



EASTER CELEBRATION Second Issue, 2009



CHRIST IS RISEN! TRULY HE IS RISEN! YOU ARE MY LORD AND MY GOD!

John 20: 19 - 31

Very Rev. Timothy G. Bakakos

CHRIST IS RISEN! TRULY HE IS RISEN! In the Gospel Reading that is read on the first Sunday following the glorious celebration of Pascha, we hear the famous exchange between the Disciple Thomas and the other Disciples, and later, between Thomas and Jesus Christ. When the Disciples said to Thomas, "We have seen the Lord!", what was the response? Thomas said to them, "Unless I see the scars of the nails in his hands and put my finger on the scars and my hand in his side, I will NOT believe!"

Even though the Disciple Thomas has been labeled with the tag of "Doubting Thomas", Orthodox Christian tradition tells us that Thomas was, in fact, martyred for and because of his devout faith. As we certainly know, the early saints paid a terrible price for their faithfulness. We don't know a lot about Thomas, but we do know that he was one of the original twelve disciples. We also know that he had a "second" name. According to the Gospel of Saint John, he was also known as Didymus, the twin. And, we know one thing more about him. We know he was "not" a coward.

That little tidbit of information comes earlier in Saint John's Gospel in the story of the raising of Lazarus. When word came to Jesus that Lazarus was quite sick, a dilemma presented itself. Lazarus' home was in Bethany which was in Judea. The religious authorities in Judea were already threatening Jesus' life, and it was risky for Jesus and the twelve disciples to travel back there. Jesus, however, was determined to make the journey. We read in Saint John's account of this story that it was, in fact, Thomas who spoke up and said to his fellow disciples, "Let us also go, that we may die with Him." Perhaps history has maligned Thomas with the label of "coward" or "doubting".....but he definitely was NOT halfhearted in his commitment to Christ.

PERHAPS IT WAS HIS BRUTAL HONESTY THAT HAS TARNISHED THOMAS' REPUTATION. If we look at the account and follow the dialogue that transpired at the Last Supper, we see where Jesus is speaking some of the most beautiful words ever recorded. "Let not your heart be troubled," He says to the twelve. "Believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also. And you know the way where I am going."

We are told in this passage that is read on the second Sunday following Pascha, the Sunday of Thomas (April 26th), that it was Thomas who spoke up and said to Jesus, "Lord, we do not know where You are going, how do we know the way?" We see by these words that Thomas was "not" uncommitted. Rather, he was simply intellectually honest. He knew that many people have been misled by false religious teachers, and so he was determined that he would not make the mistake himself.....which led him to say, "Lord, we do not know where You are going, how do we know the way?"

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So it is no wonder that when the other disciples told Thomas that they had seen the risen Lord, Thomas blurted out, "Unless I shall see in His hands the imprint of the nails, and put my finger into the place of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe." Thomas was not being difficult. He was simply being consistent with his own character. He was a cautious man, a man of integrity, a man who did not plunge in without all the facts. He was a man, however, who when he did plunge in, gave his all.

It was a high and holy moment when Christ did appear to Thomas. And Jesus said to him, "Put your finger here, and look at My hands; then reach out your hand and put it in My side. Stop your doubting and believe." We can imagine Thomas kneeling in the face of undeniable evidence and declaring with a strong and solemn voice, "My Lord and my God!" We are given an exciting ending to a gripping story. Why? Well, because the story of Thomas is a story about "you and me". It concerns that moment of decision that confronts each of us...the question, is Christ truly Who he says He is or not?

LET'S ADMIT, FIRST OF ALL, THAT THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS "ABSOLUTE" PROOF OF THE REALITY OF THE GOSPEL. Many people would like to have such proof, but unfortunately, it does not exist. Our relationship with Christ is a matter of faith.....not absolute scientific knowledge.

Let's suppose you have one of the Near Death Experiences. I think most, if not all of us, have heard about such things, haven't we? Let's suppose that during the course of a serious operation, your heart quits beating...you feel your spirit leaving your body and hovering above the operating room.....you hear the doctor say, "He's gone." You see a bright light and a long tunnel, and hear the voices of loved ones, and you see Jesus in all His glory....but wait, it starts to fade. And the next thing you know the doctor is resuscitating you, and you are awake and you're alive and you say I will never fear death again because I know there is life on the other side...I've been there....I've seen it for myself. Well, soon afterward, as you share your experience with others, and most likely there is going to be someone who will say, "Oh that was just a chemical reaction of the brain, or it was a defense mechanism, or that it was just a dream, no matter how realistic it may have felt." It makes no difference that "they" have no more proof than you, but they will try to convince you that what you experienced was not real.

Or, suppose you have made a miraculous recovery from cancer. The doctors had sewn you up and sent you home and said there's nothing more we can do for you. Six weeks....maybe six months at the outside, but don't make any long-term plans. But your friends began to pray for you....and by the way, there are scientific studies that indicate that prayer can make a difference...your friends begin to pray for you, your spouse begins to pray for you, people at church begin to pray for you, and six months later you return to the doctor's office and there's no sign of the cancer. The doctor shakes his head and says, "some times this happens. We know that a certain number of cancer patients are going to experience spontaneous remission, but we don't know why." In your own mind and heart, YOU know why....but proof? No, there is none that will convince a skeptical scientific community. There is no such thing as absolute evidence of the existence of God. And if you require such evidence, you will be disappointed.....because proof is provided to us through our FAITH. Every serious believer confronts this truth sooner or later. Faith in Christ is NOT a given. FAITH IN CHRIST IS A CHOICE. That's the second thing we need to see...that faith IS a choice.

In our hearts many of us cry out with Thomas, "Unless I shall see in His hands the imprint of the nails, and put my finger into the place of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe." But sooner or later, we are confronted with the fact that we will never experience such direct confirmation. And we are left with a choice...is this

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faith real OR isn't it? And that is the most important choice we will ever make. DO WE BELIEVE OR NOT?

