

***Byzantine Ukrainian Catholic Parishes of St. George, Prince Albert,
All Saints, Nipawin, and Holy Spirit, Melfort***

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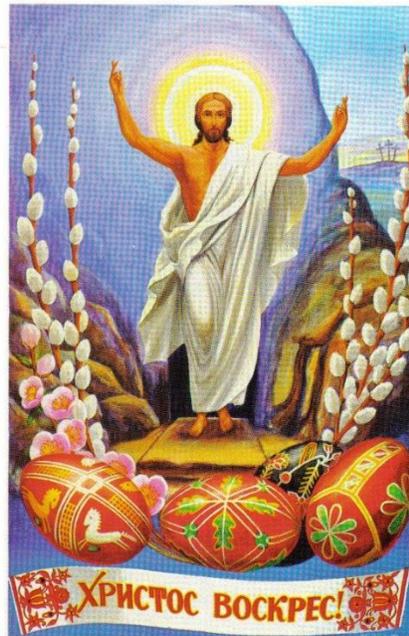
PRINCE ALBERT LITURGICAL SCHEDULE: No services until further notice

Christ is Risen! Христос Воскрес!

With social isolating in full swing, it can be easy to miss the fact that the Easter season is now here. Let us celebrate as we enter this season where we remember the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and the hope that it brings us!

Christ is Risen from the dead, trampling death by death

And to those in the tombs giving life!



(Image accessed from <https://kalynacare.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/kalynacare-leisure-and-lifestyle-calendar-april-2019.pdf>)

Why is this past week called Bright Week?

In the Byzantine tradition, a major feast has a "post-festive period" during which we continue the celebration of a particular feast. On the six days that follow the feast of Easter (Pascha), we hold a continuous celebration of the glorious Resurrection of our Lord God and Savior, Jesus Christ. These six days - Monday through Saturday - make up Bright Week. Some would say that Bright week was also the time when the newly baptized (their baptism would happen on Holy Saturday) would wear their white baptismal gowns so everything looked very bright.

Icon

As Byzantine Catholics, we focus on the beauty and spiritual meaning that is found in icons. In the Icon of the Resurrection, we see a number of items that cause us to spiritually reflect upon:

- Jesus is not only standing on the gates of Hades, he has broken them. We are reminded of the words of St. Paul who celebrates the power of the resurrection by asking, *Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?*" (1 Cor. 15:55)
- Jesus is holding Adam and Eve by the wrists to take them out of Hades. No longer do they wait, for the glorious resurrection has opened up heaven for them, and for us!
- On the left of Jesus we often see St. John the Baptist, King David, and King Solomon (although not all icons have the same figures). Notice that John the Baptist is pointing to Jesus, reminding us that Jesus is the way to eternal happiness.
- The figures on the right side of Jesus vary from icon to icon, however they generally represent Old Testament prophets and figures. The person holding the shepherds crook, often represents Abel the first human born on earth. With him Moses is often represented, and other Old Testament prophets.



- The blue shape around Christ is called the Mandorla (which is Italian for almond, which describes its shape). The Mandorla represents the eternal light of Christ; the light of Christ who guides us in times of darkness.

(image accessed from <https://www.orthodoxroad.com/christs-descent-into-hell-icon-explanation/>)

Saints from this past week

This week I want to highlight the lives of the Holy Women Martyrs Basilissa and Anastasia lived in Rome and were converted to Christianity by the holy Apostles Peter and Paul. As faithful disciples, they devoted themselves to the service of the Lord.

During the early days of the Church Christians were persecuted and killed for their faith. The Emperor Nero ordered these persecuted, and as we know, St. Peter and St. Paul were executed for their faith. Endangering their lives, Saints Basilissa and Anastasia took the bodies of these two holy apostles and gave them a reverent burial. Rumors of this reached Nero, and he ordered that Saints Basilissa and Anastasia be locked up in prison. The women were subjected to cruel tortures. However, these women bravely continued to confess their faith in Christ. By Nero's command, they were executed in 68AD. Their example of service and persistent faith is a guide for us today.



Sunday Readings

As we are in the Easter season, remember fondly how often we would sing "Christ is Risen..." Before looking at the readings, sing it in your home. If you have bells (or improvise with what you have) and ring those bells during the singing of this powerful hymn.

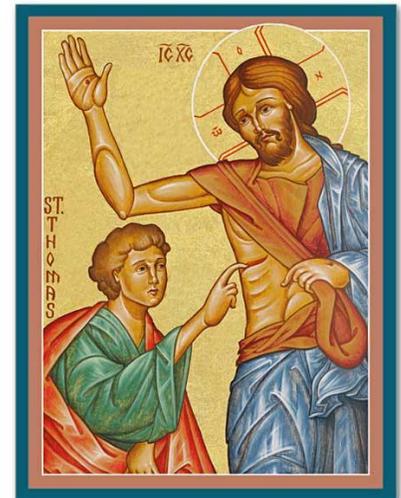
April 19th is Thomas Sunday, that day we hear the narrative of someone we generally refer to as 'Doubting Thomas'.

Epistle reading: Acts 5:12-20

- The epistle reading gives details about how the disciples continued the work of Jesus, and because of the power in the name of Jesus, the disciples were able to help many of the sick and lame.
- However, the high priest and the Sadducees had the apostles arrested for preaching the gospel. While in prison, an angel came to the disciples and told them, "Go, stand in the temple and tell the people the whole message about this life."
- How are you called today to give message of the gospel to the world?

