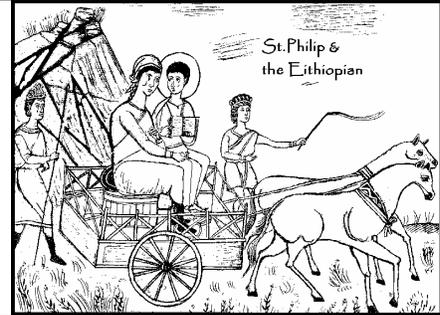


NEWS & NOTES FOR THE ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN EDUCATOR

Vol. XVIII, No. II, Spring 2012

Phyllis Meshel Onest, M.Div., Editor
Director of the Office of Religious Education
Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Pittsburgh



Church School Directors: Please distribute copies of this Newsletter to your teachers.

Contents of the Spring 2012 Newsletter & Packet Handouts

- ❖ Spring 2012 Newsletter (3 pages)
 1. Oratorical Festival News & Notes
 2. Religious Education Commission
 3. Parish Profiles & Teachers' Lists
 4. Editorial: Learning Objectives
 5. The Latest Resources: Orthodox Christian Craft Supply, Orthodox Church in America, Gigi Shadid-Music CD
- ❖ *Lent, Holy Week & Pascha Resources* at www.phyllisonest.com - handout
- ❖ *Pascha vs. Easter, Eggs, Bunnies & Baskets* article 2012 edition - handout
- ❖ Lenten Calendar 2012 - handout
- ❖ *A Special Pascha Tree: The Triodion Sundays* - bulletin board handout
- ❖ *Fact-Finding Lesson on the Myrrhbearers* and *10 Q & A* from an Orthodox online source - 2 handouts

2012 ORATORICAL FESTIVAL

DISTRICT FESTIVAL - Saturday, April 28

- ❖ **West: SS Constantine-Helen, Cleveland, OH**
Caryn Cherpas, cherpfam@msn.com
- ❖ **Central: Holy Trinity, Ambridge, PA**
Stephanie Ramaley, sakapourales@gmail.com
- ❖ **East: St. Matthew, Blandon, PA**
Cheryl Tutella, ctutella@yahoo.com

METROPOLIS FESTIVAL-Saturday, May 18
St. Nicholas Cathedral, Pittsburgh, PA

ARCHDIOCESE FESTIVAL

June 8-10, 2012
St. George, Bethesda, MD

In order for a parish to participate, please complete the **PARISH REGISTRATION FORM** and send copies to the (1) Archdiocese Department of Religious Education (address on Form), (2) the respective District Chair and (3) the Metropolis Chair (Phyllis Meshel Onest, 174 Saint Clair Dr, Akron, OH 44305).

*This will insure your parish receives the emails with updated information and that your parish will be expected at the District Festival.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION COMMISSION

The Religious Education Commission will be meeting soon with Metropolitan Savas via conference call. The Commission will introduce His Eminence to the Commission members and share how we can work together to support the needs of Religious Education within the Metropolis of Pittsburgh. We look forward to his input. Father Frank Milanese, REC Chairman

PARISH PROFILES

Thank you to all the parishes that submitted a **Parish Survey for the Metropolitan's Report**. The information will be useful to Metropolitan Savas, the Metropolis Council, the Religious Education Commission and of course, to me.

PARISH TEACHERS LISTS

Forms and Lists for updating were emailed in November.

- ❑ **If your parish did not submit** a list of Church School Teachers please do so now.
- ❑ **Dr. Vrame** Teachers emails articles directly to our Teachers throughout the school year.



EDITORIAL FROM THE METROPOLIS DIRECTOR...

LEARNING OBJECTIVE FOR TEXTBOOKS GRADES 1-5 Middle/Jr and Sr High

One of the concerns of the Director of Religious Education has to do with what is taught in our Church Schools. The Archdiocese Department of Religious Education offers textbooks for grades Preschool through Grade 12. These make up *THE CURRICULUM*.



Based on 25 of the 28 submitted Parish Profiles, only 7 Church Schools have one classroom per grade. The remaining church schools combine two or three grades to form one class and thus need to rotate books. [Note: 5 church schools have only 1 classroom each.] How can we be sure that the respective topics for each grade are taught?

