

PSALM 112

Alleluia

1. Praise the Lord, children¹, praise the name of the Lord.
- 2. May the Name of the Lord be blessed, from now and for eternity.**
3. From the rising of the sun unto its setting, the Lord's name is praiseworthy.
4. The Lord is high above all nations; His glory is above the heavens.
5. Who is like the Lord our God, Who dwells in the heights,
6. yet oversees the humility of heaven and the earth?
7. He raises the poor out of the earth, and lifts the pauper out of the dung,
8. to seat him among princes, with the princes of His people.
9. He settles a barren *woman* in a home,
*becoming a joyful mother in the presence of children*².

This is the fourth psalm in Kathisma XVI. It is read in its entirety during the service of the Ninth Hour.

Verse two is well known to all the Orthodox since it is the concluding hymn of the Divine Liturgy. It is sung three times before the final benedictions.

¹ The word **παῖδες** appears here. This may be translated as children, sons, boys, daughters, girls, youths, servants, attendants or slaves. It appears that the favored word used by prior translators of this psalm has been "servants" sometimes with the addition of words qualifying them as "servants of the Lord." In researching the choice of this word in Orthodox hymnology, I discovered that children is the preferred usage, thus it is my inclination to use that word.

² It is not surprising to find that in the final verse the word **τέκνοις** appears and is often translated as "children." That this word's proper meaning in Greek is "offspring" is confirmed by its philological derivation from the morpheme **τίκτω**, "to produce" yet the word children appears to me to be better in this context. It is difficult to weave this barren woman into the narrative of this psalm without realizing that such women in older societies were cast aside and became pariahs. But God in His infinite compassion places her in a home that apparently includes children whereby she becomes a joyful surrogate mother to them. *In the presence of* is a legitimate variant translation for the word **ἐπι**.

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SAINT SOPHIA GREEK ORTHODOX CATHEDRAL

Ὁ Ναός τῆς Αγίας Σοφίας τοῦ Θεοῦ

Washington, D.C.

April 18, 2010

Sunday of the Myrrh-Bearers

The Tone for this day is The Second

The Morning Gospel of the Orthros is No. 4

Luke 24:1-12

On the first day of the week, at early dawn, they went to the tomb, taking the spices they had prepared. And they found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they went in they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. While they were perplexed about this, behold, two men stood by them in dazzling apparel. And as they were frightened and bowed their faces to the ground, the men said to them, "Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen. Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men and be crucified and on the third day rise." And they remembered his words, and returning from the tomb they told all these things to the eleven and to all the rest. Now it was Mary Magdalene and Joanna and Mary the mother of James and the other women with them who told these things to the apostles, but these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them. But Peter rose and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen cloths by themselves; and he went home marveling at what had happened.

The Third Sunday of Easter

PROKEIMENON:

The Lord is my strength and my song
The Lord has chastened me sorely Psalm 117:14 + 18

The Epistle is from Acts of the Apostles 6:1-7

IN THOSE DAYS, when the disciples were increasing in number, the Hellenists murmured against the Hebrews because their widows were neglected in the daily distribution. And the twelve summoned the body of the disciples and said, "it is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables. Therefore, brethren, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may appoint to this duty. But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word." And what they said pleased the whole multitude, and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, and Prochoros, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolaos, a proselyte of Antioch. These they set before the apostles, and they prayed and laid their hands upon them. And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith.

The Gospel Reading is from Mark 15:43-47; 16:1-8

AT THAT TIME, Joseph of Arimathea, a respected member of the council, who was also himself looking for the kingdom of God, took courage and went to Pilate, and asked for the body of Jesus. And Pilate wondered if he were already dead; and summoning the centurion, he asked him whether he was already dead. And when he learned from the centurion that he was dead, he granted the body to Joseph. And he bought a linen shroud, and taking him down, wrapped him in the linen shroud, and laid him in a tomb which had been hewn out of the rock; and he rolled a stone against the door of the tomb. Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses saw where he was laid.

And when the sabbath was past, 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 they went to the tomb when the sun had risen. And they were saying to one another, "Who will roll away the stone for us from the door of the tomb?" And looking up, they saw that the stone was rolled back; for it was very large. And entering the tomb, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, dressed in a white robe; and they were amazed. And he said to them, "Do not be amazed; you seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen, he is not here; see the place where they laid him. But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going before you to Galilee; there you will see him, as he told you." And they went out and fled from the tomb; for trembling and astonishment had come upon them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.

The Myrrh-Bearing Women

There are three women that are definitely identified in the scripture as the myrrh-bearers: Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome, but "and certain other women with them [Luke 24:1]" are also mentioned. However, each of the four Gospels gives different aspects of the roles of eight women at the Cross and at the tomb on Easter morning. Perhaps because the eight women arrived in different groups and at different times we do not associate them usually as being Myrrh-Bearers but our Church considers them all to be such. Besides those mentioned above, other of the eight are: The Holy Virgin Mary, Joanna, Susanna, Mary and Martha (the sisters of Lazarus).

Throughout the Lord's three year earthly ministry, the myrrh-bearing women stayed in the background but contributed to everyone's support with meals and provisions [Luke 8:1-3]. After the resurrection, these women are mentioned as being prominent during the prayers and supplications in the upper room prior to Pentecost. During this time, the Virgin Mary was especially prominent. All the things that the Virgin Mary had kept and pondered in her heart [Matthew 2:19] now needed to come out in order that everyone might understand the Word of the Cross [1 Corinthians 1:18ff] and how Jesus had to be crucified. The choice of this Gospel reading today was to show the character and devotion of these women.

Today's Epistle lesson, the ordination of the first seven deacons (servants) continues the seven part series started last week on the development of Christianity after the Resurrection. The connection of today's Gospel and Epistle lessons (the Myrrh-Bearing Women and the first seven deacons) is significant and is a message in itself: the Myrrh-Bearing Women having served the function of deaconesses to the Lord during His earthly ministry. The first seven deacons were chosen to continue and extend this ministry.

Two secret disciples of Christ are also commemorated on this day: Nikodemos, a leader of the Pharisees who came to visit Jesus at night and believed in Him, as told in the third chapter of the Gospel of John; and Joseph of Arimathea, a rich and noble citizen of Rama. After Christ died, he had the courage to claim His body and to place it in the tomb that had been hewn out of rock for his own use.