Finally, the power of choice is the most powerful gift God has given us. Think of all the people who have fouled up their lives because of poor choices. In a seminar some time ago, a speaker and successful philosopher asks the question, "How big will a tree grow?" He said that the correct answer is that a tree will grow to be as big as it can. It will put down as many roots as it can; it will grow as many branches as it can; it will put out as many leaves as it can; and it will produce as much fruit as it possibly can. In fact, everything in nature grows to its maximum potential. Everything that is, except for people. Why? Because only people have the ability to choose. And, sadly, they can choose to be less than they have the ability to be. However, there is great news in this powerful truth. If people have the ability to choose to be less than they can be, they also have the ability to choose to be all they can be. Everything begins with a choice. And the choice must be ours, because someone else's choice imposed onto us will result in a life half-hearted, half-done, and half committed.

Most of us came to the Orthodox Christian Faith because we were born into the Faith....our parents were already Orthodox Christians. But sooner or later, in order to claim for ourselves a mature faith...a faith that will reassure us in times of crisis...a faith that will motivate us to be all we are capable of becoming...a faith that will allow us to lay down our lives for others....we must make the choice for ourselves. Is this Gospel true or not? If we could test it in the laboratory or prove it with our math tables, no decision would be necessary. But that is not the privilege that God has given us. God has asked us to stake our lives on that which we cannot hold in our hands....on that which we cannot see with our eyes. Remember how the story of Thomas ends in this Gospel Reading read on this day. Jesus said to him, "Because you have seen Me, have you believed? For I tell you....Blessed are they who did not see, and yet believed."

Jesus is talking about us. He's calling us blessed. And He's right. WHEN WE MAKE OUR CHOICE FOR CHRIST, WE ARE BLESSED. And having made that choice, we are then able to put our priorities in order. We are able to face life with a quiet confidence that is "not" shaken by life's storms. We are able to make other hard decisions with the knowledge that however they come out, they will turn out all right. Certainly, we may never have the absolute knowledge that Thomas had, but we will have something more precious: we will have a mature faith that grows as it is tested under fire in the laboratory of life. It will not be easy, but it will be real.

A college student, who was home from school, came to his priest for counseling. As he sat down in the priest's office, he said, "I have lost my faith." The priest said, "That's good!" The student answered, "Father, obviously you weren't listening. I said I have discovered things at the university that have taken away my faith." And the priest said, "I was listening.....I heard you. And now I say to you that if your faith can be lost that easily, it was not the right kind of faith you were practicing. So now you can replace it with real faith."

And in a way, that priest was right. There is no absolute proof in this world of the reality of the Gospel. Mature faith in Christ is a choice....the most important choice we will ever make. But it must begin with FAITH....and once we make that choice, all the rest of life falls in place because we have placed our priorities and life in proper order and perspective. CHRIST IS RISEN!! TRULY HE IS RISEN!!

+ A M E N



Parish Council President...

President's Report *By James Lakerdas*

“CHRISTOS ANESTI”

I wish to thank, the Reverend Clergy, the members of the Parish Council, Chanters, the Choir, our Sunday school staff, Philoptochos, Volunteers, and all the participants in all the Worship Services and special events of Great Lent and Holy Week. Everyone had an important offering of love for our Assumption Community.

During this time of year we reflect on giving. We witness God giving us his only Son. We also reflect on what we have given, and whether it is enough. Recently I was contacted by a member of our community who asked, “How can I give money to the Church, when I have so many other financial responsibilities?”

I explained to him that I was not the person you should ask. Giving I said is something that you must feel and only you can say what feels right. The question I can answer is why does God want you to give? God doesn't want us to give if we are going to get in financial trouble. God certainly doesn't want us to be greedy or foolish with our money either. Will He love us more if we give more? Will He love us less if we don't? I don't think so.

So, why does God want us to give; because He wants us to be *giving people*. He wants us to be like Him. He gave us everything; He gave us his only son! People that are giving are better people in the long run. They make better husbands, wives, teachers, waiters, and parents. And suddenly, they become more successful and blessed. You don't just give money when you give to your Church! You give part of yourself to God. And we should say, “God, I want to be like You, I want to give something back. You gave us everything; I am giving a little back”.

Here at Assumption, we don't stress strict Tithing, or set a specific pledge amount. Instead we opt and entrust our stewards with their individual sense of fair share. What feels right. The ultimate giving is up to us. Jesus' passion and death is GOD'S proof of His love for us. What He calls on us to do in return is to be His people, Giving People, faithful and responsible in the continuation of His Church. It is a burden we all choose to accept with our giving of our time, talent and treasury.

May this Easter Season, and every season find us as Giving People. We will surely be blessed in the end. Have a Blessed Easter.



Save the Date

May 31 - Liturgy in the Park

Ty Warner Park, Westmont

Philoptochos...

Current Events *By Nancy Pilafas*

Budget Approved

The budget for the year 2009 was approved by the members at the meeting held on Thursday, March 19th. Sophia Vlahos, who prepared the budget, went over each section, allowing for questions and discussion. In attendance at this meeting was Fr. Timothy, James Lakerdas, President of our Parish council, and Peggy Vranas who is on the National Philoptochos Board. Peggy gave us an overview of items discussed at her last board meeting in New York. All-in-all, it was an extremely informative meeting.

Chapter Elections

On Thursday, May 21st, there will be a general meeting at 11:00 am. after Divine Liturgy for Sts. Constantine and Helen. At this meeting we will hold election of officers, so your attendance is very important. If you haven't done so, please pay your dues so you can participate in the election process. We will enjoy refreshments and fellowship after the meeting.

June Outing

Ladies and gentlemen: Get ready for an enjoyable afternoon this June 3rd. We will be going to Drury Lane for lunch and then stay to see Pump Boys and Dinettes. Look for fliers in the Narthex of the church or in Plato Hall so you can make your reservations and choose your lunch entree. In the past this outing has always proved to be a fun afternoon so mark your calendars and join us on the 3rd of June.

The Philoptochos Officers and Board wish you and your families a Blessed Pascha. May you be showered with good health and all the Lord's blessings. We truly appreciate your constant help and support. KALO PASCHA!!



