



Fire & Light

St. Symeon Orthodox Church

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✠ June 9, 2013 ✠

Sixth Sunday of Pascha

St. Cyril of Alexandria (444) St. Cyril of White Lake (1427)

St. Columba of Iona (597) St. Raphael of Old Agapia, Moldavia (1645)

Christ is Risen! Indeed He is Risen!

St. Seraphim of Sarov,
continually having the
memory of the Resurrection
in his soul, met every person
coming to him with the words:
"My joy! Christ is Risen!"



- ⇒ *New Inquirer's Class* – Tuesday, June 11, 6:30pm
- ✠ *Feast of Ascension* – Wed. June 13, 6:30pm
- ✠ *Thurs. June 14 10:00am* *Feast of Ascension - Divine Liturgy*
- ✠ *Feast of Pentecost* – Sunday, June 23

"The Angel Cried"

During the Church's Paschal period, from the Matins of the Resurrection of our Lord and God and Savior Jesus Christ to the eve of His Ascension on the fortieth day, the primary hymn to the Mother of God is the much loved, "The Angel Cried:"

"The angel cried to the Lady Full of Grace: Rejoice, rejoice, O Pure Virgin! Again I say 'Rejoice' Thy Son is risen from His three days in the Tomb!" (St. John of Damascus)

We are reminded that, according to Church Tradition, the Archangel Gabriel, the Angel of the Annunciation, delivered a second annunciation to the Virgin. Thirty-four years after the first Annunciation, he returned to greet her at the empty Tomb of Christ, saying, "Rejoice, O Pure Virgin. I have come to say once again, Rejoice! For now I announce to you this is the third day and your Son is risen from the grave."

Christians have chanted this second annunciation for well over a millennium. It was always part of the consciousness of the Church that the Risen Lord appeared first to His Mother who, accompanied by Mary Magdalene, went to the Tomb "very early in the morning, while it was yet dark." She who, in a cave, brought Him Incarnate into the world, from a cave now receives Him, the Incarnate Vanquisher of Hades, back in the world.

- *George Gabriel*

"TRUE JOY" by Elder Moses the Athonite ~ March 6, 2011

Who does not want to be happy? Joy is an eternal universal desire. Joy is of great importance in our lives.

It's meaning is known and there is no need to analyze it. Today, however, it seems to have lost its true meaning. Pain dominates and joy is absent. Or at least joy is manifested though not in its authentic, essential and fulfilling form, but rather in cheap substitutes, which increase pain in the soul.

Man in Eden was innocent, happy, blessed and perfectly joyful. His source of joy was a comfortable and uninterrupted conversation with God. Wanting to become independent and self-deified, he became estranged automatically from the source of his great joy. Joy is for the soul of man what bread and water is for his body. Joy is divine inspiration, life-giving warmth, the mother of health and sister of wonderful consolation. Some think that joy will be found in unbridled fun, shameless revels,



And the Dead Shall Be Raised

Priest Alexey Gnevushev

Verily, verily I say unto you, He that believeth on Me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works shall he do. (John 14:12)

Not long before His Passion, Christ strengthened the hearts of His disciples with the promise of the Holy Spirit and the assurance that through prayer they had power to subdue the prince of this world. And in fact we read with awe the Acts of the Apostles through whose prayers the lame walked, the ears of the deaf were opened and the blind regained their sight. The ascendancy of evil in the world today can only signify a concurrent decline in the ranks of Christ's warriors. And yet, from not so long ago we have examples of those who commanded such boldness in prayer as to force open the very jaws of death itself. One of these was the country priest, Fr. Alexei Gnevushev, a contemporary of the great wonderworker St. Seraphim of Sarov who said of him:

"By his holy prayers this man is like a candle burning before the throne of God. Behold, a toiler who, not having taken the monastic vows, stands higher than many ascetics, like a star he sheds light upon the horizon of Christianity."

