

HOLY TRINITY

ROMANIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH



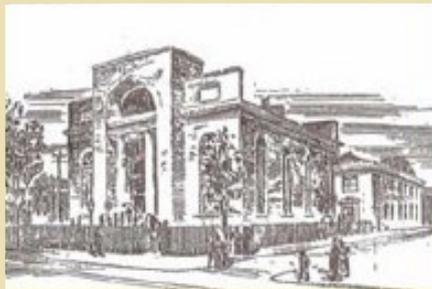
723 N BODINE ST PHILADELPHIA, PA 19123

CHURCH BULLETIN

Vol. 13 No. 19 * Sunday May 3, 2020 * Editor: V. Rev. Fr. Nicolai Buga

Sunday of the Myrrh-Bearing Women

Gospel Reading Mark 15: 43 – 16: 8



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Joseph of Arimathea, a respected member of the council, who was also himself waiting expectantly for the kingdom of God, went boldly to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then Pilate wondered if he were already dead; and summoning the centurion, he asked him whether he had been dead for some time. When he learned from the centurion that he was dead, he granted the body to Joseph. Then Joseph bought a linen cloth, and taking down the body, wrapped it in the linen cloth, and laid it in a tomb that had been hewn out of the rock. He then rolled a stone against the door of the tomb. Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James saw where the body was laid. When the sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him. And very early on the first

day of the week, when the sun had risen, they went to the tomb. They had been saying to one another, 'Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance to the tomb?' When they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had already been rolled back. As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man, dressed in a white robe, sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed. But he said to them, 'Do not be alarmed; you are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has been raised; he is not here. Look, there is the place they laid him. But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him, just as he told you.' So they went out and fled from the tomb, for terror and amazement had seized them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.

Apostle Reading Acts of the Apostles 6: 1– 7

Now during those days, when the disciples were increasing in number, the Hellenists complained against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution of food. And the twelve called together the whole community of the disciples and said, 'It is not right that we should neglect the word of God in order to wait at tables. Therefore, friends, select from among yourselves seven men of good standing, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may appoint to this task, while we, for our

part, will devote ourselves to prayer and to serving the word.' What they said pleased the whole community, and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit, together with Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolaus, a proselyte of Antioch. They had these men stand before the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them. The word of God continued to spread; the number of the disciples increased greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith.

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Synaxarion. Sunday May 3, 2020 - Sunday of the Myrrh-Bearing Women (the 3rd after Pascha): Holy Venerable Irodion of Lainici; Holy Martyrs Timothy and Maura, his wife

The Bravery and Courage of the Myrrh-Bearing Women

Among the great virtues adorning the lives of the holy Myrrhbearing Women, the most striking were their holy zeal for Christ, their reverence, and their courage of soul. The Jews and Pilate placed a protection and fortification at the Tomb of Christ, our Savior, that His disciples could not come by night and steal Him! They rolled a huge stone up against the Lord's



Tomb, sealed it off, and placed strong and armed soldiers on watch. But all of this did not scare or frighten the holy Myrrhbearing Women. Their great zeal, sacred reverence, and courage of soul passed over all the Jews' obstacles, and all the guards at the Tomb did not shake their resolve. But one thought, but one desire led their minds and hearts— to serve the funeral of their dear Savior with fullness of faith and with reverence.

Solomon once said, *One man among a thousand have I found; but a woman among all those have I not found* (Ecc. 7:28). And here are woman who are more brave than men. Men, the disciples of Christ, were hiding from fear of the Jews. Peter, fervent and firm in faith, thrice denied the Lord, of which he then repented and bitterly wept (cf. Lk. 22:62). But women, by nature timid and weak and often afraid even when there is no danger, here, at the service of the burial of our Most Holy Savior, turned out to be stronger and braver than men. They were not afraid of the Jews' wrath or the brutality of the soldiers, and the guard at the Lord's Tomb also did not agitate their hearts.