We have tools! (a) ***Learning Objectives: "Living Our Orthodox Faith" Elementary School Textbook Series - What Your Child Should Know.*** This is an expanded version of "*What Your Child Should Know... after X Grade*" - a project of our Department of Religious Education. (b) ***Learning Objectives: Middle School / Junior High and High School Textbooks - What Your Child Should Know.***

The Fall 2011 Newsletter included both sets of *Learning Objectives*, to which I had integrated the Prayers, Hymns, Songs, Bible Stories, Memory Verses, Saints, Sacraments, Services and Vocabulary of each textbook. The combination offers a type of check sheet of information for each textbook. *This is the tool.* THE *LEARNING OBJECTIVES* provide each teacher with the boundaries of what he/she is to teach. (The *Learning Objectives* are also on my website www.phyllisonest.com)

Church School Directors were asked to make copies for their teachers. PARISH VISITS revealed this was done at Annunciation Cathedral, Columbus, OH. They also revealed it did not occur in the parishes that teachers were teaching (a) concepts beyond the level of their students and/or (b) topics not included in that year's textbook!

Metropolitan Savas asked why there were so few Teacher Seminars listed in my report. It's been difficult to get parishes to host seminars, even for just their respective parishes. I am available for parish and regional levels where we review teaching techniques, what is age appropriate and the curriculum. There's no time to waste on a Sunday morning with material our students cannot understand or are not expected to learn.

CHURCH SCHOOL DIRECTORS AND CLERGY need to review the *LEARNING OBJECTIVES* with their Teaching Staff so that we are working together for the education of our Youth.

RESOURCES

PACKET INSERTS

- ❖ **Lent & Pascha Resources at www.phyllisonest.com** This index identifies the 40-day Lenten activities for the home, games, lesson plans, handouts and more on my website. Please refer to it as you plan your lessons this Triodion season and Holy Week.
- ❖ ***Pascha vs. Easter, Eggs, Bunnies & Baskets*** – I often receive requests for permission to reprint this article in parish bulletins. I offer an updated edition.
- ❖ **Lenten Calendar 2012** Fran Hourican Zappalla (Saint George Church, Media, PA) first developed this calendar. This is its second year in this Newsletter.
- ❖ **A Special Pascha Tree – Triodion Sundays** Thank you Fran Hourican Zappalla for this bulletin board display to teach the Sundays of the Triodion.
- ❖ **Q & A About the Myrrhbearers** 10 Q & A from the website <http://www.orthodox.net/questions/index.html>
- ❖ ***Fact-Finding Lesson on the Myrrhbearers*** - A lesson plan to use on the 3rd Sunday after Pascha, using *10 Q & A About the Myrrhbearers*.

Orthodox Christian Craft Supply

<http://www.orthodoxchristiancraftsupply.com>

How often have we wished for ready-to-go Orthodox craft kits? We finally have a source - Orthodox Christian Craft supply!

According to the website, "...it took a lot of time and work to adjust ideas to fit differences in [Protestant and Catholic] theology and tradition. Sometimes, I had the idea, but I couldn't find Orthodox-specific craft materials to make it a reality. After several years of frustration and not being able to find exactly what I was looking for, I set out to create it myself.

"Orthodox Christian Craft Supply does all the work for you. We've tracked down hard to find supplies. The ones we couldn't find, we found a way to produce. No need to think of a craft idea and how to adapt it to Orthodoxy. No need to go to the craft store and realize they don't manufacture the supply you need. We've done all the research and legwork for your family or parish.

"You don't have to be a crafty person to help your child make these projects. You don't have to own special supplies. All kits were designed to be constructed with basic craft supplies like markers and white glue."

Topics for the various craft kits include:

Nativity of the Theotokos

- Elevation of the Cross
- Entrance of the Theotokos
- Thanksgiving
- St. Nicholas Day
- Nativity of Christ
- Theophany
- Meeting of the Lord
- Great Lent
- Annunciation
- Pascha
- Ascension
- Pentecost
- Apostles' Fast
- Transfiguration
- Dormition
- Gifts/Devotional Items



Entrance of the Theotokos Learning Box Kit \$9

Department of Christian Education, Orthodox Church in America

Activities for Great Lent

Two Lenten activities for Grades 2-3, 4-6, 7-8. The "Teacher Pages," following the "Activity Pages," give answers to the questions, plus suggestions for discussion.

