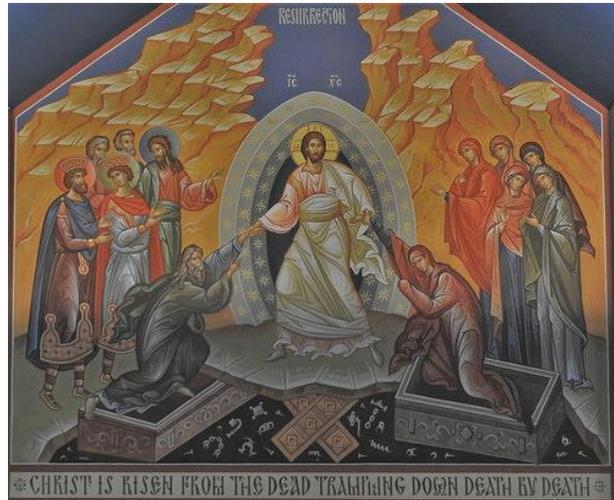


Pascha and Bright Week 2018

Pascha: Celebrating the 1st Day of the Week ON [APRIL 8, 2018](#) BY [FR. TED IN CHRISTIANITY, ORTHODOX CHURCH, ORTHODOXY, PASCHA, PATRISTIC, RESURRECTION](#)

Christ is Risen! Indeed He is Risen!

It is on this day that we put aside every work, when our soul beams with joy from relaxation; most important of all, we have enjoyed innumerable blessings this day. For on this day death was abolished, the curse was erased, sin disappeared, the doors of Hades, were broken into pieces, the devil was imprisoned, the long-lasting war ended, and reconciliation between God and men happened. And our race returned to its former, or better yet, to a much greater nobility, and the sun beheld that marvelous and paradoxical sight — man being born immortal.

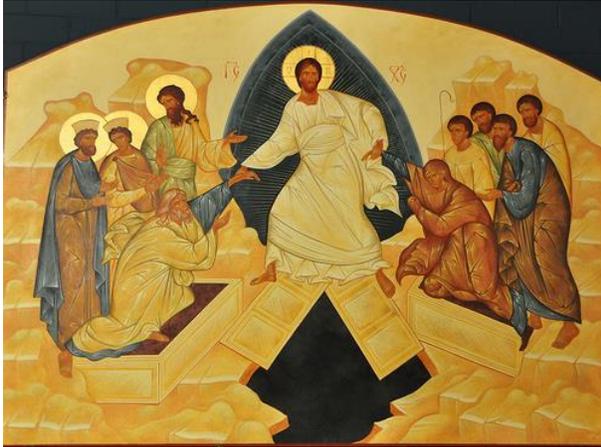


He wanted to remind us of all these events and other similar ones, and he brought the day before all, taking only this day as an advocate, and he says to everyone: “Just think about how many and extraordinarily great blessings you benefited from on this day, O Man; from how many evils you were delivered, who you were before and who you have become since these things. If on our birthdays we, and many house-slaves on these days on which they were freed, celebrate these events with great honor, and the former holds banquets while the free even give gifts, and they all very much honor those specific times, much more so must we honor the Day of the Lord, which one would not err in calling the birthday of all of human nature. For we were lost and then found, dead and alive again, enemies and then

reconciled.” For this reason, it is fitting to honor it with spiritual honor — neither to hold banquets, nor to pour out wine like water, nor to get drunk and dance, but rather to render great abundance to the poorer of the brethren. ([St. John Chrysostom, The Fathers of the Church: On Repentance and Almsgiving](#), p. 138)

Pascha – The Resurrection (2018)

ON [APRIL 8, 2018](#) BY [FR. TED IN CHRISTIAN, ORTHODOX CHURCH, ORTHODOXY, PASCHA, RESURRECTION](#)