Father Alexei was by no means a "born saint". His early years as a priest were undistinguished. In fact, he even had a reputation for drunkenness. But one night God knocked sharply at the door of his heart and his soul awoke from sleep. A man came to Fr. Alexei and asked that he go immediately to the bedside of a peasant who was dying in a neighboring village. Irritated at being disturbed late at night, Fr. Alexei decided to postpone his visit until morning. But whenever he shut his eyes to fall asleep, the dying peasant appeared before him. Finally, he could bear it no longer and went to him. The peasant lay on a bench before the icon corner; he was dead. Beside him stood an angel holding a chalice. This so affected Fr. Alexei that he became a changed man. He began to keep a strict, monastic rule; he served daily the Divine Liturgy, dedicating himself entirely to God and the service of His Holy Church. Graced with clairvoyance and the

gift of healing, Fr. Alexei became known throughout Russia for the many miracles worked through his intercession both before and after his death. Indeed, were it not for the disruption of the Revolution, the Synod would surely have canonized him. One of the most extraordinary miracles took place not many years before Fr. Alexei's repose.

A 12 year-old boy died in Fr. Alexei's parish. He was an exceptional child and God's grace rested upon him as if he were born an angel; at any rate, that is how people thought of him, and indeed, he looked like one: he had shoulder-length golden curls, and his big blue eyes sparkled when he smiled. Wherever he went he brought peace with him. When he happened to come to someone's hut where people were fighting or quarrelling, he would stand there quietly at the threshold without saying a word, only his radiant eyes would sparkle with a kind of heavenly light. As soon as the people noticed him they would immediately calm down. The boy would then smile, take wing and run somewhere else. Everyone in the village loved him and thought of him as their own child.

Once the villagers were having some kind of big celebration. The men got drunk, and their revelry did not stop for about a week; it finally ended, as so often happens, with a raucous free-for-all. Just at this time the boy became seriously ill, and within a few days he died. When the news spread through the village it produced a sobering effect upon the peasants. There was no end to their crying and sobbing; everyone blamed himself for the boy's death and thought of it as a punishment for their damnable behavior. The women wept and lamented, and the whole village surrounded the hut of the boy's parents and repented before God of their transgressions.

The boy lay in his coffin as if he were alive; the bright smile on his lips was like a silent reproach to the peasants. One glance at the boy and one after another men would leave the

hut sobbing, or sighing deeply, their heads bent low.

The boy lay there for a week until signs of decay became visible and greenish spots appeared on his hands...

Then they carried the little coffin to the church and the funeral service began. Choking with tears and sobs, Fr. Alexei and the singers could hardly go on with the service. It was almost five o'clock before anyone could approach the coffin to give the final kiss.

It is impossible to describe what went on in the church. Everyone kept accusing himself of the boy's death; those who had been engaged in heavy drinking and fighting were a sorry sight indeed. As everyone knows, when a Russian commits a sin and comes to himself, his repentance is just as profound and sincere as his sin was grave.

Standing in the altar before the Lord's Table, his hands raised to heaven, Father Alexei with great boldness loudly called out to God: "O my God, my God, Thou seest that I have no strength to say good-bye to this youth. Do not allow me, Thy slave and priest, to leave this church in shame; do not allow the enemy of mankind to have his laugh at me, Thy servant, for having in my weakness interrupted this service... It is beyond my strength... Heed the moaning and weeping of Thy repentant people, heed the suffering of his parents' hearts, heed the request of Thine old priest... Do not take away from us the one who is Thine own, given to us that we might mend our ways and come to our senses and glorify Thy Holy Name. Thou it was, O Lord, Who said that Thou wilt give us all that we ask in faith. Thou, the Merciful One, said to us: 'Ask and it shall be given unto you...' O Righteous God, there is no one in this church who can walk up to this youth to say the last farewell. Neither do I have that kind of strength... O, our God, be merciful to us, hear us, our Lord and God..." Ail of a sudden there was a deep silence in the sanctuary.

Moments later the priest fell to his knees before the altar crying out loud: "Yes, O Lord, yes, but bring this youth back to life, because Thou canst do all things, Thou art our Lord, Thou art Almighty... It is in my humility, not out of pride, that I dare..."

Just as during a raging storm a blinding flash of lightning is followed by thunder, the cry of the old priest lying prostrate on the altar floor was answered by a piercing cry in the church... The priest got up and, turning his head, saw the boy sitting up in his coffin and looking around... As soon as the priest saw this he fell again to his knees before the altar and, crying softly, gave thanks to God for the miracle. Then, leaning on the deacon's arm and without saying a word, he made his way towards the coffin. The commotion that reigned in the church is impossible to describe.

It was only with great difficulty that the priest finally reached the coffin. He lifted the boy in his arms and carried him into the sanctuary; there he placed him on a chair and gave him the Eucharist while kneeling because he was so shaken by what had happened that he could not stand on his feet. Then he brought the resurrected boy to his parents who took him home.

