

Christ is Risen!



And they said among themselves, "Who will roll away the stone from the door of the tomb for us?" (Mark 16:3)

Dear Parishioners,

Take a moment and imagine oneself being present amongst the myrrh-bearing women, during the time of the Lord Jesus Christ. Their best friend, their love, their hope being spat upon, slapped, whipped, mocked and put to death in the most humiliating and tortuous ways, by being suspended on a cross. They saw Him thirst. They saw Him close His eyes. They witnessed the sky become dark and the earth tremble. They saw His side pierced and they assisted with taking His holy and precious body off the cross. They witnessed where it was placed and the stone that sealed the tomb. **Of one thing that the myrrh bearers were sure, it was the death of their Lord.**

After the Sabbath, early before dawn, they start making their way to the tomb, with ointments, myrrh and spices in hand. Why? Knowing that the Jesus was

buried in a rushed manner in order to fulfill the rules of the Sabbath, they wanted to make sure that their Lord was properly buried with the royalty of a king.

As they are walking towards the tomb, they are questioning even if they could fulfill their commitment because who was going to roll the heavy and large stone away from the tomb. They were met with a great surprise based on their expectations! **The tomb, the stone, the myrrh, the early morning, are all props and images of a story of ancient times that are used to open the message of the gospel to everyone in today's technological society.**

The women were asked by the angel to look into the tomb to see that Whom they sought was not there. The tomb is a dark and cool place. The tomb points each person to look into their soul, as dark as it might be, and that which they are afraid to find; fear, anxiety and depression, are not there. This darkness is overcome with the light of Christ's resurrection.

In the gospel of Matthew, the stone was rolled away with great force, the force of an earthquake. The earth-shattering experience of God's glory opens the soul of a person for conversion, for one to look into their soul.

The Myrrh bearers bring with them spices and myrrh to anoint the precious body of the Lord. The small but costly offering of the women who are arriving with a certain task and expectation are totally met with a new reality. For the first time, the curse of death is defeated and lifted. **Even in the worst fabrications of one's mind of a perceived reality, the potential that comes with faith and love for God is able to transform and present an unexpected and different result.** The soldiers were left frozen in fear at the presence of the angels and the resurrected Lord. The myrrh bearing women's reality was of awe and ecstasy.

Early in the morning the women arose to care for the Lord. The first steps of a person's new day are paramount to the experiences that they will encounter throughout the day. "O God, You are my God; Early will I seek You" (PS 63:1)

One of the verses recited before singing "Christ is risen" is the following "as smoke vanishes, so let them vanish, as the wax melts at the presence of fire" (Psalm 68:2) St. Paul in his letter to the Ephesians encourages the Christian to a proper way of living, "Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil." (Ephesians 5:15-16) St. John Chrysostom speaking on St. Paul's letter makes a statement of one of the reasons people live in such disproportion today, "For the wish to have more than one's neighbor of this world's goods, arises from no other source, than from "love waxing cold."

May this holy season of the Great Pascha create a warmth and love in one's heart for their neighbor. May this love be life fire that waxes away injustice, prejudice, envy and anger. **May each person that reaches out their anointing hand of healing to a person that is being marginalized, hurt with prejudice, impoverished, made sick through sin, be like the myrrh-bearers approaching the tomb of Christ.** This action of love has the same potential, to be met with the awe and ecstasy of the resurrection, bringing renewal, life and the joy of a new life into someone's heart and soul. "Love the Lord your God, with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind and with all your strength"

A very happy and blessed Pascha to you and your family!

In Christ's Ministry,

Protopresbyter Fr. John K. Lardas

2021

Truly He is Risen!