The disciples, men, affrighted and disbanded in all directions, as the Savior had predicted to them beforehand. But the holy women gathered themselves. The men were hiding, but the women went out in the light of day, heading to the market and buying myrrh and spices to anoint the Life-bearing Body of Christ. O, blessed women, how were you not afraid to go out alone at night, and how did you dare to approach that place guarded by royal soldiers, and how did you not fear, but strove to roll away the stone, break the seal, open the tomb and anoint the Body of the Lord with spices? These ascetic feats sprang from the zeal, reverence, and great bravery of your souls.

Feeble women by nature, but not in your minds and hearts; for womanly weakness did not appear in you in any way, but all your feats surpassed the bravery of men.

Upon you were truly fulfilled the words of Scripture,

which say, *My strength is made perfect in weakness* (2 Cor. 12:9), and again, *God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty* (1 Cor. 1:27; cf. Ps. 8:2, Mt. 21:16). The words of our Most Holy Savior were truly in your hearts, Who said, *fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to*

kill the soul (Mt. 10:28). And again the Holy Spirit says, *Be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart, all ye that hope in the Lord* (Ps. 30:24). You completed the apostolic work before the apostles. You displayed the faith and courage of soul of the holy martyrs before them.

Elias the great prophet, ablaze with Divine zeal, rebuked Ahab, and you confounded the guards of the Lord's Tomb. Gideon once crushed a multitude of Midianites with three hundred soldiers (cf. Jdg. 7:25). You, along with the righteous men Joseph and Nikodemos, stronger than all of the Jews' and Pilate's fortifications became fearless ministers, ready even unto death to serve Him Who came to serve and lay down His soul for the redemption of the whole of mankind. You, O holy women, together with the Most Pure Virgin Mary, the mother of our eternal Savior, with great zeal and bravery of soul gathered to celebrate the very first service to the Savior. Therefore, you were blessed even before the apostles to preach the Resurrection of the Lord.

Beloved faithful!

Who are these holy Myrrhbearing Women who followed Christ together with the apostles and were accounted worthy to be witnesses to the Lord's sufferings, and to anoint His holy Body with spices as it lay in the Tomb? The holy Gospel briefly provides us their names and deeds.

The first and most full of spiritual zeal and courage is Mary Magdalene, from the city of Magdala in Galilee.

The other holy Myrrhbearers are Maria, the mother of James (Mk. 16:1) and of Joses (Mk. 15:47), who is the cousin of the Mother of God; Mary, the wife of Cleopas (Jn. 19:25), and Salome, the mother of the Sons of Thunder (Mt. 27:56; 28:1; Mk. 16:1; Lk. 24:10). Then there is Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, Susanna, and many others serving Him out of their own means (Lk. 8:3). Among the Myrrhbearers were Martha

and Mary, the two sisters of Lazarus from Bethany, where the Savior often stayed with the holy apostles on the way to Jerusalem or Galilee.

What were the main virtues of these holy Myrrhbearing Women? Above all, they firmly believed that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, the Messiah proclaimed by the prophets, Who came to earth to save mankind. Then, they led a life pure and holy, in prayer and fasting, abstinence, and almsgiving, abiding in sacred love for one another, and, as they were able, lovingly rendering hospitality to Jesus and His holy disciples.

However, the faith and zeal of the holy Myrrhbearing Women are not limited to this. They didn't just receive the Lord into their homes, wash His feet, serve Him at the table, and provide Him the opportunity to rest, but more than that, they followed after Christ with zeal, and were witness to His miracles and boldly confessed that He is the Son of God, the Savior of the world.

But the Myrrhbearing Women's greatest bravery was revealed during the Lord's sufferings. After the disciples deserted Him in fear and Peter denied Christ, the only ones following Him from afar were the holy Myrrhbearing Women with the Mother of God at the head, Mary Magdalene, and the apostle of love, John, for it's impossible to ever cast off Divine love.

The bravery and courage of the Myrrhbearing Women was seen on the path of the Cross to Golgotha. They alone, with St. John, accompanied the Lord to the crucifixion and were witnesses to His suffering. They alone prayed for Him with tears and deep sighs, such that the Savior, moved with compassion for them, said, *Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children... For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?* (Lk. 23:28-31).

