Christ is Risen!

Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb; and he saw the linen cloths lying there, and the handkerchief that had been around His head, not lying with the linen cloths, but folded together in a place by itself. (John 20:6-7)

Dear Archangel Michael Family,

Χριστὸς Ἀνέστη! Christ is risen!

When the myrrh-bearing women and the apostles approach the tomb, did Jesus need to remove the stone from the tomb for Him to emerge risen? The answer is no! The proof of this answer is seen in another account of the resurrection. The disciples are gathered in the upper room with the doors and windows shut out of fear. What happens next is wondrous! The risen Lord Jesus appears to them, even though the doors and windows are shut. The sealed tomb was not a hindrance for the Lord to arise.

Why is the open tomb emphasized so much in the gospel stories of the resurrection? The purpose of the open tomb is that the disciples could enter and see for themselves and believe that Jesus was resurrected from the dead. What evidence of the resurrection did Peter find? He found the linen cloths laying there, and the handkerchief that covered His head folded together in a place by itself. If thieves had taken the body, would they have taken the time to unwrap a very sticky funeral shroud from the body and then fold and place the head covering elsewhere?

As we celebrate Pascha, the Orthodox Christian is invited by the resurrection to journey into the tomb of the heart. To enter this tomb, one must be willing to open the doors to the heart. The heart is at the center of the spiritual life. Jesus says, “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.” When a person makes this journey into their heart, what do they discover? Is their heart stuck to the mindset of the world, which is the funeral shroud? Or, is the heart set free of the darkness of the passions (vices) and is carried out of the dark tomb into the light of the resurrection? With an open and pure heart, one may see God. “A coal engenders a flame, a flame lights a candle, so will God, who from our baptism dwells in our heart and kindles our mind to contemplation.” (St. Hesychios) The greatest effect of singing “Christ is Risen” on Pascha is that the heart becomes full of the light of Jesus Christ and is overwhelmed with the love of God.

On behalf of the Archangel Michael Church, thank you for the gift of faith that comes forth from your heart through your worship and dedication to this vibrant Christian community. May your Pascha be filled with great opportunities to spend with your family and may the risen Lord Jesus Christ bestow upon you the abundance of His love!

Χριστὸς Ἀνέστη! Christ is Risen!

In Christ’s Ministry,

Rev. John K. Lardas

Truly He is Risen!