Vespers of Holy Friday

On April 17, 2020, Holy Friday, His Beatitude Metropolitan Tikhon prayed the Vespers of Holy Friday, at which we commemorate the Burial of our Lord, God and Savior Jesus Christ, at the Monastery of Saint Tikhon of Zadonsk. At the conclusion of the service, His Beatitude offered these words to the faithful.

Antiphon XV

Today He who hung the earth upon the waters is hung upon the Cross. He who is King of the angels is arrayed in a crown of thorns. He who wraps the heaven in clouds is wrapped **Con't Next Page**

Sermon on Holy Friday Con't

in the purple of mockery. He who in Jordan set Adam free receives blows upon His face. The Bridegroom of the Church is transfixed with nails. The Son of the Virgin is pierced with a spear.

We venerate Thy Passion, O Christ.

We venerate Thy Passion, O Christ.

We venerate Thy Passion, O Christ.

Show us also Thy glorious Resurrection.

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

Today, we gather around the throne of God, to honor in silence the King who rests upon that throne, as was spoken by the Prophet Habakkuk: *The Lord is in his holy temple: let all the earth keep silence before him* (Habakkuk 2:20). Having witnessed all which preceded this moment: the crown of thorns, the purple of mockery, the spitting and the scourging, the nails, the spear and the Cross, we now behold the Lord of all and the Creator of the Universe lying in the tomb, and we can do nothing other than stand with the same silence within which the women stood by the Cross.

We stand in outward silence but our minds are filled with thoughts and our hearts marvel at this wonder: How did the Lord come to this point? For what purpose did He endure such sufferings? How could it be that His pure hands and feet were pierced with nails, and His precious body lifted upon the Cross, to die a shameful death? And as we ponder this we wonder: if Christ, as immortal God and perfect Man, endured such things, what hope is there for us, fallen mortals who are subject to corruption, to suffering and to death? How can we make sense of our own life and death, if we cannot fathom the life and death of the Son of God?

Truly, it is not ours to understand the mystery that is revealed before us. Tomorrow, we will sing: "Let all mortal flesh keep silent, and in fear and trembling stand, pondering nothing earthly-minded." But today, we have already entered into that silence, not for the sake of an outward quiet, but so as to find the stillness of heart that will enable us to experience the present mystery not as a defeat but as a victory: the victory of light over darkness, of truth over falsehood, of life over death.

The Lord could have brought about our salvation in any way He chose, for as God, all things are possible to Him, but He chose to save us with justice rather than with power. The Enemy of mankind relies on authority and power, and it is through these that he treacherously led mankind to death and continues to tyrannize us. In order to overthrow the tyranny of death and corruption, and at the same time to grant us the gift of eternal life, the Lord voluntarily took upon Himself human nature by His Incarnation.

He became man, not as the old man was, but as the New Adam, so that we all might be sanctified through Him. He became man, not born of seed, but born of the Virgin, so that He might become the author of new life for us. He became man and was baptized, thus revealing the grace of the Holy Trinity and allowing everyone who receives that baptism to likewise receive divine regeneration. He lived a holy life of obedience and love to reveal His divine perfection to us and, beyond this, to call us to that same perfection. He humbled himself even unto death to show us that it was possible, by God's grace, for human nature to overcome death and be united eternally with God.

Christ had no need to suffer and to die upon the Cross, since He was sinless and perfect, and yet He voluntarily chose to die, so that His unjust death might become the means of overcoming the death that justly afflicted us. His death became a condemnation of death because his death was not the result of disobedience and sin. And because of this, "His death [becomes] our life." As we sang in the Beatitudes last evening:

For my sake Thou wast crucified, to become for me a fountain of forgiveness. Thy side was pierced, that Thou mightest pour upon me streams of life. Thou wast transfixed with nails, that through the depth of Thy sufferings, I might know with certainty the height of Thy power, and cry to Thee, O Christ the Giver of Life: O Saviour, glory to Thy Cross and Passion. (Beatitudes for Holy Friday)

And so, for us to know with certainty the height of the Lord's glory, we too must pass through the depth of His sufferings. Because He suffered voluntarily, His suffering becomes our release from suffering, and a way for us to bear the suffering that afflicts us, as the Holy Apostle Paul writes: *For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to help those that are tempted* (Hebrew 2:18). ***Con't Next Page***