- **Saint Gerasim[os] and the Lion**
- **Scrambled Verses** - During Great Lent, we read many verses from the Book of Proverbs. Here are some verses from Proverbs, with one word missing, and a list of scrambled words...

Online Resources-Lessons on Line

A favorite site on my **ONLINE RESOURCES** list is the section "Lessons-on-Line." Five sites offer not only lessons, but also resources and supplemental material.

On such site, listed as **Scripture, Saints Great Feasts, Nicene Creed + Q&A for each Topic**, is the website of St Nicholas Russian Orthodox Church, McKinney, Texas.

<http://www.orthodox.net/questions/index.html> The Q & A Topics include:

- Scripture
- Scripture read on various Sundays, movable feasts and church days, in order, from Pascha [not complete]
- Lives of the Saints and the Menaion
- Great Lent and Pascha
- Great Feasts
- Liturgics
- The Symbol of Faith

Included in this Packet are the 10 Q & A for the 3rd Sunday of Pascha – *Myrrhbearers Sunday*. I offer the lesson plan *FACT-FINDING LESSON ON THE MYRRHBEARERS* based on the questions. The Answers include the related passages from Scripture.

CD: *The ABC's of Orthodoxy*

Once again, Gigi Baba Shadid offers us a lively CD of Orthodox Children's Music that also teaches about the Orthodox Faith. (\$15.00 + \$3.95 SH) 15 songs range from "Miracles of Jesus" to a rap about "Colors" in church. Use songs in programs and classes. For more information contact Gigi at

gigishadid@yahoo.com

Orthodox Christian Mission Center

Lessons on Missions

http://www.ocmc.org/resources/lesson_plans.aspx



Resources for Great Lent, Holy Week & Pascha at www.phyllisonest.com

Miscellaneous

- **Annunciation Retreat/Project** – Spring '11 ([PDF](#))
- **Holy Friday Retreat Guide** National Forum Musicians – Spring '10 ([PDF](#))
- **Holy Land Posters & Order Form** ([PDF](#))
- **Orthodoxy Sunday Procession** flyer – March '07 Update ([DOC](#)) ([PDF](#))
- **A Resurrection Play** (St. George GOC–Massillon, OH) Spring '09 ([PDF](#))

Articles About...

- **"GREAT LENT"** by Fr. George Shalhoub plus a Lesson Plan – Spring '05 ([PDF](#))
- **"Holy Week Message"** by Dr. Tony Vrame – Spring '10 ([PDF](#))
- **"Planning for Great Lent in the Church School"** by Dr. John Boojamra – Spring '04 ([PDF](#))
- **"Preparing Our Children for Holy Week Services & Pascha"** - March '08 ([PDF](#))

Books, Leaflets, etc.

- **Getting Ready for Holy Week & Pascha** – Book ([PDF](#))
- **Healing Saints in the Unction Service** ([PDF](#))
- **A Young Person's Guide to the Lenten & Holy Week Services** - March 2008 ([PDF](#))

Bulletin Board Ideas

- **Paschal Greetings in Various Languages** – Spring '00 ([PDF](#))

Cards

- **"Pascha Card"** – Spring '05 ([PDF](#))
- **"Pascha Card"** – Spring '11 ([PDF](#))

Confession

- **"Sacrament of Penance and the Younger Child"** by Dr. Constance Tarasar – Spring '01 ([PDF](#))

Games

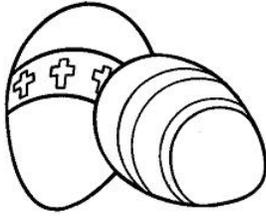
- **Journey to Pascha: Lenten Board Game** – 2011 edition ([PDF](#))
- **PASCHA EGGS: The Resurrection Story for Orthodox Christian Children** – Directions for Assembly & Booklet pages – 2007 Edition ([PDF](#))
- **Pascha Symbols Game** – cards & text - Spring '09 ([PDF](#))
- **Memory Verses for Pascha Symbols** Spring '09 ([PDF](#))