Save the Dates

August 14 - Panagia Vespers and reception

August 15 - Divine Liturgy and fellowship

Youth Ministry...

Christ is Risen! Truly He is Risen! ***By Father Athanasios Pieri***

The Resurrection of Christ is the leading moment of the mystery of the Divine economy that every year gives us the opportunity to take a step deeper and to slowly, slowly participate within this mystery. Inside the harmonious message of the Resurrection of Christ we have to remember that in the Holy Scriptures and according to our Holy Tradition Christ is described as the ‘first born’ (prototokos.) Also, in one of the resurrection hymns He is described as the “first born who resurrected from death.”

As we know the word “prototokos” means the first of the children of the family and this name is given to Christ in many ways. Saint Paul said that the Son and Word of God became “first born before the Creation” “first born of many brothers and sisters” and “first born of the dead.”

Saint John of Damascus who analyzed the writings of Saint Paul said that the Son and Word of God became the “first born of every creation” as the only begotten who was born from God the Father before the ages of ages, but the creation was created later and inside the time. For that reason Christ is called first born (prototokos) but we can not call Him first creation (protoktistos) because He is not created but He is from the same substance with His Father. He is characterized first born among many brothers and sisters because with His Incarnation He receives flesh like ours, when He was born as the only begotten Son from His mother, so we became His brothers and sisters. The difference is that Christ according to His nature is the Son of God but we are sons of God according to the Grace of God. That was the reason that Christ said to His disciples “I will go to my Father and your Father.”

In this perspective Christ is the first born of the dead because He resurrected first Himself as God and then He gave resurrection as a gift to us. Saint Paul said “that He is the head of the body of the church because He is the beginning and first born of the dead, so He became in everything first.” Christ is the head of the Church because He is the Resurrected Christ. The hierarchs are in type and place the Head of the Church without exceeding Christ.

The Resurrection of Christ predicts our resurrection at the right moment when He will come to judge the living and the dead. Let us remember that our bigger brother has resurrected, that also means that we are going to be resurrected. The picture of the swimmer is very characteristic as first the head of the swimmer is coming and then followed by the body. The same will happen to us as we are members of the Church that first Christ was resurrected who is the head and then we are going to follow Him.

The Resurrected Christ that we are ready once again to celebrate is the first born of the dead who resurrected and conquered death from the sins. Let us try to support ourselves in Him and with His strength we will be able to resurrect ourselves and conquer death. Our goal as Christians is to live always as brothers of Christ, so our first brother will help us to participate in our victory and in His victory and then we will gain the hope, light and the life.

Christ is Risen, Truly He is Risen!

Sunday School...

Sunday School Update *By Christina Arvanites, Sunday School Director*

The St. John Chrysostom Oratorical Festival is an opportunity for students grades 7th-12th to write and talk about their faith while representing their parish. This year our parish is being represented by two seniors. Dina Loumakis and Cathy Kaczmarczyk. We thank them for taking the time out of their busy schedules to submit an entry and represent our Beloved Parish. The Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Chicago Festival is scheduled to take place on Saturday, April 25, 2009 . We wish them luck, but they are already winners in our eyes!

Teenagers and the Temple *By Constandina Loumakis*

Day by day, teenagers are faced with common problems: how to look, how to dress, and how to impress. The media offers them many solutions; whether it may be makeup, surgery, or certain clothing, our society buys into whatever the TV and the magazines say. People are trying to make themselves into the “perfect” person, but they do not realize that we are perfect the way God created us. St. Paul wrote, “For God’s temple is holy and that temple you are.” This means that we should not resort to cosmetic surgery or certain designer clothing to make us feel beautiful because this is directly contrasting the will of God.

The media always portrays beautiful people. The women are always slim and tall, with a flawless face and the males muscular and tall. This gives a message to younger children and teens who are still trying to figure out who they are and what they want to be. Suddenly, little girls want to be that model in the commercial and the little boys want to be the “macho man” to attract all the model women. This poses a problem as the teenagers realize that not everyone can be built like that. They would need some help, so they start to ponder of the ways that would make them like that. The Book of Genesis says that we are made in the image of God, which means that we have a little bit of God in us. We are created the way God wanted us to be created and we shouldn’t try to change it. We cannot defile God’s creation, or His “temple.”

People use clothing to make themselves seem like they are something they’re not. Teenage girls strive to have the top-notch designer purse, jeans, or dress. What would that get them? Naturally, endless envious stares and compliments from people, but also a false sense of self. We don’t need designer goods to make us feel better about ourselves, it should come from within.

At one point, the book of Genesis tells us that we are made in the likeness of God’s image. This means that we all encompass God’s own self in us. Why then do we place so much attention on the media and on looking “perfect?” God didn’t send his Son on Earth with a predisposition to those who looked prettier or had the best and most expensive clothing. We are God’s temple, and we shouldn’t defile it with petty things like designer brands or cosmetic surgery. For it was said in the Bible, “Do you not know that you are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit dwells in you?”

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Η σημασία της θυσίας του Χριστού

Ο Κύριος Ιησούς και Θεός μας χωρίς να φταιει σε τίποτε ραπίστηκε, ώστε οι αμαρτωλοί που θα τον μιμηθούν, όχι μόνον να λάβουν άφεση των αμαρτιών τους, αλλά και να γίνουν συγκοινωνοί στη θεότητά του με την υπακοή τους. Εκείνος ήταν Θεός κι έγινε για μας άνθρωπος. Ραπίστηκε, φτύστηκε και σταυρώθηκε, και με όσα έπαθε ο απαθής κατά τη θεότητα είναι σαν να μας διδάσκει και να λει στον καθένα μας:

«Αν θέλεις, άνθρωπε, να γίνεις Θεός, να κερδίσεις την αιώνια ζωή και να ζήσεις μαζί μου, πράγμα που ο προπάτοράς σου, επειδή το επεδίωξε με κακό τρόπο, δεν το πέτυχε, ταπεινώσου, καθώς ταπεινώθηκα κι εγώ για σένα— απόφυγε την αλαζονεία και την υπερηφάνεια του δαιμονικού φρονήματος, δέξου ραπίσματα, φτυσίματα, κολαφίσματα, υπομείνε τα μέχρι θανάτου και μην ντραπείς.