Sermon on Holy Friday Con't

We know so well how we are tempted: We try to become aware of our own passions and yet we more easily condemn the passions of others; we long for purity of the heart and yet find ourselves drawn to impurity of the mind; we struggle to show love and yet more often give in to anger and irritation; we strive for perfection and yet drag ourselves down with guilt when we fail to attain it; we overlook the darkness in our own hearts and then turn and judge others for trifles; we wait eagerly for friend or family member to ask for our forgiveness and yet delay in asking for theirs; we demand love and respect from others and then respond with bitterness and anger when we do not receive it.

Our sins and passions are like the grave-clothes that bound Lazarus and like the tie that held the hair of the sinful woman. The first was loosed by the voice of Christ and the second herself loosed her hair to wipe the feet of Christ, reminding us that both the grace of God and our own effort are needed if we are to allow the Crucified and Buried Lord to help us, who are so tempted, to taste of the immortal life which He is now proclaiming to those in Hades.

Once more, we are brought back to the silence of the present day, when the noise of all that has gone before has died away: the shouting crowds have been appeased, the questioning rulers have gone on to other things, and even the disciples themselves have fled away. Throughout the tumultuous recent events, only a few friends remained faithful to the very small request of the Lord: that they watch and pray for one hour. These few friends, by their silent faithfulness, reveal to us what we ought to learn from the present mystery, for they remained faithful through their offering of repentance, humility and love.

The good thief was a friend who watched with repentance. He said only a few words, but those few words revealed the depth of his contrition, and with that contrition, in one moment, he “stole paradise.” If we could have his repentance, and humbly cry to the Lord in our weakness: “Remember us, O Lord, in Thy kingdom,” then we too, even for a brief moment, might taste of Paradise as we struggle to bend our passionate energy towards that which is pure and true.

Joseph of Arimathea was a friend who watched with humility for he bore the shame of asking for

the body of a Stranger whom the whole world had abandoned. And for his humility, he was given the gift of wrapping in fine linen and anointing with spices the body of that Stranger who was a stranger to corruption. And if we would wrap our Lord in the linen of prayer, and anoint him with myrrh through our acts of charity and words of kindness, then we too could taste of heavenly consolation which gives us the boldness to approach the Lord of Glory.

The Mother of God was a friend who watched with love. A sword pierced her heart as she beheld her own Lamb led to the slaughter, nevertheless she did not fail in her love but cried: “I cannot bear to see Thee crucified. Hasten and arise that I too may behold Thy resurrection on the third day.” And if we would seek after this love which the Blessed Mother showed to her Only Son, then our sorrow would indeed be turned to joy, as a mother’s sorrow is turned to joy at the birth of her child.

By the offering of their repentance, their humility and their love, these friends received, in return, the grace of beholding the first rays of the Risen Son of God. And as we stand in silence around the tomb of Christ, we too can perceive the rays of that light, for already the Lord is descending into hades, to release those held captive there and to reveal to us in the most powerful way that He is present even there. For just as the earth cannot remain dark when the created sun begins to shine upon it, so it is that even hell and death cannot withstand the uncreated Light and Life of Christ. And if mighty hell and mighty death are so powerless before that Light and Life, how much more so will the hell and the darkness that are in our own hearts disperse before the One whose love was so great that He laid down his life for his friends?

Therefore, if until this moment we have not watched and prayed, let us watch and pray now. If we have allowed pain and sorrow to overcome us, let us weep over our sins and await forgiveness. If despair and the fear death darken our hearts, let us look to the Life of all who lies dead before us, and yet is not dead. Let us endure the sufferings of our life with patience and humility, so that we may receive comfort and joy from above. Let us bear our cross with longsuffering and meekness, so that He Who bore the heaviest *Con't Next Page*

Holy Friday Sermon Con't

Cross of all may strengthen us with His grace. Let us make our heart a tomb, wherein Christ may dwell eternally, so that the darkness of the passions may be forever dispersed by the Light of Christ. And let us look with expectancy to the glorious day of resurrection when we will sing with joy the Paschal hymn:

*Yesterday, O Christ, I was buried with
Thee,
And today I rise again with Thee in Thy
rising.
Yesterday I was crucified with Thee,
Now glorify me O Savior, in Thy Kingdom.*

To Him be all glory, honor and worship, together with His Father, Who is from everlasting, and the most-holy and life-giving Spirit, now and ever and unto the ages of ages. Amen.