Gospel reading: John 20: 19-31

- The gospel of John gives the account of the risen Jesus appearing to the disciples (all except Thomas).
- When the disciples told Thomas, he said, "Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe."
- Jesus then appears again to the disciples, which included Thomas, and Thomas' doubt is erased. Thomas calls Jesus, "My Lord and my God".
- The theme of today is doubt. Doubt can cause problems. Think of doubt in a relationship, or doubt in trusting someone. Doubt can be like a cancer that destroys a belief.
- The church wants us to reflect on the resurrection. Do we have any doubts that the resurrection happened? In this age of scientific proof, what evidence is there of the resurrection?
- Well, let's consider the evidence about the resurrection.
 - Accounts of the resurrection are written in the bible (a religious source) but also referenced by other non-Christian writers in the time of Jesus.
 - Appearance of Jesus: We hear of numerous accounts of a risen Jesus appearing to people. Paul tells us that 500 people had seen the risen Christ.
 - In the gospels, the first person to see the risen Jesus were women. In the time of Jesus, women did not hold rank to testify in court. If the story

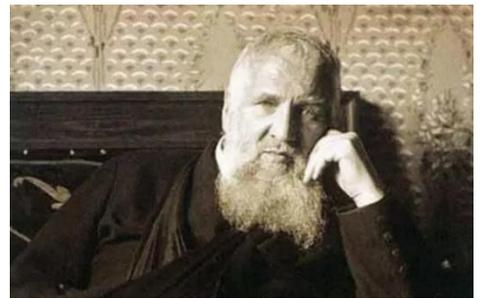


were made up, it doesn't make sense that women should proclaim the resurrection, unless it is the truth.

- The news of the resurrection happened immediately, not months or years later
- Voluntary Suffering: many of the early followers of Christianity were killed for their faith. People do not give their lives unless they really believe their cause.
- One of the most important pieces of evidence we have for the resurrection is the empty tomb. There is no doubt about it. If the tomb had not been empty, would thousands in Jerusalem start believing it if were not true as they were right there and could see for themselves? The tomb was empty; Jesus was resurrected!
- Based on the bible's account, as well as much other evidence, there should be no doubt that the Resurrection of Jesus occurred exactly as it was mentioned in the Bible.
- Let us celebrate the fact that Jesus' resurrection means that we have hope in life (death no longer has a sting) and life everlasting with him in heaven! Christ is Risen from the dead (a fact) trampling death by death (a fact) and to those in the tombs giving life (a fact)!!!

Reflection on Prayer

I came across a wonderful prayer written by the Venerable Metropolitan Andrey Sheptytsky, who was the patriarch of our Ukrainian Catholic Church for over 40 years (from 1901-1944). This means he would have witnessed the Spanish flu epidemic, as well as two world wars, amongst many other events. Here is a short version of one of his prayers. Perhaps incorporate this prayer into your prayers this week.

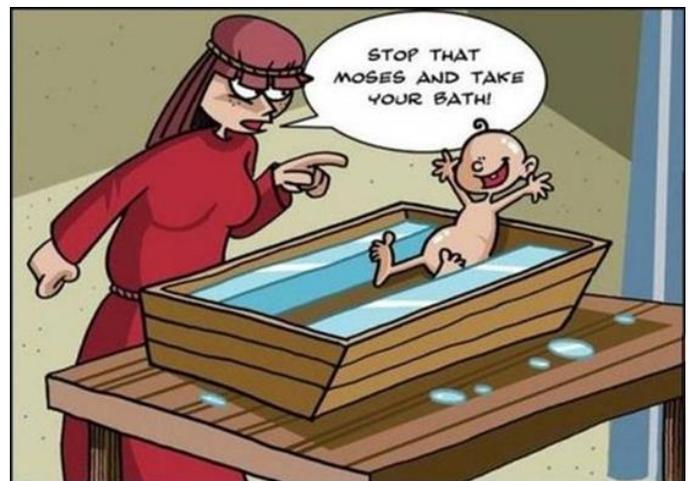
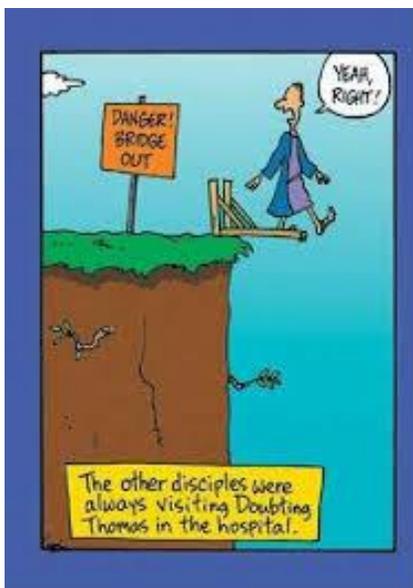


- Dear God
- Grant me the wisdom of Your ways and the wisdom to walk the paths of Your holy will.
- Grant me the wisdom of success and failure so that I would know how not to exalt myself in the former and not to be downcast in the latter.
- Grant me the wisdom of joy and the wisdom of sadness; may I rejoice only in that which leads to You and be sad only in that which separates from You.

- Grant me the wisdom of everything that passes and everything that lasts; may the first decrease in my sight, and the second grow.
- Grant me the wisdom of a sincere and straight-forward intention, the wisdom of simplicity, the wisdom of sincerity. May my heart turn to You and seek You in all things all my life long.
- Grant me the wisdom of obedience for Your law, for Your Church.
- Grant me the wisdom of poverty, so that I would never value goods in any other way except according to their real worth.

(Image and prayer accessed from <https://www.royaldoors.net/2019/11/the-prayer-for-divine-wisdom/>)

Humour for this week



Christ is Risen!!!