Αν όμως εσύ ντραπείς να πάθεις κάτι χάρη των εντολών μου, καθώς εγώ ο Θεός έπαθα για σένα, θα θεωρήσω κι εγώ ντροπή μου το να είσαι μαζί μου κατά την ένδοξη έλευσή μου και θα πω στους αγγέλους μου:

Αυτός κατά την ταπεινώσή μου ντράπηκε να με ομολογήσει και δεν καταδέχθηκε να εγκαταλείψει τον κόσμο και να γίνει όμοιός μου. Τώρα λοιπόν που απογυμνώθηκε από τη φθαρτή δόξα του Πατέρα μου, θεωρώ ντροπή μου ακόμη και να τον βλέπω. Πετάξτε τον λοιπόν έξω: «αρθήτω ο ασεβής, ίνα μη ίδη την δόξαν Κυρίου» (Ησ. 26:10) (διώξτε τον ασεβή για να μη δει τη δόξα του Κυρίου).

Φριξέτε, άνθρωποι, και τρομάξετε, και υπομείνετε με χαρά τις ύβρεις που ο Θεός υπέμεινε για τη σωτηρία μας... Ο Θεός ραπίζεται από έναν τιποτένιο δούλο... και εσύ δεν καταδέχεσαι να το πάθεις αυτό από τον ομοιοπαθή σου άνθρωπο; Ντρέπεσαι να γίνεις μιμητής του Θεού, και πώς θα συμβασιλεύσεις μ' αυτόν και θα συνδοξασθείς στη βασιλεία των ουρανών, αν δεν υπομείνεις τον αδελφό σου; Αν και 'κείνος δεν καταδεχόταν να γίνει άνθρωπος για σένα και σ' άφηνε να κείτεσαι μέχρι τώρα στην πτώση της παραβάσεως, δεν θα βρισκόσουν τώρα στον πυθμένα του Άδη, άθλιε, με τους άπιστους και τους ασεβείς;

Αλλά τι θα πούμε προς αυτούς που δήθεν εγκατέλειψαν τα πάντα κι έγιναν φτωχοί για την βασιλεία των ουρανών; Αδελφέ, φτώχυνες και μιμήθηκες το Δεσπότη Χριστό και Θεό σου. Βλέπεις λοιπόν ότι τώρα ζει και συναναστρέφεται μαζί σου, αυτός που βρίσκεται υπεράνω όλων των ουρανών. Να, βαδίζετε τώρα οι δυο μαζί— κάποιος σας συναντάει στο δρόμο της ζωής, δίνει ράπισμα στον Δεσπότη σου, δίνει και σε σένα. Ο Δεσπότης δεν αντιλέγει και συ αντεπιτίθεσαι; «Ναι», λει, γιατί είπε σε εκείνον που τον ράπισε: «ει κακώς ελάλησα, μαρτύρησον περί του κακού— ει δε καλώς, τι με δέρεις;» (Ιω. 18,23). (Αν είπα κάτι κακό, πες ποιο ήταν— αν όμως μίλησα σωστά, γιατί με χτυπάς;)

Αυτό όμως δεν το είπε αντιμιλώντας, όπως φαντάστηκες, αλλά επειδή εκείνος «αμαρτίαν ουκ εποίησεν, ουδέ ευρέθη δόλος εν τω στόματι αυτού» (δεν έκανε αμαρτία, ούτε βρέθηκε δόλος στο στόμα του).

Και για να μη νομισθεί, ότι, επειδή τάχα αμάρτησε, δίκαια τον χτύπησε ο δούλος λέγοντάς του: «ούτως αποκρίνει τω αρχιερεί;» (Ιω. 18,22)— (έτσι αποκρίνεσαι στον αρχιερέα;), για να αποδείξει λοιπόν ανεύθυνο τον εαυτό του, είπε τον παραπάνω λόγο. Δεν είμαστε όμως όμοιοί του εμείς οι υπεύθυνοι για πολλές αμαρτίες.

Έπειτα, μολοντί υπέμεινε πολύ χειρότερα απ' αυτό, δεν μίλησε καθόλου, αλλά μάλλον προσευχήθηκε για τους σταυρωτές Του.

Εκείνος, αν και τον περιέπαιζαν, δεν αγανακτούσε, και συ γογγύζεις;

Εκείνος ανέχεται φτυσίματα, κολαφίσματα και φραγγελώσεις, και σε δεν ανέχεσαι ούτε ένα σκληρό λόγο;

Εκείνος δέχεται σταυρό και την οδύνη των καρφιών κι ατιμωτικό θάνατο, και συ δεν καταδέχεσαι να εκτελέσεις τα ταπεινά διακονήματα;

Πώς λοιπόν θα γίνεις συγκοινωνός στη δόξα, αφού δεν καταδέχεσαι να γίνεις συγκοινωνός στον ατιμωτικό του θάνατο; Μάταια στ' αλήθεια εγκατέλειψες τον πλούτο, αφού δεν δέχθηκες να σηκώσεις τον σταυρό, δηλ. να υπομείνεις πρόθυμα την επίθεση όλων των πειρασμών — έτσι απόμεινες μόνος στον δρόμο της ζωής και χωρίστηκες δυστυχώς από τον γλυκύτατο Δεσπότη και Θεό σου!