At Golgotha the holy Myrrhbearing Women, together with the apostle of immortal love, were also the sole witnesses to the crucifixion of our Lord Jesus Christ. They saw Him bleeding and falling beneath the weight of the Cross. They saw Him naked, without a robe, stretched out upon the Cross. They saw how His hands and feet were pierced with nails, and how He fainted under the Cross from pain. They heard the blasphemous words of the Jews, the repentant confession of the thief, and the heart-rending prayer of the Savior: *Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* (Mt. 27:46).

The Myrrhbearing Women saw how the sun was darkened, how the heavens groaned, how the dead arose from the graves, and they heard the prayer of the Son of God for the forgiveness of the Jews-murderers:

Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do (Lk. 23:34). They, these women, braver than the apostles, more full of zeal than the disciples, saw how they cast lots for Christ's tunic, sewn by the hands of the Mother of God, and heard His last word: *Father, into thy hands I commend My spirit* (Lk. 23:46).

How great was the zeal, the firmness of their faith, and the bravery of soul of the holy Myrrhbearing Women! They didn't fear the Roman soldiers, so bloodthirsty. They didn't fear the Jews' fury, not fearing God, and were by no means afraid of the death of the Lord on the Cross, like those having no hope!

But the bravery of the holy Myrrhbearing Women was not limited to Golgotha. They were there on Friday evening when they removed the Lord from the Cross, and together with Joseph of Arimathea they bought a shroud and spices, anointed His Body with the spices, *and wrapped Him in the linen, and laid Him in a sepulchre which was hewn out of a rock, and rolled a stone unto the door of the sepulchre. And Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses beheld where He was laid.*

And when the sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, had bought sweet spices, that they might come and anoint Him. And very early in the morning the first day of the week, that is, Sunday, they came unto the sepulchre at the rising of the sun. And they said among themselves, Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre? And when they looked, they saw that the stone was rolled away: for it was very great. And entering into the sepulchre, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, clothed in a long white garment; and they were affrighted. And he saith unto them, Be not affrighted: Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified: He is risen; He is not here: behold the place where they laid Him. But go your way, tell His disciples and Peter that he goeth before you into Galilee: there shall ye see Him, as He said unto you. And they went out quickly, and fled from the sepulchre; for they trembled and were amazed: neither said they any thing to any man; for they were afraid. Now when Jesus was risen early the first day of the week, He appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom He had cast seven devils. And she went and told them that had been with Him, as they mourned and wept (Mk. 15:46-16:10).

Do you see the zeal of the Myrrhbearers, and their bravery and firmness of faith in the Son of God? Do you see the courage of these holy women? The disciples sat, hiding and locked away in a room from fear of the Jews, but they bought a shroud and spices to anoint the Body of Jesus.

The disciples wept and lamented the death of the Lord, but they ran to Golgotha at sunrise to see His Tomb. In fear, those waited for news from Golgotha, but these, entering into the Tomb, received from the Archangel Gabriel the news that the Lord is risen, with the words, "Weep no more!" Then, by his command, they ran back and told the apostles that Christ is risen—He is no more in the grave!

So much courage and faith, so much steadfastness and boldness these women had. The men sat, hiding, but the women ran to the Tomb, entered within, bearing spices, encouraging one another, spoke with the angels, and were the first to see the Life-bearing Tomb and the shroud folded nearby. They feared neither darkness of night, nor the soldiers guarding the Tomb, nor death, nor angels—nothing. They had but one desire—to see Jesus, and anoint and kiss His holy Body. The Myrrhbearing Women were the first and most worthy witnesses of the crucifixion, death, burial, and Resurrection of the Lord. They were the first to proclaim to the apostles and the whole world that Christ is risen, and that death, the devil, and hell are vanquished and Paradise is open wide.

Where now are such women, loving Christ with such firmness of faith and good deeds as the Myrrhbearing Women from the Holy Gospel?

