

Announcements and Activities

Great Vespers— Saturday, at 5:30PM.

Divine Liturgy— Sunday, at 10AM.

Coffee Hour— This week's Coffee Hour is being sponsored by Matushka and Elise. Next week's Coffee Hour will be sponsored by Sunday and Rhoda.

Fundraiser on May 20th— We are doing a joint fundraiser to both help the church with our budget and Syrian families related to the many Syrian Orthodox families living on the central coast. We are distributing tickets for you to sell to family and friends. The food will be a Middle Eastern food: Shwarma— beef and chicken cooked on a rotisserie, dolma, rice, tabouli and baklava, a \$20 combo. This is a great cause and a way to lift our own budget up. Please make an effort to buy and sell tickets.

Pray for... Sarah, the daughter of Fr. Lawrence's godfather, health issues. **Youseff and Jimmy— who are ill.** Matushka Ann Hopko, reposed. **Jonathan— ill.** Reposed **Barbara Ranjo.** Fr. And Matushka's **Granddaughter Annabella is past her illness, but still needs prayer for the return all body parts to normal.** Laure— **battling Cancer.** Paul— ill **Ralph—ill Archpriest Lawrence,** from Canada, progressive eye disease. **Tsige Roman—** our beloved Tsige reposed on December 3rd. Please keep praying for her homeland of Ethiopia. **Brian— ill.** **Jonathan— ill.** **Katia—** sister of Shkbarra's **Grace,** Heather's goddaughter. **Reposed Priest, James.** **Reposed Hierarch Tikhon . Diane— surgery.** **Rufin—** soldier in Ukraine. Elise, ill. **Sally,** surgery, **Reposed Patrick, Reposed Jim, Reposed Alex; Christian,** prayers. **Chris,** reposed. **Galina,** reposed. **John D.,** anniversary of repose. **Patrick,** reposed. **Alex—** reposed.

Myrrh-bearers Sunday

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit!

Today is the feast day devoted to the women who brought spices to Christ's tomb, and also the day when we honor the memory of Joseph and Nicodemus - two Pharisees, members of the ruling council, who were responsible for burying the Lord. It is the day on which we honor loyalty, for these people alone remained true to the Lord in those first days. Nicodemus and Joseph believed Jesus' message but because formerly they had been afraid openly to express their faith in the coming Kingdom of God, they used to come to Him in secret. You remember how Nicodemus came to Him by night, so that his colleagues would not see that he was visiting the hunted teacher.

Is this not how many of us often come to the Lord, ashamed of the fact and hiding it? I still remember a scene I witnessed many years ago. It was far away, in Siberia, at Easter. That night the church was full to overflowing with people all around it. A professor from a college had come and was standing, like the tax collector, at the back of the crowd. With his collar turned up and his hat pulled down, he crossed himself timidly, glancing about him. His soul was reaching out to the Church but he was afraid. Can we judge him? After all, if someone had caught sight of him there, he would certainly have run into difficulties and complications and might even have lost his job.

Nicodemus must have come by night in the same way. Joseph of Arimathea, who occasionally spoke out in the Savior's defense against His enemies, was also His secret disciple. They maintained their loyalty to Him through the worst moments of mourning and despair, when all the disciples had abandoned the Lord and fled. Joseph and Nicodemus, risking their reputations, went to Pilate and asked his permission to bury the body of their executed teacher. The bodies of executed criminals were usually thrown into a common grave, but Pilate granted them permission and, as we know, it was Joseph and Nicodemus who carried the Lord's body to the tomb, which was in a garden.

Meanwhile the women were looking on from afar. They did not dare to come too near. They on the other hand, had been at Golgotha, where few of the Lord's closest friends had been. The women who stood there supporting the Virgin Mary are almost unknown to us. We know their names: there was Mary from Magdala (Mary Magdalene), there was Joanna, wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, as well as Salome, mother of the apostles James and John, and some other women from Galilee. They stood on the hill of Golgotha and watched their Lord and teacher dying. They saw where His body was placed and agreed among themselves that after the Sabbath, on which buying and selling were forbidden, they would buy spices, anoint the Lord's body and say their own prayers of mourning (for Joseph and Nicodemus had been able only to say hurried prayers before sunset).

It is amazing that it was to these women that the Lord appeared first, appearing only later to Peter and the others. That is what the Evangelists tell us. It is true that the Apostle Paul says He first appeared to Peter, but by this he meant that Peter was the first among the apostles to see Him; Paul simply does not mention Mary Magdalene. However, as you know, the women were carrying what was necessary for burial - "myrrh" - which is why we call them the spice bearers, and they were the ones who saw Him first. ...

Amen.

"There do not exist many or few, nor small or great problems. The only problem is the absence of Christ from our lives" (From the life and teachings of Elder Epiphanius Theodoropoulos)