

**Orthodox Church of the
Resurrection of Christ
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**Sunday, 26 May, 2024
Divine Liturgy Sundays at 9:30 AM
Confessions 8:45-9:15 AM
Sunday of the Paralytic
Нед. о Разслабленном**

**Christ is Risen! - Indeed He is Risen
Христос Воскресе – Воистину Воскресе!**

Last Sunday, May 19, was the Sunday of the Myrrh-bearing women. We were unable to provide a bulletin for that day, so we present this one today:

The Myrrhbearing women, St Joseph of Arimathea and St. Nicodemus



The Myrrh-bearing women, along with St Joseph of Arimathea and St. Nicodemus are commemorated on the third Sunday of Pascha.

Although St. Thomas was commemorated the previous Sunday, it is still right that the

descendants of Eve should be the first to behold the Resurrection and to hear the joyful tidings concerning it. Therefore we remember the Myrrh-bearing women on this Sunday because they were the first to truthfully bear witness to the Resurrection; and Joseph and Nicodemus, because they were the first to bear witness to Christ's burial.

We know both of these facts through the tradition of the Church. Nicodemus was immediately banished from the synagogue by the Jews and was forbidden to rejoin them. And Joseph was thrown into a deep pit by the Jews, but by the grace of God he was delivered from it, and went to his estate in Arimathea. Joseph could not keep silent regarding these events and boldly taught all the people what had taken place regarding Jesus. And also it is

said that Nicodemus was the first to proclaim in detail what had occurred at the Passion and the Resurrection of Christ. Since he was one of the foremost in the council of the Jews and a Pharisee, he knew firsthand the councils and plots of the Jewish leaders and all that had come to pass regarding the Lord. Thus we commemorate on this Sunday Saints Joseph and Nicodemus and the Myrrh-bearing women because they are true and authentic witnesses of the burial.

The women are titled "Myrrh-bearers" because they purchased expensive ointments and oils, and came to the tomb while it was still night, in order to properly anoint Christ's body and to complete all that had to be omitted due to the hurried manner of His burial. The burial was hurried because the Friday on which Christ was buried was the day before the Passover, and Joseph and Nicodemus did not have sufficient time to properly anoint the body according to custom. They were able only to apply some aloes and a bit of myrrh before wrapping It and laying It in the tomb. When the women came after Passover to complete the burial properly, they became the first witnesses to Christ's Resurrection. *(excerpted from the Synaxarion)*

Who are the Myrrh-bearing women? Only seven of them are named. Mary Magdalene, Mary the wife of Cleopas, Joanna, Salome, Susanna, Mary and Martha of Bethany.

We find references to Mary Magdalene in many places in the gospel. Jesus healed her as she was possessed with devils.

Mary the wife of Cleopas was the mother of three daughters and four sons. The sons were the Apostles James the Lesser, Joses, Jude and Simon. She was at the Cross when Jesus was crucified, and again with Mary Magdalene at the Tomb.

Mary and Martha of Bethany were sisters. Lazarus, whom Jesus raised from the dead, was their brother. There are many references to them in the gospels.

We can read about Salome in Matt. 20:20. She is the one who requested positions of honor for her sons, James and John.

Susanna was a wealthy woman whom Jesus had healed.

We must remember that it was very dangerous to be a follower of Christ and especially to help in His mission.

The ardor and continual love of the Holy Myrrh-bearers for the Lord also serves as an example for our love for Him. By the example of the holy women, we also should strengthen in our hearts the true self-denying love for our Savior. Even the strength of our love for Him should be like those, as the holy Apostle says, that nothing could separate us from Him, neither things present nor things to come, neither life nor death, neither angels nor men (*Rom. 8:38-39*). Besides this, in the example of the Holy Myrrh-bearing Women the Holy Church presents a spiritual healing for all Christians tempted with sorrows, leading to depression. Like the holy women, wounded with fierce grief during the scene of their Lord and Savior crucified on the cross and buried in a tomb, they searched for unique comfort in that tomb where all their happiness and life were hidden, and found this desired comfort. So it is that each Christian soul should seek consolation in the sorrows and grief at the tomb and cross of the Savior.



At the Sheep's Gate there was a pool, which was called Bethesda, which means "house of mercy," or God's mercy: the water used to gather from a curative spring. According to the testimony of Evsevius (in the 5th century AD), the pool had 5 porches. This healing spring attracted many people with different ailments. However, this was no ordinary healing spring: it manifested its curative power only at times, when God's Angel descended and stirred up the water, and upon the water being stirred up, only the first person to immerse into the pool was cured; evidently, the water retained its healing properties for a short time only, thereafter, losing them.

Here, by the pool, lay a paralytic who had suffered for 38 years and who had almost lost all hopes of a cure. Particularly — as he explained to the Lord — not having an assistant, he was incapable of utilizing the miraculous spring, as he didn't have the strength to move fast enough to immerse himself into the water, immediately after it was stirred. Taking pity, the Lord instantly cures the unfortunate with only His words: "Rise, take up your bed and walk." With this, the Lord showed through His saving grace, His superiority over the Old Testament methods.

However, as this was Saturday, the Jews, instead of being happy for the unfortunate individual that had suffered for so many years, or be amazed by the miracle, were annoyed because the former paralytic had the audacity to violate the tranquillity of the Sabbath, rebuked him. However, the cured paralytic, not without some effrontery, began to justify himself, stating that he is only carrying out the wishes of Him, Who healed him and Who in his eyes, had sufficient authority to release him from conforming to the rather narrow-minded regulations regarding Saturday. With traces of contempt, the Jews inquired of the former paralytic as to Who was the Person, that had the audacity to permit him to violate a public regulation?

Blessed Theophilactus notes interestingly on this: "Here is the meaning of evil! They do not ask, Who cured him, but Who ordered him to carry his bed. They are not interested in that, which brings you to amazement, but that which is censured." Although they were not certain, they most probably guessed that the Healer was none other than the hated Jesus from Nazareth, and therefore did not want to discuss the miracle. The cured paralytic could not answer them as he did not know Jesus.

Soon afterward, he most probably went to the temple in order to bring a sacrifice, in gratitude for his healing. Here, the Lord met him with significant words: "See, you have been made well. Sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon you." From these words, it can be seen that sickness overtakes a person for his sins, and the Lord warns the cured paralytic against repeating the sins, so as not to be afflicted with a greater punishment. Recognizing his Healer, he went and told the Jews about Him: not with any evil intent, but just to raise the authority of Jesus Christ. This evoked a new rage of hatred in the Jews, and they "sought to kill Him, because He had done these things on the Sabbath." (*from Explanation of the Four Gospels by Abp. Averky*)