Still, the number of holy women in the Christian Church increased and sometimes even exceeded the number of men. Recall the great host of the holy martyrs, such as Thekla the Equal-to-the-Apostles; Barbara, killed for Christ by her own father; Ekaterina; Irina; Mary; Sophia with her three daughters; Fevronia; Tatiana and Philothea of Argesh,¹ and the great number of venerable women who labored in monasteries and deserts, becoming vessels of the Holy Spirit and working wonders. Let us mention but a few of these: Mary of Egypt, Euphrosynia, Ksenia, Pelagia, Melania, and also the venerable Parasceva of Iasi, Theodora of Sihla, and many others.

All of these holy brides of Christ, disciples of the holy Myrrhbearers and ascetics of prayer of the Church, pray for us all.

Beloved faithful!

Today is the day of Christian women. They are the successors of the Myrrhbearing Women, the daughters of the Resurrection, the handmaidens of the Lord, lanterns of faith, the soul of the family. Christian women, believers of the Orthodox Church, preserve the flame of faith and ancient traditions and the holy flame of prayer and piety in our homes more than men. Believing women are at the same time good mothers, dedicated Christians, honest and hardworking wives, and models for society.

Faithful women are the first to church, the first in prayer, in fasting, labors, alms, reading good books, in care for the sick and for all. They preserve the spiritual warmth of faith, love, patience, and peace in church, family, and society.

Our families are in need of such wonderful mothers today. The Church of Christ is in need of such pious daughters. The society today in which we live is in need of such honest and model women for all. For so many mothers do not want to bear children, or to give them a good Christian upbringing. How many women kill most of their children, and those few that they bear are not raised in the fear of God, and they don't care for them, so they become burdens to their families and a disgrace for society.

Mothers, you are today's myrrhbearers of the Church of Christ, bringing the Lord not precious spices, but your purity of faith and good children, well raised and faithful. Speak to them most of all about God, the saints, the Church and our ancestors. Tempt them in nothing, and give them as many good books as possible to read. You can make a huge contribution to the spiritual renewal of the world, the Church, and society. Add holy oil to the souls of your children. Tomorrow great souls will come from them, good people, devout priests, enlightened teachers, and exemplary Christians. The future of families, children, and the Church depend on you most of all. Always be about the fulfilling of your duties, as were your own mothers. Remember what holy mothers you had!

Young girls, for the sake of the Lord preserve your honor and good faith unblemished, while you have not yet received the status of mothers in the Church and society. And you also, widows and older mothers, keep an eye on the young, on your children, on all those around you. Do not be silent! Young mothers are in need of your example and sacrifice, young virgins are in need of your advice, and children and grandchildren of your prayer, tears, and reproofs.

Begin everything with the Lord, with prayer, with regular confession, and greater humility and patience. More good mothers, and more honest and faithful widows and virgins today will mean more children in homes, more believers in church, more peace in families, less drunkenness, divorce, and abortions in the world, less disease and tears in the world and more souls in Paradise tomorrow! Amen.

Christ is Risen!

Archimandrite Cleopa Ilie
(Translated by Jesse Dominick
Source: www.pravoslavie.ru)

The Myrrh-Bearing Women Yesterday and Today

As you know, the third Sunday after Easter is the Sunday of the Myrrh-bearing women, or the Sunday of the faithful women, keepers of Christian family. You should be joyful that you partake of this special honor from our Resurrected Lord. And through our most pure Mother Theotokos and the Holy Myrrh-bearing women, you have a Sunday a year when you are especially honored. May the Lord multiply in you the grace and gifts of the Holy Spirit and may the gift of Christian love abide truly in you, in order that you may become maintainers of Christian' warmth and harmony in your family. For many families today are met with disaster... as you know better than me, so I will not speak about it.

And those of you (faithful women) who come to church and pray to the Lord – here and in your home – if you pray attentively with love, humility and perseverance, you'll receive help from God and be comforted in your troubles.

