



ST. NICHOLAS ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH

WONDER WORKER

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF ST. NICHOLAS ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH, PINELLAS PARK,
FLORIDA

Thoughts From Father Michael
"Lenten Challenges"

April 2019

We Christians celebrate each Spring Christ's Passover – Pascha – from death to life because we remember that His Resurrection from the dead gives us the opportunity of eternal life in His Kingdom.

But there was an earlier Passover!

Perhaps, the most significant event in the Old Testament was the Angel of Death Passing Over the blood anointed door posts and lintels of the homes of the enslaved Israelites in Egypt to spare their first-born children and livestock. Not so for Pharaoh and the Egyptians.

This action of God achieved His ultimate objective to rescue His people from four hundred and thirty years of bondage. This event resonates throughout the books of the Old Testament, and continues to resonate with Jews to this day. This was the First Passover: an action of God in history - a sign of His love and compassion for His people that makes evident The Immortal caring for us mortals.

Yet, we mortals have not always acted to thank Him for His concern by living our lives in accordance of His expectation of us and remembering His saving action. Like Adam and Eve, we continue to disobey Him. God, however, true to His person, has not forgotten the high point of His Creation – us mortals. He sent His prophets to admonish us of our wayward ways, and to remind us of His steadfast love for us. And in the fullness of time He sent His only begotten Son to reach out to us and to gather us under His wings.

Pascha, the Second Passover

In this second Pascha, Christ passed over from death on the Cross to life with His Resurrection on the third day. The Second Passover supersedes the First one in that it opens the gates of Paradise to all people – Jews and Gentiles. It is not **exclusive** to one people only; rather, it is **inclusive** to all nations of mankind.

Moreover, this Second Passover took place on the occasion of celebrating the First. Christ instructed His Disciples to prepare the Passover meal of lamb for Him: "Go into the city to a certain man, and say to him, 'The Teacher says, "My time is at hand; I will keep the Passover at your house with My disciples.'" [Matt 26:18] Then He became the sacrificial Lamb inaugurating the New Covenant with His Blood.

Our God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – desires to be with us, to walk with us, and to talk with us. Little by little He reveals Himself to us as far as we can understand. We cannot know God on our own, and we will never know God completely; knowledge of Him is not something we can acquire on our own brainpower. We as mortals – created out of dust – cannot fully comprehend the Immortal – the One who

created us from that dust. Can the clay advise the potter? as Isaiah points out [Is 29:16]. He is beyond our human capacity to fathom Him. What we do know is what He has revealed about Himself to us.

What He reveals to us through His prophets, but most especially through His Son, is a loving, caring, long suffering, and compassionate Person. Unlike the god of the philosophers – the unmoved Mover of Aristotle for example – He is a God who works in history for our benefit, so that we may have life and have it abundantly. He is not distant, but nearby. He is not abstract, but real.

Think of it. He sent His only begotten Son to rescue us not from Egyptian slavery, but from death itself. As St Basil the Great puts it in his Anaphora Prayer during the high point of the Liturgy

...he loosed the pains of death and rose again on the third day,
making a way for all flesh unto the resurrection from the dead,
for it was not possible that the Author of life should be held by corruption.

What greater love is there than for one to give his life for another, and Christ gave His life for all of us.

Moreover, He did not leave us alone or abandoned after He rose from the dead and ascended into heaven to return to His Father. As St Basil continues in the Anaphora prayer

And he hath left with us, as memorials of his saving passion,
these things which we have set forth according to his commandments.
For when he was about to go forth to his voluntary and ever-memorable
and life-giving death, in the night in which he gave himself up
for the life of the world, he took bread in his holy and immaculate hands;
and when he had shown it unto thee, the God and Father, and given thanks
and blessed it and hallowed it and broken it,

He gave it to his holy disciples and apostles, saying: Take, eat.
This is my Body which is broken for you, for the forgiveness of sins...