Homily of His Beatitude Metropolitan Tikhon at the Divine Liturgy of Holy

Saturday

On April 18, 2020, Holy Saturday, His Beatitude Metropolitan Tikhon celebrated the Divine Liturgy of Saint Basil at the Monastery of Saint Tikhon of Zadonsk. At the conclusion of the service, His Beatitude offered these words to the faithful.

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

The Holy Apostle Peter writes that, in His divine power, our Lord Jesus Christ *has given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue. And through these things that God has given us, Saint Peter continues, we are given exceeding great and precious promises: that by these [we] might be partakers of the divine nature (II Peter 1:3-4).*

Our most merciful Lord has given us all things in the great work of salvation which he wrought by his incarnation, his life upon earth and death upon the Cross, and his glorious resurrection and ascension into Heaven. The Lord has also given us all things in his Holy Gospel, which is an icon of Christ Himself and a treasure of Divine teachings for us. And in a unique way, but just as powerfully, he has given us all things in this year's journey through Great Lent, Holy Week, and our present anticipation of the glorious resurrection.

Our Lord spoke to us of all of this even when we began our Lenten journey by offering us the Parable of the Prodigal Son, a parable that the fathers refer to as a "miniature Gospel." In this parable, the younger son of the benevolent and wise father asks for the portion of the goods that belongs to him, and the older son feels entitled to that very same portion, which he feels deprived of.

Like the younger son, some of us may feel like we have departed to a foreign land and that we are starving.

Like the older son, some of us may feel that we are unable to participate in the banquet that has been prepared.

The present circumstances which the coronavirus crisis have created for us have turned many things on their heads. For most of us, who are North Americans, we are not used to not having all that we feel rightly belongs to us. No matter what our political ideology, no matter what our philosophical outlook, no matter what our theological opinion, we all want that portion that we feel belongs to us, that portion which we have lost, or that portion which we feel is owed to us.

The father in the parable of the Prodigal Son is an image of our heavenly Father, and today, our heavenly Father speaks to those of us who are like the older son through the father's words: "Son, thou art ever with me and all that I have is thine."

And to those of us who are like the younger son, he silently and without protest reminds us that His love was always with us, even when we took and squandered what He gave to us.

It is hard to be in exile. It is hard to be as if we were strangers to one another. It is hard to be isolated. To be far from our churches, for our family, and from our friends. To be deprived for a time of the Body and Blood of Christ.

But let us be mindful of two things:

First, let us be inspired by these words from Abbess Thekla of the Monastery of the Virgin Mary of Consolation in Quebec, who writes concerning the times, many years ago, when she and her sisters were deprived, for months at a time, of a priest who could offer up the holy mysteries. Even then, they would prepare for and partake of a special meal, as if it were the mystical supper:

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“The chapel would be fragrant as if someone had sprinkled it all over with myrrh. Our eyes would stream with endless tears. Our heart would leap from the Grace of God. On the days that we supposedly “communed”, without even realizing it, we would speak softly because we felt as if we had partaken in some sacred ceremony. Saying the prayer, our mouth would taste as if we had taken a very fragrant candy. We would feel the presence of Holy Communion, even though we had not received it, and throughout the day we would be cautious not to spit, nor chew gum and throw it out. So great was the sense of the presence of Holy Communion.”

Then, let us remember that God is ever speaking to us as the father in the parable of the Prodigal Son and reminding us that all that He has is ours, as our Lord reminded us in the Gospel on Holy Thursday.

“And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one:

I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.

Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.

O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee: but I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me.

And I have declared unto them thy named, and will declare it: that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them.” John 17:22-26

May our loving Lord grant each of us a taste of that love and that unity with Him as we make our journey towards, and approach, the glorious feast of the resurrection. Amen.

Having Beheld the Resurrection of Christ...