Γράφει: ο Άγιος Συμεών ο Νέος ο Θεολόγος



Ευχή του Αγίου Ιωάννου του Χρυσοστόμου

«Η τράπεζα γέμει, τρυφήσατε πάντες.
Ο μόσχος πολύς, μηδεὶς ἐξέλθει πεινῶν.
Πάντες απολαύσατε του συμποσίου της πίστεως.
Πάντες απολαύσατε του πλούτου της χρηστότητος.
Μηδεὶς θρηνεῖτω πενίαν, εφάνη γὰρ ἡ κοινὴ βασιλεία.
Μηδεὶς φοβείσθω θάνατον, ηλευθέρωσε γὰρ ἡμᾶς του Σωτήρος ο θάνατος.
Που σου θάνατε το κέντρον;
Που σου Ἄδη το νίκος;
Ανέστη Χριστός, καὶ ζωὴ πολιτεύεται
Ανέστη Χριστός, καὶ χαίρουσιν Ἄγγελοι.
Χριστός γὰρ ἐγερθεὶς εκ νεκρῶν, ἀπαρχὴ των κεκοιμημένων ἐγένετο...

Μήνυμα

Τις αμελείς και ράθυμες ψυχές - ἔλεγε ἡ μακάρια Συγκλητική - κι εκείνες πού ἀπό νωθρότητα δεν καταφέρνουν να προκόψουν στην ἀρετή, καθὼς και ὅσες κυριεύονται εύκολα ἀπό την ἀπόγνωση, πρέπει νά τις ενθαρρύνουμε. "Ἄν μάλιστα παρουσιάσουν ἀκόμα κι ἓνα μικρὸ καλὸ, να το θαυμάζουμε και νά το μεγαλοποιούμε. Ἄπεναντίας, και τα πιο σοβαρά και μεγάλα σφάλματά τους, νά τα χαρακτηρίζουμε μπροστά τους σαν πολὺ μικρά και ἀσήμαντα. Γιατί ο διάβολος, πού θέλει ὅλα νά τα διαστρέφει για νά μας κολάσει, προσπαθεῖ νά κρύβει ἀπό τούς αγωνιστές και τούς επιμελείς στην ἀσκηση τις ἀμαρτίες τους, κάνουντάς τους νά τις ξεχνούν, για νά τούς ρίξει ἔτσι στην υπερηφάνεια. Ἐνῶ, ἀντίθετα, στις ἀρχαίριες και ἀστερέωτες ψυχές παρουσιάζει ἐξογκωμένα τα ἀμαρτήματά τους, για νά τις ρίξει σε ἀπελπισία

Ο Συμβολισμός του κεριού στην Εκκλησία

Ὅλα τα πράγματα που βρίσκονται ἐντὸς του Ναοῦ ἔχουν και το συμβολισμό τους. Ἐίναι χαρακτηριστικά τα λόγια του Αγίου Γρηγορίου του Παλαμά: «Πάσα τελετὴ και παν ἐπὶ μέρους στοιχείον αὐτῆς, και το πλέον ἐπι φαινομενικῶς μικρὸν και ἀσήμαντον εἶναι σύμβολον και ἐγκρύπτει την υπέρ λόγον ἀλήθειαν, την ὁποίαν συμβολίζει, και ὡς εκ τούτου ἔχει δύναμιν και λόγους και σημασίαν».

Ἐνα τέτοιο σύμβολο που λέγει ο Ἅγιος Πατὴρ εἶναι και το κερὶ ἡ λαμπάδα.

Οι πρώτοι χριστιανοὶ χρησιμοποιούσαν το κερὶ ὡς μέσο φωτισμοῦ στις συνάξεις τους. Ὅταν τον 4ο αἰῶνα ο Μ. Κωνσταντῖνος παύει τούς διωγμούς ἐναντίον των χριστιανῶν, ἔχομε και την ἀνέγερση Ναῶν ὅπου ἡ Εκκλησία για να διασώσει ἓνα τμήμα ἀπό την ὑπαρξή της ἐντάσσει στη λατρεία το κερὶ στο ὁποῖο ἀποδίδει τούς ἐξῆς συμβολισμούς:

α) Το προσφερόμενο κερὶ μας υπενθυμίζει την ἐσωτερική μας μεταμόρφωση την ὁποία πρέπει να ἐπιδιώκομε. β) Το ἀνάμμα του κεριού μας παρακινεῖ να ζητήσωμε ἀπό τον Θεο τη Χαρὴ του Αγίου Πνεύματος, και γ) Ἡ φλόγα του κεριού μας υπενθυμίζει ὅτι πρέπει να γίνομε φλογεροὶ ποιητές της πίστεώς μας, της ἀγάπης, της εἰρήνης και της ἀνεξικακίας.

Το κερὶ ὁμως το συναντάμε και σε ὅλα τα μυστήρια της Εκκλησίας και κάθε φορά με διαφορετικό συμβολισμό.

Στην Θ. Ευχαριστία, συμβολίζει το φως του Χριστοῦ που δια του Ευαγγελίου λάμπει στις ψυχές μας.

Στο Ἅγιο Βαπτισμα, ἔχομε την ἀναμμένη λαμπάδα που συμβολίζει ὅτι το νεοφώτιστο πρέπει να βλέπει τα καλά ἔργα και να δοξάζει τον Θεο. «Ὅτω λαμπάτω το φως υμῶν ἐμπροσθεν των ἀνθρώπων, ὅπως ἴδωσιν υμῶν τα καλά ἔργα και δοξάσουσιν τον πατέρα υμῶν τον ἐν τοις ουρανοῖς».

Στο Μυστήριον του Γάμου, το ἀνάμμα των λευκῶν λαμπάδων συμβολίζει την ἀγνότητα των ψυχῶν των νεονύμφων.

Ἐπίσης το κερὶ το συναντάμε και στα μνημόσυνα, το ὁποῖο συμβολίζει την παράκλησή μας υπέρ των κεκοιμημένων. Να τούς ἀναπαύει ο Κύριος ἐν τόπω φωτεινῶ.

Ἀπ' ὅλα αὐτά καταλαβαίνομε ὅτι το ἀνάμμα του κεριού δεν εἶναι ἀπλῶς μια τυπική, ἀλλὰ μια σπουδαία πράξη στην ὁποία πρέπει να δώσωμε το ενδιαφέρον που της ἀξίζει.

Stewardship...

The Total Steward Borrowed from Greek Orthodox Archdiocese

"All things come from you, and your own have we given you." (1 Chronicles 29:14) These words sound so familiar to us Orthodox Christians who hear at the anaphora of every Liturgy: "Your own gifts, from Your own, we offer to You with all our being and for all our blessings."