In like manner, having taken the cup of the fruit of the wine and
mingled it and given thanks and blessed it and hallowed it,

He gave it to his holy disciples and apostles, saying;
Drink of this, all of you. This is my Blood of the new covenant,
which is shed for you and for many, for the forgiveness of sins...

Do this in remembrance of me; for as often as you shall eat of this
bread and drink of this cup, you do proclaim my death and confess
my resurrection.

Christ did not abandon us. He sent His Holy Spirit to guide us into all truth and He is with us at all times, but especially when we partake of His Holy Body and Blood. As He told His disciples and apostles when you partake of the Eucharist: I abide in you and you abide in Me.

There is no abstraction here. This is reality. There is personal engagement. There is the mortal with the immortal and the immortal with the mortal as a foretaste of our journey to Christ in the Kingdom of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. In the Kingdom there is no longer suffering, pain, sickness, nor sorrow, but brightness, green pastures, and peace.

Brothers and sisters in Christ. let us celebrate joyfully this Second Passover – this Pascha – this cosmic action of God in history. Christ came into our midst, died for us, reopened the doors of Paradise for us, allowed us to partake of His Holy Body and Blood. Moreover, He is with us at all times. He awaits patiently for us to acknowledge His saving Grace and to return to Him. He does indeed abide in us and grants us life everlasting.

Who is so great a God as our God!

Christ is Risen! Truly, He is Risen!

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Spiritual Sayings

The mark of a great soul is to endure all things and to serve everyone. The example of this is near at hand: for the Son of Man Himself did not come to be served but to serve, and, what is even greater, He came to give His life as a ransom for many. For what could be greater and more marvelous than a man who not only serves, but who even dies for the sake of the one he serves? Yet the Lord's serving and His humble lowering of Himself to be with us has become the exaltation and the glory of Him and all creation. For before He became man, He was known only to the angels, but after His incarnation and crucifixion, His glory is even greater and He reigns over all the earth.

St Theophylact of Ochrid

See what fasting does: it heals illnesses, drives out demons, removes wicked thoughts, and makes the heart pure. If someone has even been seized by an impure spirit, let him know that this kind, according to the word of the Lord, "goeth not out but by prayer and fasting" (Matthew 17:21).

Lenten Services for April

April 1, 2019 - 6:30 PM, Great Compline

April 3, 2019 - 6:00 PM, Pre-sanctified Liturgy to be followed by Pot Luck Lenten Meal

April 5, 2019 - 6:30 PM, Fourth Part of the Akathist Service to the Theotokos

April 7, 2019 - John of the Ladder Sunday

April 7, 2019 - 5:00 PM, Lenten Vespers, St George Serbian Church, Clearwater

April 8, 2019 - 6:30 PM, Great Compline

April 10, 2019 - 6:00 PM, Pre-sanctified Liturgy to be followed by Pot Luck Lenten Meal

April 12, 2019 - 6:30 PM, Entire Akathist Service to the Theotokos

April 14, 2019 - Mary of Egypt Sunday

April 14, 2019 - 5:00 PM, Lenten Vespers, St Philip the Apostle, Tampa

April 15, 2019 - 6:30 PM, Great Compline

April 17, 2019 - 6:00 PM, Pre-sanctified Liturgy to be followed by Pot Luck Lenten Meal

April 20, 2019 - 10:00 AM, Lazarus Saturday Liturgy to be followed by Church Cleaning

April 21 - 27, 2019 - Holy Week: See Upcoming Events in this Wonder Worker for Schedule

Finishing the Race

We are in the second half of the Great Lent, exhausted from attending more services, praying more, reading Scripture and other religious books, and fasting from food, anger, jealousy, and the other passions. Yet, if we have tried our best to meet the requirements of the ascetical nature of the season, we should feel refreshed. We should feel lighter, and moreover, to begin to anticipate the great Light that is never overtaken by night. Clearly, the Evil One has done his best to distract us from these ascetical practices, but with God's help we have prevailed.

