



MISSION NEWS-

April 23rd—Christos Anesti!

Great and Holy Pascha

On this glorious and holy day, the whole Church celebrates with joy the final triumph and life-giving resurrection of our Lord, God and Savior Jesus Christ. After the long period of darkness brought about by original sin, after the seemingly endless expectation of the prophets, after the glad tidings of the nativity that came to pass when the time had come, af-



years and the three years of public life, after the frightful passion which had seemed to be the end of all hope, after the two days in the depth of the tomb, behold: CHRIST IS RISEN! Indeed, indeed He is risen, and all is true, every promise of God has been fulfilled: the Savior has come, the Lamb of God has been sacrificed to take away the sins of the world, and supremely triumphant in his apparent defeat, He has crushed death by his death and restored everlasting life through his resurrection! The time of weeping is over: now is the time for joy! Now that we have been cleansed by the passion of Christ, now that we have repented and atoned for our sins during the penitential season of Lent, let us rejoice: let us give one another a Christ-like kiss of peace, confirming our love towards all, celebrating the end of the enmity between God and man, proving our reconciliation through Christ. Pascha is truly for us the Passover: for Christ, through his passion and resurrection, made us return from the curse of Adam and the bondage of Satan to the state of Children of God.

The day after the Sabbath was called by the Hebrew “the First Day.” In the early age of the Church, it was dedicated to the glorification of the Lord and called in Greek “Kyriake,” or “Day of the Lord.” The apostles transferred to it the dignity of the Sabbath of the Old Testament and prescribed that it be a holy day and day of rest. Thus did the first day of the Hebrew week become Sunday, the Day of the Lord.

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Mission Statement

“To establish a Greek Orthodox Church in South Orange County which follows, preserves and continues our timeless religious beliefs and traditions and emphasizes our Hellenic heritage, customs and values.”

Witness to the Resurrection

These days our TV sets are loaded with detective shows and thrillers and court TV both fiction and real. Most often, the pivot point of the plot are the clues that are presented during the program. We have become conditioned to thinking in terms of “proofs”; we automatically review the clues and seek to deduce the end result. We know through the deepest of personal convictions that there was in fact a resurrection of the Lord. The resurrection is known, not through historical fact; it is rather than that spiritually understood as St. Paul in 1 Corinthians 2:14 said: “But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.” It is, therefore, in the spirit of the inquiring mind, however feeble it comprehends the works of God, some 2,000 years after the event, that the question is asked: “Can we be sure that there was a resurrection?”

“And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty.” With these words, St. Paul addresses the Church in Corinth (1 Cor. 15:14). And he makes the important point that the resurrection of Christ is the cornerstone of the church; without it, we believe in vain.

What historical information outside of scripture exists concerning the Son of God? The earliest reference to the historical existence of Jesus is found in the *Antiquities of the Jews*, which was written around 93 AD by the Jewish historian, Josephus: “At that time lived Jesus, a holy man, if man he may be called, for he performed wonderful works, and taught men, and joyfully received the truth. And he was followed by many Jews and many Greeks. He was the Messiah.” Some Christian scholars are suspicious of this text and believe it to have been added later by an unknown person (perhaps they can hardly believe such a bold statement could have been written!).

The oldest known reference to Christ in pagan writings is found in a letter written by the younger Pliny just after the turn of the first century in which he requests advice from the Emperor Trajan on the treatment of Christians. Five years later Tacitus, the Roman historian, described an earlier persecution by the Emperor Nero of the Christians in Rome. (Early Christian tradition holds that St. Peter was martyred during this persecution in 64-68 AD by being crucified upside down). Tacitus’ comments also indicate that there were numerous Christian communities already, in 64 AD, throughout the empire. The existence of the Christian community in Rome at this time and for that matter in many other parts of the known world is solid witness, however inferred, to the historical existence of Christ. There would not have been a body of believers, fairly sizable it is thought, whose formation could have been from nothing.

Since we know that Jesus was crucified in his 33rd year, the aforementioned persecution referred to occurred little more than 30 years later. We know that as early as 52 AD the Christian community in Rome merited the un-welcomed attention of an imperial decree of banishment from Rome by the Emperor Claudius. This decree was a mere two decades after the crucifixion! The decree by the Emperor Claudius is even mentioned in The Acts of the Apostles (Acts 18:2).