So often we Christians reflect the values of society. If materialism is in, driving the finest car, living in the swankiest house, sending your children to the prici-est school, then we embrace materialism. If living together before marriage is generally acceptable in society, then we live together before marriage. If moral rela-tivism is the ethic of the time, then we live accordingly. We too easily reflect the values of the society around us.

The total Steward begins not with society's values but with Jesus Christ. Out of that relationship he lives and acts toward God, self, and others. What is a total Steward? David's words, in I Chronicles, are a guide to some answers. "All things come from you, and your own have we given you."

In the first place, a total Steward affirms that God owns all things. Psalm 24 reflects this great truth: "The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof; the world and they that dwell therein." God doesn't have to be helped, supported, or subsidized. He made and owns all things, and that includes your life and mine. A Christian Steward simply acknowledges what is already true.

A total Steward acknowledges his accountability to God. In Psalm 8 and in other places we are told that God gives us dominion over the earth. However, we are man-agers, not owners. A Steward is entrusted to manage what belongs, to the owner. With that trust comes accountability.

Many parables of Jesus deal with trust and accountability. The parable of the talents reminds us that however little or however much we have, we are accountable for its use, all of it. We must give a final answer to God. Our auditing day is coming and the report must be filed. Reckoning is on the books. The faithful Steward will not view this encounter with God with dread but with joy and peace as he thinks on the reward.

We are accountable not just for physical and financial resources; we are accountable for life itself and the experiences that come with it. We are responsible to God for what we let sorrow and suffering, happiness and joy, do to us and through us. The total Steward realizes and acts on his accountability because it matters in this life and in the life to come.

Finally, the total Steward accepts the challenge of responsibility in managing God's gifts. The total Steward will use his spiritual gifts for the sake of others. Each of us has differing gifts, but as Stewards we will seek to use our gifts for God's glory and the service of humanity. The good Steward will also share the gospel, remembering that Jesus said, "You shall be my witnesses." By word of mouth and the life he leads, the good Steward will say to others, "Jesus Christ is the most important priority in my life, and I want you to know him and love him as I do."

Equally as important, the good Steward will give his financial resources with compas-sion. He will give, invest and spend for the glory of God and out of gratitude. Brothers and sisters in Christ you are ei-ther controlled by God's desire for total Stewardship or by the world's materialistic selfish outlook. Dr. Martin Lloyd Jones says, "If a materialistic outlook is really, controlling us, we are godless, whatever we may say. Our Lord tells us that even worse than atheistic ma-terialism is a materialism that thinks it is godly. 'If the light that is in you be darkness, how great is the darkness' ... The man who thinks he is godly because he talks about God and says he be-lieves in God and goes to a place of wor-ship occasionally, but is really living for certain earthly things--how great is that man's darkness." What do you really live for? Where does Je-sus Christ, His Church and service for him fit into your concerns? Does he have your heart, your pocketbook? Don't trifle away your life and opportunity; give yourself and all of life completely to Him, and take the high road of faithful and total Stewardship.

Stewardship List March 2009...

MR JOHN ALEXANDER
MR & MRS ORESTIS ALEXOPOULOS
MR & MRS ERNEST ANALITIS
MRS CHRISTINE ANDREWS
MS CONSTANCE ANDREWS
MS DEMETRA ANDREWS
NICK & TAMISHA ANGELACOS
MRS NICOLETTA ANOS
MRS GEORGIA APOSTOL
MRS FRIEDA ARAVOSIS
MS CAROL ARGYRAKIS
MR & MRS GEORGE ARVANITES
FATHER TIMOTHY G. BAKAKOS
DR & MRS MICHAEL BAKALIS
MRS TESS BAZIOTES
MR MATTHEW BECKER
MR & MRS JOHN BELTRAMO
MR & MRS GEORGE BERBAS
MRS MARY BETINIS
MR & MRS DONALD BIANUCCI
BOB & HELEN BIGGERS
MR & MRS DONALD BLANGIN
MS KATHERINE BLANGIN
MR & MRS JAMES BOARDEN
MRS GARIFALIA BOLOS
MR & MRS JAMES BOUNARDJ
MR & MRS MICHAEL BOZNOS
MR & MRS JAMES BUONINCONTRO
MR AND MRS JOHN CALAMOS
MR DAN CARAS
MRS GEORGJEAN CARAS
MRS CATHERINE CATCHFORES
MR & MRS GEORGE CEPEK
MR & MRS GEORGE CHERIMPES
DR JOHN CHIAKULAS
DR & MRS NICHOLAS CHIPAIN
MR CHRIS CHULOS & MRS TANJA CHULOS-
SAARINEN
MR & MRS PATRICK CIBULA
MR & MRS GEORGE COLLIAS
MR & MRS ANDREW COLLIS
MR THOMAS COLLIS
MR & MRS JAMES COLUMBUS
MRS EMILY COTSIRILOS
MRS CONNIE COUSSIS
MRS JULIA CUTSUVITIS
MR PAUL CUTSUVITIS
MR JOHN DADES
MR & MRS JOHN DAKURAS

MS ANASTASIA DAMOLARIS
MS MARTHA DAMOLARIS
MR & MRS STEVE DAMOLARIS
JAMES & GEORGIA DARRAS
MR TOM DARRUS
MRS EMILY DEAM
MR & MRS BILL DEMAKIS
MRS APHRODITE DEMEUR
MR & MRS GEORGE DEMITROPOULOS
MR & MRS JOHN DEMITROPOULOS
MR & MRS JIM DEMOS
MR & MRS THOMAS DEMOS
MRS ANN DERSIS
MR GEORGE DERSIS
MR & MRS EMMANUEL DIMITRAKOPOULOS
MS KATHERINE DOUKAS
MR & MRS JOHN ELLIS
MR MICHAEL EUGENIDES
MS CATHERINE FERGUSON
MR & MRS PANTAZIS FILIS
MR & MRS HAROLD FITZSIMMONS
MR LEE FORRES
MRS MARY FOTOPOULOS
MR & MRS RICHARD FRITZ
MR & MRS GEORGE GALANOPOULOS
MR & MRS CHRISTOPHER GANAS
MR & MRS CHRISTOPHER GANAS
MRS BESSIE GANGAS
MR PETER GANIOS
MRS SHIRLEY GATZIOLIS
MS CHRISTINE GEANON
MR & MRS WILLIAM GEIB
MRS EFFIE GEKAS
NIKI GEORGACAKIS & ELAINE GEORGE
MR & MRS JAMES GEORGALAS
MR & MRS NICK GEORGIAFENTIS