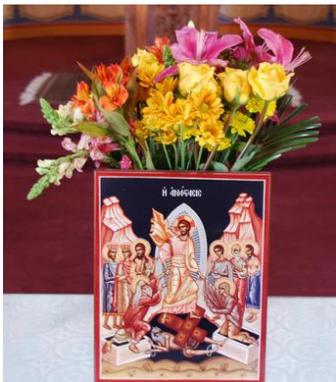
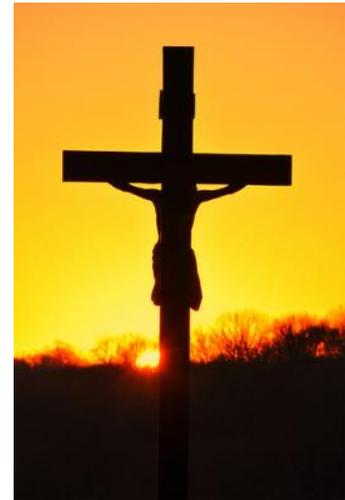
For it is the God who said, "Let light shine out of darkness,"

who has shone in our hearts to give the light

of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.

(2 Corinthians 4:6)

A Christian parish has nothing to offer the world except Jesus Christ – the One in whom we live and move and have our being (Acts 17:28). We have nothing to offer each other except Christ, and the love with which He loves each of us (John 13:34). When as a community we take our eyes off Christ, and make anything else our message or our concern, we are lost in the darkness of the world. On [Pascha](#), we see Christ risen from the dead, shining out of the darkness of Hades itself, calling each of us personally and all of us together to lay aside our worldly cares and way of seeing each other. Out of the darkness of the night, out of the darkness of our hearts, out of the darkness of our minds, the light of Christ shines. That can only happen when "I" no longer live but Christ lives in me (Galatians 2:20).



Our Lord Jesus Christ said to us, "*you (plural, collectively) are the light of the world*" (Matthew 5:14). We all together are to be that light which shines out of the darkness. We are to be a light to each other and the world. Don't ever let the light in you and us be darkness (Luke 11:34-35). To let anything come between you and Christ or between you and your fellow believers is to have darkness threaten us all with its chaotic return. We must be able to love those whom we can see if we ever hope to love God (1 John 4:20-21). An ember removed from the fire quickly burns out, dies and goes cold and dark. We however are to have that light with which the bush was burning and yet not consumed (Exodus 3:2). We

will not lose our light, nor will we ever die if we remain united to Christ in His Body, the Church. Jesus said: "*I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and whoever lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?*" (John 11:25-26)

Christ is risen! Indeed He is risen!

Christ is Risen! Keeping It All in Perspective

[Bright Monday: Christ is Risen!](#)



One of the surprises of the Orthodox faith is that on [Pascha](#) night when we celebrate the Resurrection of Christ, on the night in which we proclaim dozens of times: “*Christ is risen!*”, on the night in which all our hymns focus on the resurrection of Christ, the Gospel we proclaim at the [Divine Liturgy](#) is not one of the accounts of the Resurrection. What we proclaim is [John 1:1-17](#), which is not about finding the empty tomb or about Christ’s descent into Hades. The Gospel we proclaim is often referred to as “The Prologue” – it is just the introduction to the book written by the Evangelist John.

And one reason that we read this Gospel at the Paschal Divine Liturgy is that it is about the big picture. We are not just celebrating that one man, a good man at that, came back from the dead, though that would be a big enough event in its own right. The Gospel for the Paschal Liturgy helps us see Christ’s resurrection in the big picture of the entirety of creation (the entire universe) and the entire history of the cosmos. The Gospel takes us back to the beginning of Creation – *In the beginning was the word* (John 1:1). We are taken back to the beginning of the Bible itself, back to chapter one of the book of Genesis, back to the big bang, the beginning of everything. And we remember that in the midst of the total silence of nothingness, in the soundless vacuum, God spoke His Word and creation – time and space – came into being. God said, “*Let there be light*” and there was light (Genesis 1:3). It is God’s Word which causes creation to exist – causes us to exist. And as we hear in John’s Gospel at the Paschal Liturgy, Jesus Christ is the Word of God. It is He who caused all things to come into existence as we just heard – *All things were made through Him and without Him nothing was made that was made* (John 1:3).



