

then went out and left from the tomb, full of dread and ecstasy. And they did not say anything to anyone, because they were afraid”.

Who, I wonder, was ready to hear and to believe such strange and stunning news; when at their first attempt to make this known to the Apostles (Lk. 24:11) they not only disbelieved, but also characterized their words “female gossip and fantasies”?

The excellent example of daring of the holy Myrrbearing women, a mark of love “firm as death” for Christ (Song of Songs 8:6) is a huge benefaction for the Church. Equally great however-even if involuntary – is the benefaction from their “dread”, as also from the disciples’ disbelief, at the first “Christ is Risen” of the angel. These first human reactions strengthen our faith in the Resurrection of Christ. They assure us that these later fervent preachers of the Resurrection had no predisposition, expectation or hope, to live this stunning event. And so for this reason, they became its most unbiased and objective witnesses.

Archim. B. L.

SUNDAY, APRIL 22, 2018 SUNDAY OF THE MYRRH-BEARING WOMEN,
Theodore of Sykeon , Nathaniel, Luke, & Clemente the Apostles, Nearchos the Martyr, Gregory Gravano of Nisyros

TONE OF THE WEEK : *Tone Two*

EOTHINON : *Fourth Orthros Gospel*

EPISTLE READING: *Acts of Apostles 6:1-7*

GOSPEL READING: *Mark 15:43-47; 16:1-8*

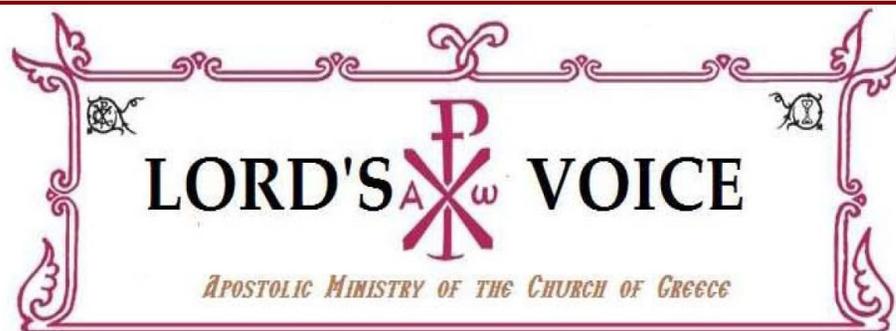
NEXT SUNDAY, APRIL 29, 2018 SUNDAY OF THE PARALYTIC, *Jason and Sosipater the Apostles of the 70 and their Companions, Holy Martyr Cercyra, Our Holy Father John of Kaloktenos, Metropolitan of Thebes. Basil, Bishop of Montenegro, Nektarios the New Martyr of Optina.*

EPISTLE READING: *Acts of Apostles 9:32-42*

GOSPEL READING: *John 5:1-15*

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66TH YEAR APRIL 22, 2018 PAMPHLET #16 (3386)

“THE DARING OF THE MHYRRHBEARERS

The Church projects to us, today, unparalleled examples of daring; honoring the memory of the holy Myrrbearing women, of Saint Joseph of Arimathea and Saint Nikodemus, the “nighttime” disciple of the Lord. Two men and one group of women, with the All Holy Virgin Mary as chief, dared to care for the burial of Christ. There where the “daring of the disciples ceases”, who are hiding, failing in the exams of courage, the up till now “hidden” disciple Joseph, “excels”. In danger of losing not only the high position of “senator” but also his life, “he asks for and buries” the crucified Lord of glory.

Can hope be stolen?

Of course, the holy Myrrbearing women receive excellent grades of this holy daring, who, as opposed to the other disciples, except for John, not only “follow Christ together” in the whole course of His passion, but also, after His burial, they came with aromas to the tomb to mourn and to anoint His body. Neither the fear of the Jews nor the stone of the tomb, which would be difficult to move, prevented them from expressing this love for the dead Jesus.

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MARK 15:43-47; 16:1-8

At that time, Joseph of Arimathea, a respected member of the council, who was also himself looking for the kingdom of God, took courage and went to Pilate, and asked for the body of Jesus. And Pilate wondered if he were already dead; and summoning the centurion, he asked him whether he was already dead. And when he learned from the centurion that he was dead, he granted the body to Joseph. And he bought a linen shroud, and taking him down, wrapped him in the linen shroud, and laid him in a tomb which had been hewn out of the rock; and he rolled a stone against the door of the tomb. Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joseph saw where he was laid.

And when the sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him. And very early on the first day of the week they went to the tomb when the sun had risen. And they were saying to one another, "Who will roll away the stone for us from the door of the tomb?" And looking up, they saw that the stone was rolled back; for it was very large. And entering the tomb, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, dressed in a white robe; and they were amazed. And he said to them, "Do not be amazed; you seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen, he is not here; see the place where they laid him. But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going before you to Galilee; there you will see him, as he told you." And they went out and fled from the tomb; for trembling and astonishment had come upon them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.

Yes! For them no doubt existed. Jesus was a dead person, who would follow the natural course of corruption. And the myrrh- aside from expressing honor to Him-they themselves first needed, in order to stand by His relic, as much as they could more. No thought about resurrection. No predisposition and no hope that they would see Him again alive. And when "having entered in, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus", realizing that neither will they see Him again dead, their despair was heightened. And they broke out into wailing. "Who stole our hope?

Who took a dead naked, "myrrh anointed" one, who-even as dead-was his mother's sole consolation? (Doxastikon of Vespers).

With such grief in their heart, how could they remember the words of the divine Teacher that "after three days I will arise", which – how strange!-Only the high priests and the Pharisees remembered. They remembered these words, of course, not because they believed them, but – "Oh inexpressible forbearance" of His!- In order to slander him "as a deceiving God". And-Oh their foolishness! –in order to secure the tomb, from fear that the dead person would be stolen.

Why do you forget?

So, justifiably, "the shining Angel" scolds the forgetful Myrrbearing women whom he meets at the tomb: "why are you seeking the living one among the dead?" (Lk. 24:5). What relationship does the living one have with the dead? "Remember what He spoke to you". Didn't He tell you that on the third day He would rise? Why do you forget all that He told you? And the pen of the Evangelists will pass into the hands of the hymnodists of the Church, for them to paint the angel's words in a stunning manner: "why are you mixing the myrrh with your tears? The myrrh befits only dead people. Not Him. He, as God that He is, resurrected from the tomb. Now the time of mourning has passed. Do not cry"

The angel's joyous message was not enough to chase away the initial fear and doubt from the hearts of the Myrrbearing women. Their heart did not suddenly fill with a resurrectional joy. The darkness of death is so heavy, that it does not leave so easily; and furthermore, from weak human hearts, which lived such abrupt and intense changes from one emotion to the other. Such an overturning in human history is not easy for someone to absorb.

The beneficial dread

So for this reason, they also were not yet ready to obey the angelic command and to become the first messengers of the Resurrection of Christ. Their heart could not yet bare to begin the celebrations. The absolute sparse description of their first contact with the light of the Resurrection, closes with a raw realism: "they