As we preach today on the Sunday of the Holy Myrrh-bearing women, let not forget that all of you – Orthodox Christian women and your daughters - are called to be the Holy Myrrh-bearing women of the Orthodox Church today and forever.

The young girls and daughters can bring as mirth to our Lord Jesus Christ, their clean life – virginity, their prayers and obedience to their parents. All (college) students and young women who come to church regularly, can also bring to Christ our Saviour their mirth of good fragrance: the zeal for good deeds, mercy and charity towards those in suffering and obedience to their spiritual father.

The Christian mothers will offer our Master their most precious mirth, which is the birth, raising and education of children in the fear of God. But also the older mothers, the grandmothers and widows that are always present in the holy churches of God, may bring their ointment of tears and prayers as they piously keep the Orthodox faith and legacy passed on by our ancestors.



Behold, all daughters of the Orthodox Church, today you are the offspring of the Holy Myrrh-bearing women – when you hold in your heart the good fragrance of faith, prayer and Christian love. If you'll only run with devotion to church along with your children, as the Holy Myrrh-bearing women once ran to the Holy Tomb of our Saviour.

On the Holy Myrrh-bearing women I can also tell you that there were times in the life of our Saviour Jesus Christ when they were more courageous than the Apostles. Such, when our Lord was taken-up by the Jews in the Garden of Gethsemane, when all the Apostles – with the exception of St. John the Evangelist – left Him, and Peter betrayed Him by swearing three times that he does not know

Him. But the women followed Him both to the council (of Pilate) and on the road to Calvary. They accompanied Him when He fell under the heaviness of the Cross, and Veronica with her veil wiped his tears, and her veil became the first icon bearing the image of Christ.

These holy women witnessed His beating, His nailing and His crucifixion (among the two thieves), they have heard the last words of our Saviour and wept bitterly when He gave His last breath saying „It is done!”

Even after the crucifixion of Jesus, when the Apostles were hidden for fear of the Jews, these women in that very early morning approached the Holy Sepulchre (Tomb) to anoint our Lord's body as it was customary in the Hebrew tradition. And just when they reached the tomb seeking our Lord's body, they found it opened and empty and an angel of the Lord announced them that „Christ had risen from the dead”, showing them the empty shroud.

Mary of Magdalene, this brave women from whom Jesus exorcised seven demons, had become the greatest witnesses of Christ' Resurrection; she remained weeping at the grave while other women had left. She was still

seeking for our Lord's body, but the tomb was empty. Then she met someone at the grave and thought to be the gardener. So she asked: "Sir, if you have carried Him away, tell me where you have laid Him, and I will take Him away." (John 20, 15).

And „the gardener” Christ Himself, called her by name: Mary! His emphasis and tone of voice, made Mary recognize HIM. Although Jesus Christ was the same in flesh and blood, as He revealed Himself later to the Apostles, there was something changed in Him. It was undoubtedly His divine appearance, His transfigured flesh. And He was only recognized by those with a pure heart, that had their eyes enlightened.

When Mary recognized Him, she sought to approach Him. But Jesus said: „Do not hold me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to my brethren and say to them, I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.” (John 20, 17).

Not long after this event, our Saviour appeared to His disciples in Galilee on Mount Eleon. There, Jesus was to meet His Apostles gathered in one house.

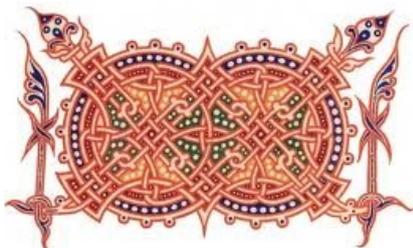
So we see how these holy women were in company of the Risen Christ – Who appeared from time to time, in order to get them accustomed with his resurrected body, because it was a great miracle, since no one had seen a resurrected body before. (...)

During these forty days, He entrusted the Apostles and the Myrrh-bearing women by appearing to them and to many others.

Christ' Resurrection is a guarantee of our resurrection and, as Jesus Christ rose from the dead, as St. Paul says, we will also rise (...) and we'll be standing before the judgment seat of Christ with all our good or evil deeds, and we'll be spending eternity accounting the way we lived our lives in this world.