Out of the vacuum of nothingness and silence, creation was brought into existence by the Word of God. Or, maybe into that empty void God caused creation to come into being. Either way, there came to be something, rather than nothing by the Word of God. *By the word*

of the LORD the heavens were made, and all their host by the breath of his mouth (Psalms 33:6).



And then, what we just thought about all during Holy Week – the impossible happened. Creation - we creatures - endeavored to silence the Word of God. We nailed him to the cross and He died. No breath was found in Him. He was sealed in a silent tomb, left voiceless and to rot back into nothingness. Descending into the depths of Hades never to be heard from again.

Except, that on Pascha, the Word spoke again – out of the dead silence of Hades, God’s Word again called Light into existence. From the muteness of Hades – from which no voice was ever heard on earth, God speaks to us. Pascha night is a night of

renewal for all creation for God again is giving light and life to the world, to all of creation, to us and to the entire universe. From the tomb shines forth the Light of Life, and we hear the Word of God giving life even to the dead.

And God tells us even in death we don't return to nothingness. Even in death we do not cease to exist. Death does not, can not, annihilate us because God the giver of life is more powerful than death, and the life God gives us is stronger than death. Death does not end our life.

So we proclaim this Gospel of John 1:1-17 on Pascha night – a universal message, not just for Christians but the entire created universe. The power of the resurrection is not limited to Christ or to Christians, but is offered to the entire human race. Listen to the Gospel:

All things came into being through Jesus Christ (John 1:3)

The Light shines in the darkness and the darkness does not overcome it (1:5).

John came to bear witness to the Light – that ALL might believe through him (1:7).

Christ the true light enlightens EVERYONE who ever existed, who now exists or who will ever exist (1:9).

ALL who receive Him are given the ability to be God's children (1:12).



ALL have received grace upon grace (1:16)

When we focus only on the resurrection of Jesus as a historical fact, we can easily lose sight of the universal and cosmic meaning of that message. Everything in the world, and everyone in the world is found in the message of John's Gospel. We proclaim it this night because it includes all of us – as we heard in [the catechetical homily of St. John Chrysostom](#), it includes all who diligently kept the fast and all who didn't, all who labored from the 1st hour and those who came at the 11th hour, the sinners and the saints, the rich and the poor, everyone encompassed in the universal resurrection which our Lord has given to us all.



We Await the Resurrection of Our Bodies

ON [APRIL 10, 2018](#) BY [FR. TED](#)

IN [CHRISTIANITY](#), [GOSPEL](#), [ORTHODOXY](#), [PASCHA](#), [RESURRECTION](#), [SALVATION](#)

[Bright Tuesday](#)

Salvation is cosmic in its dimensions.

Our soteriology needs to be holistic.

It is the total human person that saved:

a human being is not a soul dwelling temporarily in a body

but an integral unity of body and soul,

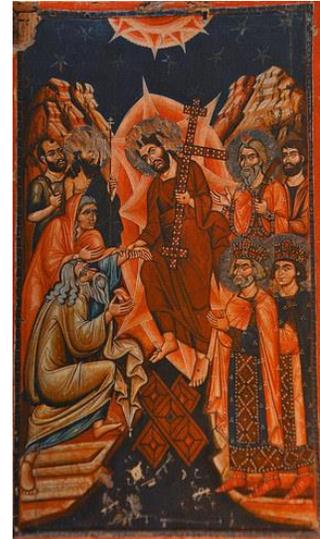
and so the two are sanctified and divinized together.

As Christians we do not simply believe in the immortality of the soul,

but we await also the resurrection of the body. Nor is this all.

Through our bodies we relate to the material environment around us,

and so our sanctification implies the sanctification of that environment as well.



We are not saved *from* but *with* the world.

Looking to the age to come, therefore, we await not merely the resurrection of the body but also the transfiguration of the entire cosmos; there is to be a “new earth” as well as a “new heaven” (Rev. 21:1).