MRS IRENE GERAKARIS
MR & MRS PETER GIANAKOPOULOS
MRS TOULA GIANAKOPOULOS
MRS CHRISTINE GIANNOULIS
DR & MRS CONSTANTINE GODELLAS
MRS OLGA MEHALOS GOLDEN
MRS GEORGIA GOROS
MR LEO GOROS
MR & MRS DOUGLAS GREEN
MR JOHN GRITSONIS
MRS HELEN GROM
MR JAMES HATZIS

Stewardship List March 2009..

MR & MRS MARIO HOLGUIN
MR & MRS JANUSZ KACZMARCZYK
MR ANDREW KANEL
MRS CHRISTINE KANEL
MR JAMES A. KANEL
MR & MRS JAMES KAPPOS
MRS CATHERINE KARABAS
MISS SOPHIE KARAGIANNIS
MRS DEMETRA KARAHALIOS
MR & MRS ANTHONY KARAS
MR LAMBROS KARKAZIS
MR & MRS THOMAS KARONIS
MR & MRS ANDREW KAROS
MR & MRS ERNEST KARRAS
MRS MIA KASIMOS
MRS ANTOINETTE KASKAS
MR & MRS CHRIST KATES
MRS BESS KATSIKAS (GEROULIS)
MR & MRS LOUIS KAZAGLIS
MRS CONNIE KEENAN
DR NICHOLAS KINNAS
MRS ANGELINE KIOUSIS
MR & MRS SPYROS KOKOLIS
MR & MRS GEORGE KOLETTIS
MS FAY KOLLIAS
MRS ALICE KOPAN
MR GEORGE KOSIONIS & MS JAN AUGUSTINE
MR & MRS THOMAS KOSTAS
MS NATALIE KOTSOVETIS
MS KATHERINE KOTT
MR & MRS WALTER KOTT
MR & MRS GUST KOUIMELIS
MRS HELEN PAPAGEORGE KOUIMELIS
MR & MS DEMETRIOS KOULOURIS
MISS SOPHIE KOUTSELAS
MRS GEORGIA KOUVELIS
MR & MRS PETER KOUVELIS
MR & MRS MATTHEW KOZIL
MS EUGENIA KRIBALES
MRS HELEN KRILLIES
MS CALLIOPE KUTRUBIS
MRS GEORGIA KYRIAZES
MR & MRS CHRIS LAGEOTAKES
MRS KYRIAKI LAGON
MRS DEMETRA LAKERDAS
MR JAMES LAKERDAS
MRS ANASTASIA LAMBESIS
MISS EVELYN LAMBROU
MR & MS LOUIE LAMBROU

MR & MRS JAMES LEAKAKOS
MR & MRS NICK LEKOUSIS
MISS BETTY LEONTIOS
MISS EUGENIA LEONTIOS
MRS DENA LEVADITIS
MR & MRS WILLIAM LIMPARI
DR JANICE LIMPERIS
MR & MRS NICHOLAS LINARDOS
MRS MARY CLARA LIVADITIS
MR & MRS ILIAS LOULOUSIS
MR DEAN MAGGOS
DR EVELYN MAGGOS
MR LOUIS MALEVITIS
MRS MARY MAMAIES
DEAN & LOUISE MAMALAKIS
MR GEORGE MANIATES
MRS HELEN MANIATES
MR & MRS GEORGE MANIATIS
MR & MRS THEODORE MANIATIS
DR & MRS CHAD MANSOUR
MR & MRS NICHOLAS MANSOUR
MR & MRS EMILE MANTZAKIDES
MR & MRS JOHN MAROUTSOS
MR & MRS THOMAS MASSOURAS
MS MICHELLE MAUTONE
MRS BESSIE MAVREAS
MRS HELEN MIHAIL
MR & MRS GEORGE MILLER
MR & MRS MARTIN MILOSOVIC
MR & MRS TIM NASH
MRS ALIKI NICHOLAS
MS PHYLLIS NICHOLAS
MR VINCENT NICHOLAS
MRS AMELIA NICHOLS
MRS MARIE NICHOLS
MRS HELEN NICOLOPULOS
MR GEORGE NISBETT
MR & MRS ROBERT NISBETT
MRS ANTONIA PAGAKIS
MR & MRS LARRY PALMISANO
MS SOFIA PALOUMPIS
MRS FREDA PANAGOS
MR & MRS PETER PANOS
DR & MRS JOHN PANTON
DR & MRS PETER PANTON
DR & MRS ROBERT PANTON
MR & MRS DIONYSIOS PAPAFOPOULOS
MR & MRS NICK PAPAFOPOULOS
MRS MARIA PAPAGIANNPOULOS

Stewardship List March 2009...