Lesson Plan Ideas

- **Holy Week & Pascha Recall** – Spring '06 ([PDF](#))
- **"Icons & Hymns of Holy Week"** - March 2008 ([PDF](#))
- **Journey through Holy Week – Matching** Spring '09 ([PDF](#))
- **Matins Gospel Classroom Activity** Spring '10 ([PDF](#))
- **Memory Verses for Pascha Symbols** Spring '09 ([PDF](#))
- **Pascha Egg Hunt with a Message** – Classroom Activity – Spring '04 ([PDF](#))
- **Pascha Lesson Cookie Recipe** – Spring '00 ([PDF](#))
- **"Preparing Our Children for Holy Week Services & Pascha"** - March '08 ([PDF](#))
- **Quotes to Remember: A Holy Week Bible Study** – Spring '05 ([PDF](#))
- **Resurrection Witness Reports** Classroom Activity – Spring '02 Newsletter page 2 ([PDF](#))

40-Day Lenten Activities

- **Fishers of Men Lenten Activity** –Spring '11 ([PDF](#))
- **A Lenten Bouquet** (PS – First grade) – Spring '05 ([PDF](#))
- **Lenten Treasure Chest & Coins** (Grades 2–6) – Spring '05 ([PDF](#))
- **Our Lenten Journey Begins** Puzzle for younger children – Spring '06 ([PDF](#))
- **Pascha Egg Collecting Basket** – Lenten activity Spring '06 ([PDF](#))
- **Shamrock Bag** Lenten Home Activity – Spring '04 ([PDF](#))



Pascha vs. Easter, Eggs, Bunnies & Baskets

2012 edition

By Phyllis Meshel Onest, M.Div.

One year, on the day after western Christians celebrated the Resurrection of Christ [Easter], I made my annual pilgrimage to the card, gift & candy store for the 50% off sale of Easter goodies. I also looked for an appropriate card in Russian to send to our adult godchildren in California. [Vladimir and Olga came to the U.S. to study, met, fell in love, and wanted to marry a s Russians "used to do" in the Church. My former husband and I became their sponsors.]

To my surprise the foreign language "Easter" cards all used a form of the word, *Pascha*! Cards in Russian, Slovak, Spanish, Hungarian, Italian, Polish! Later I read that "Easter" is used only in English and German. And here I thought that only Orthodox Christians had the "inside track" on the correct term for this holy day!

Pascha is the Greek form of the Hebrew word, *Pesch* - "Passover" in English. We know that Passover is the Jewish feast commemorating the Israelites' freedom and exodus from Egypt. After all, who doesn't have the image of Charlton Heston as Moses in the movie "The Ten Commandments" engraved in their mind? When I close my eyes, I can see him standing on the rocky edge of the Red Sea, arms spread open in the form of a cross, and the sea parting. [This is the Old Testament reading for the Elevation of the Cross!] Thus the Israelites passed over from "death and slavery" in Egypt / physical death to "life and freedom" in the Promised Land / eternal life in Paradise.

For Orthodox Christians - and apparently for non-English and German Christians - *Pascha* best identifies our Passover from sin's "death and slavery" to "life and freedom" through Christ's Resurrection. Christ not only fulfilled the Old Testament prophecies, but also became the "Passover" Himself. What Moses, the prefiguration of Christ in the Old Testament, inaugurated for the people of Israel on the temporal level, Christ inaugurated for all people on the eternal level.

So where do the terms "Easter" and the Easter Bunny come into play? I have written about the pagan heritage or influence on holidays such as Halloween and May Day. Well, it occurs here as well. According to the Venerable Bede (673-735 AD), a monk who wrote about Anglo-Saxon mythology, Pascha Sunday was called "Easter" in connection with the Anglo-Saxon goddess Eostre/Ostara.

Eostre, the goddess of the spring, is venerated at the vernal equinox. It's no surprise that she and her accompanying symbolism entered into the new religion's festival, since Christianity corresponded so well to the already familiar springtime themes of rebirth, new life, new hope, and light. Her existence is based on folklore and the traditional German festival Ostarun. Although Eostre was nearly always accompanied in legend and art with a hare (rabbit), it was a magical hare that could actually lay eggs ("the Cadbury bunny"). It's easy to see the connection between this myth and the story of the Easter Bunny. [I always wondered why the Easter bunny, a mammal, brought eggs!] Since rabbits reproduce so rapidly, and are associated with fertility, the three became connected - rabbits, eggs and a goddess of Spring (a time of new life and fertility).