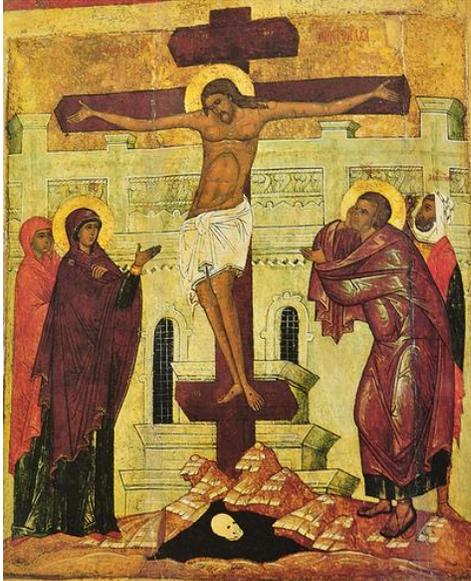
Our human salvation leads in this way to the redemption of the whole created order, which through us ‘will be set free from its bondage to corruption and will enter into the freedom of the glory of the children of God’ (Rom 8:21).

([Bishop Kallistos Ware, How are we Saved?](#), pp 80-81)

Christ Died that We Would Live ON [APRIL 11, 2018](#) BY [FR. TED](#) IN [CHRISTIANITY](#), [GOSPEL](#), [ORTHODOX CHURCH](#), [PASCHA](#), [PATRISTIC](#), [RESURRECTION](#)

[Bright Wednesday](#)

But [the Lord] in his turn vanquished death through his great cry when he had gone up on the cross. Whereas death was binding one person on the cross, all those who had been bound in Sheol were being delivered because of the chains of one person...his hands, which delivered us from the bonds of death, were transfixed by nails, his hands which broke our chains and tied those which were binding us.

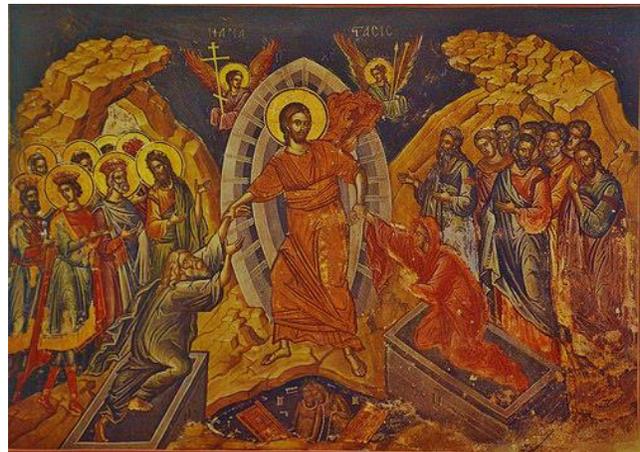


It was an amazing thing that the dead were killing the living one, [whereas] the slain one was raising the dead to life. The directed their fury more intensely towards heaven, whereas he humbled his greatness even further down into the depths...

[Death] stole him, took him away and put him in the tomb while he was asleep, but, on awaking and standing up, he stole his stealer. This is the cross which crucifies those who crucified [the Lord], and this is the captive who leads into captivity those who had led him into captivity. The cross, through your death, has become a fountain of life for our mortal life...death used his body to take and devour the life hidden in mortal bodies What it had hastened to gulp down while famished it was forced to

restore very quickly...he commanded the stones and they were split in two. [He commanded] death and it did not prevent the just from going forth at his voice. He trained the lower regions to his voice to prepare them for hearing it on the last day, when this voice will empty [the lower regions].