Elder Sofian Boghiu

(Excerpt from "Elder Sofian' spiritual conversations". Translation by EC)



HOLY TRINITY'S Liturgical Schedule from to May 3 to May 10, 2020

**Sunday April 3:
(Sunday of the
Myrrh Bearing Women,
the 3rd after Pascha):**

9:00 am - Matins

10:00 am - Divine Liturgy

Wednesday May 5:

5:00 pm - Akathist

Friday May 7:

5:00 pm - Akathist

**Sunday May 10
(Sunday of the Paralytic,
the 4th after Pascha):**

9:00 am - Matins

10:00 am - Holy Liturgy



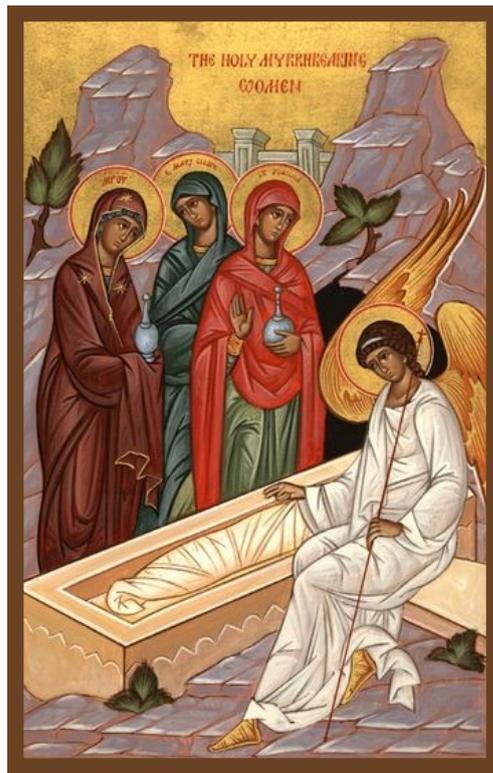
With a Courage Born of Love

Christ is Risen!

We have now been celebrating our Lord's victory over death for two weeks. We will continue to do so for a few more weeks, saying "Christ is Risen" many times. But we must not let our celebration of Pascha stop there. For we want to live the new life that the Lord has brought to the world; we want to participate in His victory over sin, death, and all that separates us from life eternal. And we can learn an important lesson in how to do that from those who were at the empty tomb on Easter morning as the first witnesses of the resurrection to hear the word of the angel: "He is Risen. He is not here...Go tell His disciples—and Peter—that He is going before you to Galilee; there you will see Him, as He said to you."

These first witnesses of our salvation were women who went to the tomb with oil and spices to anoint the dead body of Jesus Christ. They obviously did not expect the tomb to be empty. They were surely heart-broken, afraid, and terribly disappointed that their Lord had been killed. But they had the strength to offer Him one last act of love: to anoint His body properly for burial. Just imagine the risks that they took, publically identifying themselves with the Lord at His crucifixion and then going to the tomb of One executed as a traitor in the wee hours of Sunday morning. With a courage born of love, they must have put aside obvious concerns about their personal safety. And as they did so, these women— Mary the Theotokos, Mary Magdalen, two other Mary's, Johanna, Salome, Martha, Susanna and others whose names we do not know— received the greatest news in the universe, the resurrection of our Lord, God, and Savior Jesus Christ. Yes, the angelic proclamation of Pascha came first to the Theotokos, even as she was the first to hear from the Archangel the good news of the Incarnation.

As you will remember, the male disciples did not believe their testimony at first, even as St. Joseph the Betrothed was at first skeptical of the circumstances of the Lord's



virgin conception. But with the balance between man and woman that we see throughout the unfolding of our salvation, we remember along with these blessed women.