The second half of Lent is a time to double down, to grow closer to God, and to be open to His grace; a

grace we can sense in our being.

If we have not participated fully in the first half, there is still time to enjoy the fruits of fasting and more church services. Some complain of the length of the services, yet, their very monotony is designed to quiet us down and to concentrate on the words of the psalms, the hymns (troparions), and the beautiful songs that are chanted only during this Lenten season. Come and see how good the Lords is.

Spring Cleaning

Looking for an opportunity to share your labors with same-minded folks? Then join us after Liturgy on Lazarus Saturday to clean the church, to wash church windows, to polish the altar vessels, to trim shrubs and other yard work, and other chores to get ready to celebrate Christ's Resurrection on Pascha. A light Lenten lunch will keep you nourished. Please see Bob Rolfes for possible assignments.

Please Pray for the Following Brothers and Sisters:

Departed: Jammilleh Jacob, Sonja Twors, Nancy Blair, Phyllis Kirshy, Habeeb Khoury, Kokab Kakesh, Victoria Jasmine White, Bassam Ishaq

Shut-ins/Sick: Metropolitan PAUL, Archbishop YOHANNA, Nicholas Hughes, Schauki Kassis, John Bennett, Rose Beede, Alice Flaherty, Theodora Ohlinger, Sally Bell, Bob Bostley, Bill Yopp, George Joseph Rolfes, Aurelia Buda, Eveyne Lonack, Richard Pippy, Diane Zorich, Lisa McCoy, Thomas Ziegler

For the Health of: Fr Lazarus Sucanto, Kh Loretta Karparlenia, Kh Virginia Massouh, Pf. Margot Siniari, Viola Haddad, Angela Jacob, Farhat David, Helen Massarelli, Carole Massarelli, John & Evelyn Salem, Helen Salem, Ruth & Evern Hazel, Kay Varoutis, Gerorgette Abraham, Mariam Haddad, Bryan Haddad, Nasir Kassis, Geri & Mitch Kanaan, Ron Patell, Photini Larson, Vickie Sue Kingsbury, Nadine Schmidt, Alice Faccenda, Pat Salem, David & Eva Szabo, Marion Bostley, Theodore Todorow, Alex Gimon, George Hooker, Diane Karns, Leo Poirier, Collin Lamkin, Sophie Massouh, Bob Poirier, Steve Bové, Natalie Floreancig, John Rollins, Millicent Palko, Leila Bashara

Service Members: Christopher Salem (Air Force): Nephew of Helen Salem), Peter McIntire: Nephew of Viola Haddad, Curtis Brickwood (Navy): Fr. Michael's Cousin, James Sexton(Army): Grandson of Michaelina Sexton, Derek Voss (Army), Son of Carolyn & Joe Galluccio, David Butler (Navy): Son of Joanna Kassis Butler, Trenton Wesley (Army): grandson of Leila Bashara, Luka Dundua (Army): Grandson of Salome Rollins

Upcoming Events

Sunday, April 7, 2019 - John of the Ladder Sunday

Sunday, April 14, 2019 - Mary of Egypt Sunday

Saturday, April 20, 2019 - 10:00 AM Divine Liturgy Lazarus Saturday

to be followed by Spring Cleaning of Church & Grounds

Sunday, April 21, 2019 - Palm Sunday

Sunday, April 21, 2019 - 6:30 PM Bridegroom Service

Holy Monday, April 22, 2019 - 6:30 PM Bridegroom Service

Holy Tuesday, April 23, 2019 - 6:30 PM Bridegroom Service

Holy Wednesday, April 24, 2019 - 6:30 PM Holy Unction Service

Holy Thursday, April 25, 2019 - 10:00 AM Institution of the Eucharist & Washing of the Feet