The priest himself did not go home. He asked for a chair to be placed in the middle of the church, and sitting thus, he served a molieben to the Saviour and read an Akathist to the Mother of God. Extreme shock and agitation made Fr. Alexei unable either to stand or walk out of the church. Parishioners carried him home, seated in the chair, and put him to bed, where he remained for a week...

The priest lived three more years after this miracle. The boy, after his wondrous rising from the dead, lived for another six years and died at the age of eighteen."

Such is the power of prayer. Such is the true boldness of an Orthodox priest before God.

The world makes a lot of fuss about its achievements in the field of science, but closes its ears and is hopelessly deaf when reminded of the power of prayer, of its great importance in the eyes of God. God is our Father and will never refuse a loving son in whatever the son asks.

(Translated by Mrs. Olga Oleinikov from Bogosoznanie by Archpriest Nicholas Deputatov.)

Christ is Risen!
Truly He is Risen!

Thoughts on Saturday and Sunday

From The 12 Great Feast Days of the Church
by Metropolitan Hierotheos Vlachos of Greece

Saturday

The day of Great Saturday, when Christ's soul was in Hades with its divinity and His body with its divinity was in the tomb, and the power of death and the devil were conquered, is regarded as a great day by the Orthodox Church because it is connected with Sunday.

The Seventh Day of creation, on which God "rested from all his works" after creating the world and man, is connected in the liturgical texts with the day of Great Saturday, on which Christ rested from all those things which He had done for the salvation of man. Therefore we sing, "for this is the blessed Sabbath".

In the book of Genesis we see that because God created the whole world and man in six days, on the seventh day He rested from His labors. Moses writes: "Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it he rested from all his work which God had created and made" (Gen. 2:3).

Therefore Moses decided that on the seventh day, the Sabbath, which is interpreted to mean rest, the Jews should rest, and the day should be devoted to worship and prayer. The command was clear "And the first day shall be called holy, and on the seventh day you shall have a holy convocation. No servile work shall be done on this day; but that which everyone must eat - that only may be prepared by you" (Ex. 12, 16).

There is an interpretation according to which the command of the Sabbath rest was given by God primarily for man's reformation and renewal, which would take place through the sacrifice and death of Christ on the Cross, through Christ's descent into Hell and the abolition of sin and death. To be sure, it must be emphasized that the reshaping and renewal began on Great Saturday, but the manifest and perceptible beginning of the restoration was on the Sunday, when Christ was visibly risen from the tomb (St. Nicodemus the Hagiorite). Therefore we too, although we honor the Saturday, give more honor to the Sunday, which we regard chiefly as the day of reshaping and re-creation. We always revere the Saturday, according to the words of St. Germanus, Patriarch of Constantinople: "This Saturday is to be revered as the day of our reshaping".

In the Orthodox Tradition the Sabbath observance also has another meaning. In essence it consists of man's rest, hesychasm, the so-called holy stillness (hesychia) in the full sense of the word. When the Apostle Paul says that this rest is essential for the people of God, he advises: "Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone should fall after the same example of disobedience (Heb. 4:11). St. Gregory Palamas says that when man withdraws every thought from his nous and when with patience and unceasing prayer the nous returns into the heart, then he enters the divine rest, which is to say the vision of God.

This rest, this hesychasm, is not inertia, but great movement. Just as God, although He rested on the seventh day, continued to direct the world by His uncreated energy, so also man, when he is in a state of spiritual vision of God, is doing his greatest work, he is uniting with God and then he loves what God loves. Therefore we can say that it is possible to live Christ's Resurrection within one's own rest, within one's own hesychastic way of life. As far as one enters into the divine rest, one is experiencing the Resurrection. The wish "Happy Pascha" (Kalo Paschal!) should be accompanied and followed by the wish "good rest".

Sunday

Christ rose in the morning hours of Sunday. We do not know the actual time of His Resurrection, since no one saw him at that time, but it was certified when the Myrrh-bearing women came to the tomb to anoint Christ's body with perfumes. Thus Sunday, the first day of the week, is the day of Christ's Resurrection. If Christ conquered the power of death on Saturday, on Sunday His resurrection was certified to all, that He was the conqueror of death and the devil.