Eggs, though, have a worldwide association with rebirth, new life and fertility. The custom of egg-rolling came from Britain and gave rise to today's egg hunts. Most famous are the red eggs of Pascha, which remind us of the blood of the risen Lord. In Orthodox churches, red eggs are blessed by the priest and distributed at the Resurrection service. Before eating the eggs, people tap their eggs against one another's as they say "Christ is Risen!" and respond, "Truly He is Risen!" Cracking the egg represents breaking the seal of Christ's tomb. According to custom, the last person with an uncracked egg, and it may only be at one end, has the blessing.

Article – Pascha/Easter, Eggs, Bunnies, Baskets

(Each year there is a major competition at my family's Pascha dinner to determine who will be that year's "Egg Cracking Champion"! It began when our now-adult children (my daughters and my sister's son and two daughters) were in elementary school and is now taught to the spouses who did not grow up in an Orthodox home and to another generation of Orthodox children.)



St. Mary Magdalene, who is depicted in icons holding a red egg, may have been aware that the Romans would know the meaning of the egg as something that brings forth life from a sealed chamber. After Christ was crucified and rose up to Heaven, Mary was in Rome. When she met with the Roman Emperor Tiberius, she gave him a red colored egg and announced "Christ is Risen!" She then went on to preach to Tiberius about Christ. It was an intelligent choice on her part because it was something the Romans would have understood. (*Included below are a second story and related information.)

The Christian Church realized that while some pagan customs could be eliminated, the new religion would be wise to give new significance and blessing to other established symbols, like the Christmas tree and the Paschal egg. So, while Christians are celebrating the birth or resurrection of Jesus, modern-day pagans are celebrating the return of light or the goddess of spring and fertility.

Thus, when we celebrate the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, let's call it Pascha! Since the "Easter Bunny" has nothing to do with Pascha, but everything to do with pagan gods, let's play it down. Hopefully the Easter Bunny does not visit our parishes. If you want to carry this even further, if your child gets an "Easter basket" or "Pascha basket," rather than fill it with lots of chocolate bunnies, cellophane grass that gets everywhere, and marshmallow chicks that are 100% sugar, consider filling it with some chocolate candies (I prefer sheep and eggs), an icon, a book about Pascha, a good book, or a small toy. For those who bring Pascha baskets of food to be blessed after the Resurrection service, consider including these chocolate delights among the other items.

Originally written by Phyllis Meshel Onest for **ORTHODOX FAMILY LIFE** journal.

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\* The second story states, "When Mary visited the Emperor Tiberius Caesar in Rome, holding a plain egg in her hand, she greeted him with the words; 'Christ is Risen!' The Emperor exclaimed, 'How can someone rise from the dead? This is hard to believe. It is just as likely that Christ rose from the dead as it is likely that the egg you are holding will turn red.' Even as he spoke the egg's color began turning into a brilliant red." [TRIODION AND PENTECOSTARION edited by Fr. David Kidd & Mother Gabriella, HDM Press, Rives, Junction, MI, 1999, p.186.]

In addition, according to the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of Australia, it is from this tradition that we distribute red eggs at Pascha. "On one ancient hand-written Greek ustav written on parchment, kept in the Monastery library of St. Athanasius near Thessalonika (Solunea), is an established prayer read on the day of Holy Pascha for the blessing of eggs and cheese, in which it is indicated that the Hegumen (Abbot) in passing out the blessed eggs says to the brethren: 'Thus have we received from the holy fathers, who preserved this custom from the very time of the holy apostles, wherefore the holy equal-unto-the-apostles Mary Magdalene showed believers the example of this joyful offering'".