DR & MRS STEVEN PAPAGIANNOPOULOS
MRS GEORGIA PAPPADIMITRIOU
MISS ANASTASIA PAPPAS
MR GEORGE PAPPAS
MRS MARTHA PAPPAS
MR & MRS THEODORE PAPPAS
MISS VIVIAN PAPPAS
MRS ANGELA PARRY-PATERAKIS
MR GEORGE PARRY-PATERAKIS
MISS KATHERINE PATRINOS
MR & MRS ANDREW PENESIS
MRS DIMITRA PEPPAS
MRS MARY PETENES
MRS GEORGIA PETREE
MR AND MRS JAMES PETROPOUL
MRS ELIZABETH PHILLIPS
FATHER & PRESBYTERA ATHANASIOS PIERI
MRS RITA PIETRZYK
MS ANN PILAFAS
MISS NANCY PILAFAS
MRS HELEN PONTIKES
MRS BEATRICE POTAMIANOS
MR & MRS ANTHONY POTOGLOU
MRS JANE POULAKOS
MRS NIKI POULOS
PETER & JOY POULOS
MRS THERESA PRESVELOU
MRS MARY PREVAS
MR GEORGE PREVOLOS
MR & MRS ALEXANDER PSARRAS
MS GEORGIA PSICHOGIOS
MR & MRS GUS PSICHOGIOS
MS PAMELA PSYHOGIOS
MS KEKE RAFTELIAS
MS MARY RAFTELIAS
MR & MRS WILLIAM RANTIS
MRS HELEN RAPTIS
MR & MRS JAMES REGAS
MR & MRS RAYMOND RIHA, JR
MR AND MRS RAYMOND RIHA, SR
MR & MRS EDWARD RIZER
MR & MRS JEFFREY ROBERTS
MR AND MRS PETER ROMAS
MRS SOPHIE ROMAS
MRS IRENE ROMBAKIS
DR & MRS WILLIAM ROUMAN
MR & MRS KEN RUBENSTEIN
MR & MRS DEAN SARANTOS
MR & MRS HARRY SAUNDERS

MS MARIA SCHMIDT
MR & MRS NICK SCOURLETOS
MS TESSIE SELIMOS
MR & MRS KOSTA SKOULIKARIS
MRS POPE SKOULIKARIS
MR & MRS KOSTAS SKOULIKAS
MS IRENE SKUTERIS
MR & MRS SPIRO SKUTERIS
MRS ATHENA SOULIDES
MS TASOULA SOULIDES
MR & MRS HARRY SOUMAKIS
MR & MRS NICK SPYRIDAKOS
DR BASIL SPYROPOULOS
MR & MRS PETER SPYROPOULOS
DR STAVROULA SPYROPOULOS
MRS GEORGIA STAVROPOULOS
MISS JOANN STAVROPOULOS
MR & MRS PAUL STAVROPOULOS
MR & MRS JOHN STEC
MRS ROSE MARIE STEWART
MR & MRS DIMITRIOS STRAVOLEMAKOS
MR & MRS MATHIEU SUSSMAN
MR & MRS PETER SUTTERLIN
MR PETER ROBERT SUTTERLIN
MRS MARY T SZCZESNIAK
MRS SEVASTI TAGARIS
MR TAKOUDIS & MRS FOUSTALIERAKI
MISS ANASTASIA TEROVOLAS
MISS CRYSTELLA TEROVOLAS
MRS BESSIE THERMOS
DR & DR NICK THOMOPOULOS
MR & MRS CHRISTOPHER TORCHIA
MRS HELEN TOULIOS
MR & MRS PETER TRAGOS
MR JOHN TRAHANAS
MR & MRS GUS TRAKAS
MRS BESSIE TRIHAS
MR & MRS VASILIOS TSAGANOS
MR & MS JOHN G. TSIGOLIS
MRS BETTY TSIOLIS
MR JAMES TSIOLIS
MR & MRS DIMITRIOS TSIRIBAS
MRS KATHERINE TZOUMIS
MRS DENA VAGIAS
MRS ARITA VALESSARES
MRS MARY VARVEN
PAULINE VAVASIS
MR & MRS ROBERT VELASQUEZ
MR & MRS THOMAS VELIS

Stewardship List March 2009...

MRS STAMATA VERVENIOTIS
MR & MRS ALEX VICKAS
MR AND MRS JOHN VLAHOS
MRS MARIANTHE VLAHOS
MR & MRS PETER VLAHOS
MR & MRS ROMAN VOULGARAKIS
MR BILL VRANAS
MR JASON VRANAS
MRS PEGGY VRANAS
MS ALKISTIS WONAIS
MR & MRS JACK WOODS
MS MARY ELLEN WOODS
MRS MARIKA XINOS
MR & MRS CONSTANTINE YANNIAS
MR & MRS STEVE YANNIAS
MS TRACY YANNIAS
MRS FRANCES ZACK



Sunday School...

Assumption Entries for the Oratorical Festival

Continued from page 7

The Spirit of Truth
By: Cathy Kaczmarczyk

*The Spirit of Truth
Guides Souls through
The moment of Life,
The Day of Judgement*

*Between good and evil,
Between right and wrong,
Between light and dark
He is always there*

*The Spirit of Truth,
The Son of Mary
Guides and Protects
He is Our Holy Father*



Submit articles to the Church Office or to Tina Sarantos at t.sarantos@sbcglobal.net or (708) 660-0154.

Parish Registry...

March and April 2009

BAPTISMS

- Son of, Stacy and James Buonincontro, taking the name *Matthew James*
Godparent – Tess Selimos
- Daughter of, George and Diane Berbas, taking the name *Joanna*
Godparent – Demetrios Logothetis
- Daughter of, Kelly (Kaliopé) and Constantino Xinos, taking the name *Elefpheria*
Godparent – Anesti Derakis

40 DAY BLESSINGS

- Daughter of Jodi and Peter Gianakopoulos
- Daughter of Bob and Helen Bigger
- Son of Penny and Tom Gialamas

FALLEN ASLEEP IN THE LORD

+ Gus P. Psychogios
+ Peter Mestousis

+ Jane J. Gagomiros
+ Demetrios M. Kouimelis

MEMORIALS

9 Days

Jane Gogomiros

40 Days

Andrew Andrews
Nicholas Chelemengos
Jennie Flesor

Gus P. Psychogios
Peter Mestousis
John Demepoukas
Jane Gagomiros

6 Months

Jenny (Ionna) Berbas
Stanley (Stellanos) Sutryk
Nicholas Alexander
Stella Christopoulos

1 Year

5 Years

Maria Dallas

7 Years

Peter Berbas

8 Years

Marie Rodel

46 Years

Eugenia Pappas



SECOND ISSUE
2009

Pascha
April 19, 2009

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