The day of Sunday in the so-called seven-day cycle is the first day from which the week is counted, but also the eighth, that is to say after the Sabbath. In the Old Testament it is regarded as an important day, on the one hand because it is the first day of the creation of the world, on which light came into being, and on the other hand because it is also considered holy, according to the commandment: "For seven days you shall offer a whole burnt offering to the Lord. On the eighth day you shall have a holy convocation, and you shall offer a whole burnt offering to the Lord" (Lev. 23:36).

Moses does not call the first day first, he calls it one. And, interpreting it, St. Basil the Great says that the holy Sunday on which Christ rose He calls one day in order to direct our understanding towards the eternal life to come. Sunday is now a type of the coming eighth age, and then it will itself be the eighth age. If one thinks that the weekly cycle symbolizes the whole time of the life of mankind and Sunday is a type of the coming eighth age, then it is the one and only day. St. Basil calls the Sunday "beginning of the days", "co-equal with light".

According to St. Gregory Palamas, Sunday is called eighth day because on that day Christ's Resurrection took place, which is the eighth raising in history. Three raisings of the dead took place in the Old Testament (one through the Prophet Elijah and two through Elisha), and four raisings of the dead took place in the New Testament through Christ (the daughter of Jairus, the son of the widow of Nain, Lazarus, and the dead on Great Friday). The greatest, the Eighth Resurrection, is the Resurrection of Christ, but also the first with regard to the awaited resurrection of all the dead.

Light came into being on Sunday, the first day of creation. It was on Sunday, the first day of the re-creation, that the light of the Resurrection appeared, which is the very light of the Transfiguration and Pentecost, Christ's human nature cast off mortality and corruptibility, as we shall see.

Moreover, Sunday is called a holy day because all the great events of the Lord happened on it. The Fathers say that the Annunciation of the Theotokos, the Nativity of Christ and the Resurrection, the great, basic happenings of the Lord, took place on Sunday. But also the Second Coming of Christ and of course the Resurrection of the dead will happen on this day. (St. Peter of Damascus). This is why the Christians attach great importance and weight to it and try to sanctify it, because Christ's sudden coming will take place then.

For all these reasons St. John of Damascus celebrates on the Feast of Pascha: 'This is the chosen and holy Day, the one King and Lord of Sabbaths, the Feast of Feasts, and the Triumph of Triumphs: Wherein let us bless Christ forever more!'

It is moving to think that every Sunday the Church celebrate Christ's resurrection with its wonderful troparia. Thus in the annual Pascha there is also the weekly Pascha, the so-called little Pascha, the light-bringing day of Sunday.

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"Your tongue longs to jump into arguments, but restrain it.
It is a tyrant, and you must fight it daily seventy times seven."

~ St. John Climacus

This and That

President Barack Obama...has banned the use of the words "Muslim" or "Islam" in the official American discourse on terrorism.... By placing a ban on any meaningful debate on the link between Islam and terrorism Obama is effectively aiding and abetting the enemy. In reality the jihadist threat can never be controlled by focusing on causes external to Islam itself. That enemy has a clear ideology and a standard blueprint for radical political and social action. The result is a global phenomenon that cannot be compared in fanaticism and readiness for violence with any other ideology in today's world...

The victory against terrorism ultimately has to be won in the domain of morals and culture. It can be won only by an America that has regained its awareness of its moral, spiritual, and civilizational roots. Instead, after every act of Islamic terrorism, we are served fresh doses of anti-discriminationism and tolerance. In 1938 Hilaire Belloc wondered, "Will not perhaps the temporal power of Islam return and with it the menace of an armed Muhammadan world which will shake the dominion of Europeans—still nominally Christian—and reappear again as the prime enemy of our civilization?"

Serge Trikovic, Serbian Orthodox commentator

"It will be hard to fight a great religion with no religion." - Patrick Buchanan

"The sharia, to a Muslim, is not an addition to the "secular" legal code with which it coexists; it is the only true code, the only basis of obligation." – Serge Trikovic

Once upon a time this was true for believing Christians in regards to the Law of God i.e. God's Law was not in addition to secular laws but prior to positive law in both time and importance. This is no longer true as there is no longer a legitimate authority in matters of faith and morals. The Church ? The Bible ? The Spirit ? The personal feelings of every individual ? - Robert Reavis

Most sane people who utter the words "War on Terror" know more or less, consciously or unconsciously, that "Terror" is a clever but totally inappropriate substitute for "Islamism," and that "Islam" and "Islamism" are one and the same reality. The problem is that the rhetoric against "Terror" and "Islamism," no matter how well-intentioned, affects the methodology of the combat and dilutes its effectiveness: since the true enemy cannot be acknowledged as such, real measures cannot be permitted to expose the euphemism.