([Ephrem the Syrian](#), from Hilarion Alfeyev's [Christ the Conqueror of Hell](#), p. 71)



Resurrection to Glory ON [APRIL 12, 2018](#) BY [FR. TED IN CHRISTIANITY, GOSPEL, ORTHODOX CHURCH, ORTHODOXY, PASCHA, RESURRECTION](#)



[Bright Thursday](#)

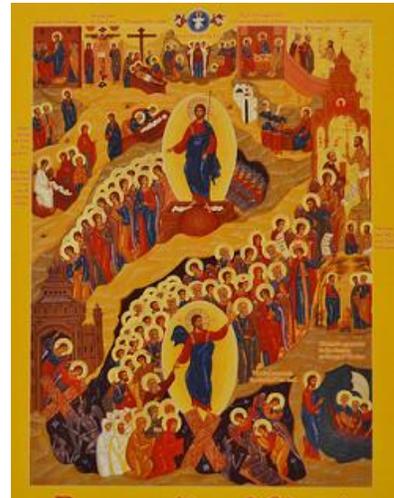
The author of [1 Enoch](#), for instance, speaks of a future resurrection of the spirits of the righteous. Others believed in a resurrection of the untransfigured body, and still others looked forward to the transformation of the body. They all moved beyond the Old Testament view of a shadowy existence in Sheol, which cannot be described as "life," and expected much more after death than the teaching about Sheol would allow.

Physical death was not considered by all of them to be an important factor in their concept of resurrection. According to the [Wisdom of Solomon](#), which was written probably by a Hellenistic Jew in the first century B.C., the souls of the righteous do not really die—they are in the hand of God, and only in the "eyes of the foolish they seemed to have died" (3:1-2). The death of the righteous is conceived as of their ascent to the presence of God, who "tested

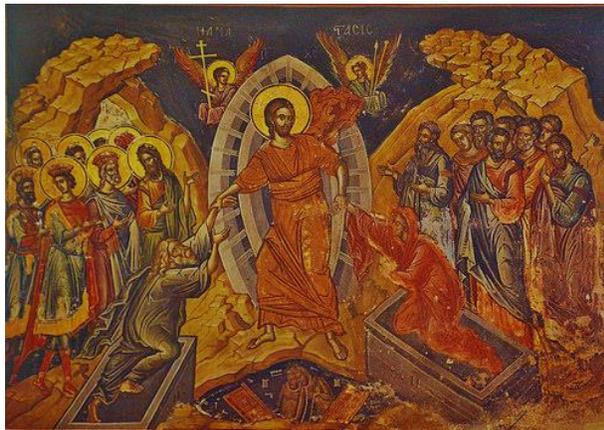
them and found them worthy of himself; like gold in the furnace he tired them, and like a sacrificial burnt offering he accepted them” (3:5-6). The unrighteous, the ungodly, go to their punishment.

There is a variety of views among the ancient rabbis with regard to the final destiny of human beings. Their teachings on this subject cannot be reduced to one unified, common teaching. Nevertheless, all their views differed significantly from what the apostles saw and experienced after the resurrection of Jesus. As Joachim Jeremias writes: “Nowhere in Jewish literature do we find a resurrection to glory as an event of history. Rather resurrection to glory—always and without exception means the dawn of God’s creation. Therefore the disciples must have experienced the appearances of the Risen Lord as an eschatological event, as a drawing of a turning point of the world.”

(Veselin Kesich, [The First Day of the New Creation](#), pp. 34-35)



Even Death is a Freedom ON [APRIL 13, 2018](#) BY [FR. TED IN BRIGHT WEEK, CHRISTIANITY, GOSPEL, ORTHODOX CHURCH, ORTHODOXY, PASCHA, RESURRECTION](#)



[Bright Friday](#): Even Death is a Freedom

Christ’s resurrection as a “wonder” would have pointed to a new religion; resurrection as a sign points to a new mode of existence. It is this mode that the ecclesial social event wishes to realize. Death is the most burdensome and unbearably irrational existential limitation of human nature. And in his historical existence Christ assumes this irrationality, he dies, in order to signify that even death may be experienced as freedom

of relationship with the Father, that is, as life without limitation.

He assumes human nature “unto death, even death on a cross” (Phil 2:8), one of the most horrific forms of execution. And he does it so that this most horrific death should become a savific sign.

(Christos Yannaras, [Against Religion: The Alienation of the Ecclesial Event](#), pp. 32-33)