Holy Thursday, April 25, 2019 - 6:00 PM Twelve Gospels & Nailing of Christ to the Cross

Holy Friday, April 26, 2019 - 10:00 AM Royal Hours

Holy Friday, April 26, 2019 - 3:00 PM Taking Down from the Cross

Holy Friday, April 26, 2019 - 6:30 PM Lamentation Service with Procession

Holy Saturday, April 27, 2019 - 10:30 AM Vespertal Divine Liturgy

Holy Saturday, April 27, 2019 - 10:30 PM Rush Service followed by

Midnight Paschal Liturgy and the Breaking of the Fast

PASCHAL SUNDAY, April 28, 2019 - 11:00 AM Agape Vespers & Reading of the Gospel in several languages

followed by Egg Hunt for Children

Parish Life Conference - June 12-15, 2019, Raleigh, North Carolina

Archdiocese Convention - July 21-28, Grand Rapids, Michigan

Birthdays for April

2 April, Victor Jacob, Jeanne Poirier; 5 April, Amy Yacoub, Kathleen Milligan; 6 April, Sami Mobayed; 8 April, Simon Najjar, Christopher Jacob; 11 April, Marion Bostley, Donna Mason; 16 April, Mary Jeanne Lubin; 18 April, Nabiha Najjar, George Ishaq; 20 April, Suhil Isaac, Olga Wiggins, Alliyah Grace Kassis, David Szabo; 22 April, Eva Szabo; 23 April, David Ishaq; 24 April, Samar Mansour; 25 April, Emily Foltz Dagly; 26 April, Avery George Cooper; 28 April, Nick Nahas

Anniversaries for April

23 April, Bob & Olga Wiggins; 25 April, Alibek & Emily Foltz Dagly; 29 April, George & Sandra Baidurashvili; 30 April, Michael & Rebecca Pagani

Departed this Life in April

2 April, Jamilleh Jacob; 5 April, Sonja Twors; 11 April, Nancy Blair; 15 April, Phyllis Kirshy; 20 April, Habeeb Houry; 27 April, Kokab Kakesh; 26 April, Victoria Jasmine White; 29 April, Bassam Ishaq

The Prayer of St Ephraim the Syrian

O Lord and Master of my life,
Take from me the spirit of sloth,
meddling, lust of power and idle talk. (Prostration)

but give rather the spirit of chastity, humility, patience,
and love to thy servant. (Prostration)

Yea, O Lord and King grant me to see my own sins
and not to judge my brother. For thou are blessed,
now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen. (Prostration)

March Was Woman's Month

Thanks to all the women who greeted, ushered, collected the alms trays, and read the Epistles: Marion Bostley, Jeanne Poirier, Pia Cummings, Carolyn Galluccio, and Cheryl Lipscomb. The homilies were given by Pia Cummings, Mona Elkhoully, Najla Kassis, Donna Mason, and Carolyn Galluccio.

Lenten Retreat

From 9:00 AM to 2:00 PM on Saturday, April 13, 2019 we are delighted to have Fr. David Fox, Pastor of Holy Trinity Orthodox Church in Randolph, NJ, lead a Lenten Retreat on "Life As Sacrament." It is based on the late Fr Alexander Schmemmann's book, **For the Life of the World**, recently reissued by St Vladimir's Press. Fr David wrote his dissertation on this book.

Fr David will lead a study of the major themes of this monograph in an attempt to assist retreat participants to understand better life through a deeper experience of the Orthodox Sacraments. Fr Schmemmann was one of the outstanding 20th century leaders not only in Orthodoxy but in all of Christendom by reaffirming the Liturgical services available in the Orthodox world.

In addition to pastoring his church, Fr David is the Assistant Dean for Mission Advancement at St Tikhon's Orthodox Theological Seminary.

A free will donation will be the charge for attending. There will be a continental breakfast and lunch at Noon. Any further donations to St Tikhon's Seminary will be gladly accepted.



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