Two men: Saints Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, prominent Jewish leaders who were also secret followers of Jesus Christ. This Joseph risked his position and possibly his life by asking Pilate for the Savior's body, even as Joseph the Betrothed had surely risked his life during the flight to Egypt to escape the persecution of the wicked King Herod. Nicodemus, who had understood the Lord so poorly in a conversation recorded near the beginning of St. John's gospel, came to faith and joined Joseph of Arimathea in wrapping the Lord in linen with spices and placing Him in a tomb.

Like the myrrh-bearing women, these men must have been terribly sad and afraid. Their hopes had been cruelly crushed; their world turned upside down. Not only had their Lord died, He was the victim of public rejection, humiliation, and capital punishment. Nonetheless, these women and men did what had to be done, despite the risk to themselves from the authorities and their own pain. They served their Christ in the only way still available to them by caring for His body.

Before Jesus Christ's death, He washed the feet of His disciples in order to show them what it meant to serve in humility as He did. The myrrh-bearers were not present that evening, but they followed the Lord's example of service better than anyone else. Perhaps they were not there because they had already learned the centrality of humble service in how they cared for and supported the Lord throughout His ministry. Regardless, their selfless devotion to Christ put them in the place where they would be the first to receive the good news of the resurrection, the first to share in the joy of Pascha. We have a lot to learn from them, as well as from Joseph and Nicodemus. For if we want to live the new life of our Lord's victory over death and corruption in all its forms, we must do as they did by serving our Lord in humility out love, despite the cost.

We have no lack of opportunities to serve Christ, in His Body, the Church, whether by visiting the sick, giving of our time and other resources to the poor, providing someone without transportation a ride to church, maintaining our building and grounds, cleaning and beautifying the church temple, teaching Sunday School, chanting, hosting coffee hour, baking holy bread, serving on the parish council or at the altar, reading the epistle in liturgy, inviting others to visit our services, or otherwise doing what needs to be done for the flourishing of our parish. These things may seem small, but they make a huge difference. If we are not faithful in small tasks, how can we hope to be faithful in large ones? Out of love for Christ, let us all answer the call to serve Him as we are needed in His Body, the Church.

We are also reminded of the importance of humble service by today's passages from Acts in which the first deacons were ordained to oversee the distribution of bread to the needy widows who were supported by the Christian community. The word deacon means "servant," and we read that, after the deacons began their ministry, "the word of God spread, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith." Perhaps the passage reads that way because humble service is the very backbone of the Church, an essential part of our faithfulness and growth as Christ's Body.

Of course, we do not encounter the Lord only in the visible boundaries of the Church. For every human being is an icon of Christ, especially the poor, needy, and miserable. In that we care for the least of these in society, for prisoners or refugees or the lonely or mentally ill, we care for Him. In that we neglect them, we neglect Him. The myrrh-bearers did not disregard Christ's body in the tomb, and neither should we disregard the Lord's body hungry, sick, poorly clothed, abused, or otherwise suffering in our world. It is not hard to find the Lord in people

we encounter every day who need our service and attention. That is why we should all bring our Lenten collections for "Food for Hungry People" to church as soon as we can. And food, clothing, and other items brought to church will always be put to good use by those who need them, regardless of the season of the year.

On this Sunday of the Myrrh-Bearing Women, it is clear that holiness is not a matter of earthly power or prestige. Those righteous women did not count for much at all in their time and place; even the male disciples disregarded their preaching of the resurrection. The new day of God's reign ushered in by Pascha is a passing over from spiritual blindness, self-centeredness, and domination to love, selfless service, and true humility before God and all who bear His image and likeness. Here we encounter the same apparent weakness manifest in our Lord's cross, which ultimately destroyed the corrupt orders of our distorted world through the glory of the empty tomb. If we want to participate even now in that glory, if we want to embrace a power beyond the powers of this

age, we must follow the example of those courageous and loving women and men who risked their lives out of love for our Lord, God, and Savior Jesus Christ. No, a life of courageous love for our Savior is not easy, but it is the only path that we lead us to behold, and even to participate personally in, the good news of His resurrection on the third day, which is ultimately what this blessed season is all about.

Fr. Philip LeMasters