~ Internet Comment

On Syria: Syriac Catholic Patriarch Ignatius Joseph III Younan

"Western nations did not heed warnings and so bear responsibility for what is happening in Syria.

"We were warning all those involved, the countries in the region and in the West -- that means the United States and some of the European Union countries, like the United Kingdom and France -- that this kind of violence would lead to chaos and the chaos to a civil war," Patriarch Younan said. "And at that time, two years ago, they chose not to believe that."

"Since the beginning, they (Western nations) just stood against the regime, calling it a dictatorship, saying the dictatorship must fall. Now it's over 25 months, the conflict is getting worse, and the ones who are paying the price are the innocent people," said Patriarch Younan, leader of nearly 40,000 Syriac Catholics in Syria. He said the morale of Christians in Syria is "very, very low."

"Christians in the Middle East have been not only abandoned, but we have been lied to and betrayed by Western nations, like the United States and the European Union," he said.

"And I believe there will be a time coming when the Christians of the Middle East will no longer look to the West for support and perhaps to better strengthen their roots with the Eastern culture and civilization. They are better to look to the East, to ... Russia, to India, to China," he said.

The patriarch said he had no news of two Orthodox bishops kidnapped April 22, but said the United States was "very able to get the news if they want to."

When asked if he considered the bishops' kidnapping a message to Christians, the patriarch replied, "How can it be otherwise?" The incident, he said, makes Christians in Syria more fearful and desperate to flee. The number of Syrian refugees in Lebanon already is more than 1 million...Every day, Christian families from Syria who have left everything behind, come to the patriarchate in Beirut seeking refuge."

Elder Joseph of Vatopaidi (1921-2009): Fatherly Teachings (conclusion)

- Spiritual variations are not nullified during the spiritual trials, but they adapt according to the state the warrior is found in. Solomon's words: "there is time for everything" are applicable here.
- As far as children are concerned, the only way to succeed with them and to be able to have better results is to show them love. This is the only thing that, either directly or indirectly, has any gains and never misses its target, even though sometimes children seem to ignore it. Love will definitely bear fruit in the future, if not straight away.
- It is very difficult to bring up children these days, since wickedness has overcome everything! Loving behavior will convince them, when it is applied softly rather harshly.
- Children would like to feel their parents' love. Neither clothes nor jewelry have any value for them. As soon as they grow up a little, they will recognize that all these are worthless and will throw them away. But they will be left with their parents' love and understanding. This is the big gain!
- You must keep three principles: Austerity for yourselves, sympathy for your fellow men and faith to God. All these attract God's Grace and Mercy.
- Faith in the Lord solves everything because everything is derived from Him. He alone has granted us His own comprehension. He alone has held us near Him, despite our trespasses. He alone has united us and bonded us devotedly and sturdily with His grace. How is it possible to believe that He will abandon us if we believe in His own declarations?
- We need patience, peace and perseverance. Nothing more and nothing less. The coming events are only presenting themselves so that man can be tested, since our Lord's love is well known, together with His promise that He has prepared our place so that we can live like kings among all the Saints in eternal life.
- Persevere in prayer, my dear children, because the time, which our Fathers have described, is at hand and who can safely say that he can stand before the Lord's Throne?
- We must be watchful all the time because the evil one neither sleeps nor hesitates, but seeks out someone to devour. This does not mean that we will get frightened or hesitate, but we must use self-contempt and patience in temptations, because they will result in our redemption.
- As we request the Lord's mercy, in the same way we must show mercy to others and love them. Who doesn't like the meek person, since even the animals in nature love him? And again, who doesn't despise the selfish and conceited person?
- Do not be hasty in judging people because of some event which happened by chance. Since, as you well know, everything is unstable and subject to change. Therefore, no man can safely judge someone's entire character because of his fleeting moves or statements. Remember: it is not just man but nature itself and even time, which are subject to change.
- It is no use to retreat and be a coward. This is not the natural way of doing things because there is no reason for it. It is rather a wave of devastation and a typhoon which have swept the place and the world has descended into darkness and frost.