Hymn of the Resurrection

Having beheld the Resurrection of Christ, let us worship the holy Lord Jesus, the only Sinless One. We venerate Your Cross, O Christ, and we praise and glorify Your holy Resurrection; for You are our God, and we know no other than You; we call upon Your name. Come all you faithful; let us venerate Christ's holy Resurrection! For, behold, through the Cross joy has come into all the world. Let us ever bless the Lord, praising His Resurrection, for by enduring the Cross for us, He has destroyed death by death. Jesus has risen from the tomb as He foretold, granting us eternal life and great mercy.

So here we are in Bright Week, “having beheld the Resurrection of Christ.” This hymn from the Paschal Matins service sketches out a map for observing these next 40 days as a “little church.”

Let us make time in our homes for worship, veneration, praise, and glorification:

We have put reader's versions of Paschal Matins, Paschal Hours, and Paschal Vespers on our diocesan website for people to download. This would be a wonderful time to set aside time to do these services daily, if possible, but if not, shoot for three days a week. Do what you can. Continue to sing the Paschal Troparion and daily greet each other by announcing, “Christ is risen!” and answering, “Indeed He is risen!”

We know no other than Jesus, so let us call on His name: Take time out of your day to say prayers in the morning and the evening. Read the epistle and the gospel for the day during the main meal of the day and allow time to discuss the readings as a family. **Con't Next Page**

CATASTROPHIC RELIEF FUND

Purpose of fund: To provide some small financial assistance to a parishioner, family member or community member who has suffered a catastrophic event.

Funds will be offered at the discretion & blessing of the Rector and the discretion of the Board.

Two parishioners have given a portion of their stimulus checks to this fund. Please feel free to donate as well. Thank you and God bless!

Antipascha: St Thomas Sunday

Commemorated on [April 26](#)

Some icons depicting this event are inscribed “The Doubting Thomas.” This is incorrect. In Greek, the inscription reads, “The Touching of Thomas.” The Slavonic inscription is, “The Belief of Thomas.” When Saint Thomas touched the Life-giving side of the Lord, he no longer had any doubts.

This day is also known as “Antipascha.” This does not mean “opposed to Pascha,” but “in place of Pascha.” Beginning with this first Sunday after Pascha, the Church dedicates every Sunday of the year to the Lord’s Resurrection. Sunday is called “Resurrection” in Russian, and “the Lord’s Day” in Greek.

John 20:19-31 (*Gospel*)

Then, the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the midst, and said to them, “Peace be with you.” When He had said this, He showed them His hands and His side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. So Jesus said to them again, “Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you.” And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.” Now Thomas, called the Twin, one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. The other disciples therefore said to him, “We have seen the Lord.” So he said to them, “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.” And after eight days His disciples were again inside, and Thomas with them. Jesus came, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, “Peace to you!” Then He said to 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 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.” And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.

Having beheld the Resurrection Con’t

Through the Cross, joy has come into the world:

Even in this time of not knowing how long these restrictions will last, call on the grace of the Holy Spirit to empower you to be joyful in how you present yourselves to each other in the house. The only way we can be robbed of the joy of the resurrection is if we allow ourselves to be consumed by the cares of this world. Lift up high the Cross of our Lord as we did on Palm Sunday, Understanding this is the Banner of His Kingdom. The only pathway to the Resurrection is through the Cross.

Through His endurance of the Cross for us, He has destroyed death by death:

Let us continue to be a people of hope and not of despair. St. John Chrysostom tells us in his paschal homily, “Let no one fear death for the death of our savior has set us free!” So many of our fears or anxieties are tied to what happens when we lose things or resent that things have been taken away from us. The death of our Savior has set us free. Let us strive to still seek the peace of Christ, which passes all understanding.

Have some fun.

Go the park, take a bike ride, play a game of catch, and watch the movie “Field of Dreams” starring Kevin Costner.

The Holy Synod of the Orthodox Church America will be meeting the week of April 27th, to further discuss the restrictions placed on our churches, and new directives will be forthcoming after that meeting. God bless you all and thank you for your patience and understanding. The Lord bless you and keep you. “CHRIST IS RISEN!”

With love in Christ, the unworthy +Paul