What profound event could have happened that would give rise to such a number of adherents of a new faith? It must have been a cataclysmic event indeed to generate a large contingent of believers in the space of two to three decades in the Roman capital, which was not even the cradle of its birth. What precipitated this lightening-speed growth of the infant church was nothing other than, in fact, the resurrection of Christ. What else, we believe, could have possibly provided the necessary motivation to impel the new faith forward so fast and among so many?

With electrified astonishment, the disciples of Christ learned of his resurrection from Mary Magdalene to whom Christ had appeared after his resurrection. Even though some of them had previously seen the empty tomb (John 20:9), they did not yet understand that he would be raised from the dead. When Christ at last appeared to the disciples himself, they were beyond astonishment; and Christ appeared to them two more times. Thus was set in motion the great conversion of the pagan world to Christianity whose first phase culminated in the conquering of the Roman Empire itself when Constantine the Great declared himself a Christian in about 325 AD.

Glory be to God in all things!

The Sacrament of Penance

The essence of Great Lent is *metanoia* (change of mind and heart). Father John will be available to those wishing to come, in a penitent spirit, to the Holy Sacrament of Confession on each Friday after the Salutation Services and after some Holy Week services.



Epitaphion Donations It's that time of year again. The glorious Pascha season. Donations are needed and greatly welcomed toward the flowers for the Epitaphion and icons including lilies for Great Lent and Pascha. Philoptochos would be ever so grateful. Please contact Michelle Selberis at (949) 364-5866 or Georgiann Ellis at (949) 388-5850 if you can help. Thanks!

Announcements

Children's Program on Holy Friday, April 21st

Preparations for the Children's Program are underway. We are planning an informative religious program for grade school kids. This will take place instead of their regular school; excuse notes will be distributed before hand. What a great way for our kids to have a better understanding of Pascha. If you are interested in helping or want to know more so that your kids can attend, please speak to either Ariana Sfakianakis or Chrys Cutrone.

Holy Week Readers

Holy Week services provide many opportunities for individual participation which will enhance your attendance at these services. There are many readings which are prescribed and for which we need volunteers. Please let Robert Henning know if you can assist in this and the service at which you can assist. Please contact him at r.henning1@juno.com.

Philoptochos News

Our Mission Ladies' Philoptochos Society is planning two special events for Palm Sunday: there will be a **Palm Sunday Luncheon** after the Divine Liturgy and a **Bake Sale**, both of which will held at our present location in JSerra. There are sure to be lots of great baked goods there for purchase at the bake sale. The luncheon will be delicious! Proceeds will benefit the Society's causes and the Mission. Please watch for the details of these events in your Email (if you provided one to the Mission) and in flyers to be passed out after church services.

The Philoptochos is always glad to welcome new members. If you are interested in joining or would like more information, please contact Chrys Cutrone at (949) 295-1256.

Greek School

On behalf of the entire Greek School at the Greek Orthodox Mission of South Orange County, we would like to extend our deepest gratitude to all of those who showed support of the program through their attendance at the dinner, purchase of raffle tickets, many hours of planning, helping to decorate, and clean up for our Greek Independence Day celebration. Also appreciated were all the donations of raffle items, drinks, and cash. To Penny and Jim and Sheila Marutsos who so graciously donated food to both the Mission and Greek School, to E. J. Constantine who made possible the use of J. Serra facilities, to Christina Selberis who donated her time and services as DJ for the entertainment of us all, and to all the families of our parish who thought it was most important to support us in retaining the memory of our Greek Heritage: to these persons we are most especially grateful.

Our children worked very hard and performed both their patriotic poems and traditional folk dances beautifully. The event was very successful.

May God continue to bless our Mission, Greek School, and priest, Fr. John, the Greek School teachers, and the parents who continue to help us remember who we are, where we came from, and the history of Greece. Zhtw H Ellas.

The Greek School Board, GOMSOC

Senior News

Our Senior Group is organizing! Since we are truly "ageless," this group includes all persons of similar interests. The first outing for the group will be on May 7th; there will be a no-host luncheon at the Cedar Creek Inn in SJC at 12:30 pm. At this

**Greek Orthodox Mission
of South Orange County**

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**METROPOLIS OF
SAN FRANCISCO**

Sunday Liturgies:

10:00 a.m.

JSerra High School Chapel
26351 Junipero Serra Rd.
San Juan Capistrano

Directions: From I-5 take the Junipero Serra Road exit. Go west on Junipero Serra Road. Just past the Shell gas station on your right, make a right into the next driveway (the sign says Sycamore Commons). Proceed to the north end of the property (signs are posted).

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