# Great Lent 2012

| Sunday Feb 26                                                  | Monday Feb 27                        | Tuesday Feb 28                    | Wed Feb 29                                     | Thursday March 1                                                           | Friday March 24                                                             | Saturday March 3                                               |
|----------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|
| Forgiveness Sunday<br>Cheesfare Sunday                         | <i>Great Lent Begins</i><br>Compline |                                   | Presanctified<br>Liturgy                       |                                                                            | Akathist Hymn                                                               | Saturday of Souls<br>Divine Liturgy                            |
| Sunday March 4                                                 | Monday March 5                       | Tuesday March 6                   | Wed March 7                                    | Thursday March 8                                                           | Friday March 9                                                              | Saturday March 10                                              |
| Sunday of<br>Orthodoxy<br><b>BRING YOUR ICON<br/>TO CHURCH</b> | Compline                             |                                   | Presanctified<br>Liturgy                       |                                                                            | Akathist Hymn                                                               | Saturday of Souls<br>Divine Liturgy                            |
| Sunday March 11                                                | Monday March 12                      | Tuesday March 13                  | Wed March 14                                   | Thursday March 15                                                          | Friday March 16                                                             | Saturday March 17                                              |
| Sunday of<br>St Gregory<br>Palamas                             | Compline                             |                                   | Presanctified<br>Liturgy                       |                                                                            | Akathist Hymn                                                               |                                                                |
| Sunday March 18                                                | Monday March 19                      | Tuesday March 20                  | Wed March 21                                   | Thursday March 22                                                          | Friday March 23                                                             | Saturday March 24                                              |
| Sunday of the<br>Holy Cross                                    | Compline                             |                                   | Presanctified<br>Liturgy                       |                                                                            | Akathist Hymn                                                               | Vespers of the<br>Annunciation                                 |
| Sunday March 25                                                | Monday March 26                      | Tuesday March 27                  | Wed March 28                                   | Thursday March 29                                                          | Friday March 30                                                             | Saturday March 31                                              |
| <i>The Annunciation<br/>of the Theotokos</i>                   | Compline                             |                                   | Presanctified<br>Liturgy                       |                                                                            | St. John Climacus<br>Akathist Hymn                                          |                                                                |
| Sunday April 1                                                 | Monday April 2                       | Tuesday April 3                   | Wed April 4                                    | Thursday April 5                                                           | Friday April 6                                                              | Saturday April 7                                               |
| Sunday of<br>St. Mary of Egypt                                 | Compline                             |                                   |                                                |                                                                            |                                                                             | <i>Lazarus Saturday</i><br>Divine Liturgy                      |
| Sunday April 8                                                 | Monday April 9                       | Tuesday April 10                  | Wed April 11                                   | Thursday April 12                                                          | Friday April 13                                                             | Saturday April 14                                              |
| <i>Palm Sunday</i><br>Bridegroom                               | <i>Holy Monday</i><br>Bridegroom     | <i>Holy Tuesday</i><br>Bridegroom | <i>Holy Wednesday</i><br>Unction<br>Bridegroom | <i>Holy Thursday</i><br>Liturgy - Last Supper<br>Jesus put on the<br>Cross | <i>Great Friday</i><br>Royal Hours<br>Jesus down from cross<br>Lamentations | <i>Holy Saturday</i><br>Vesper-Liturgy<br>Resurrection Liturgy |



## *A Special Pascha Tree the Triodion Sundays*

By Fran Hourican Zappalla, Saint George Church, Media, PA

### **Materials**

- ❖ Brown construction paper for the tree
- ❖ Green construction paper for the leaves
- ❖ Various colors of construction paper for flowers and butterflies
- ❖ Black markers
- ❖ White tissue paper for cocoons – Please refer to #7 below.
- ❖ Scissors
- ❖ Patterns are not included

**Note:** The above drawing is only an artistic rendition of what the tree could look like after Pascha. Adjust the size of the tree and leaves to fit your space. Write the names of the Pre-Lenten and Lenten Sundays of the Great Fast on the leaves.

**Note from Fran:** “When we talked about Christ going into the tomb and the Resurrection, I spoke about how a caterpillar goes into a cocoon and turns into a beautiful butterfly during Lent. We made caterpillars (pipe cleaners), put them in cocoons (made of tissue paper) and hung them on our tree. Adding the butterflies to the tree connected the lessons.”

### **Procedure:**

1. Cut a tree from the brown construction paper
2. Attach it to the bulletin board or adhere it to the classroom wall with plastic putty. The tree starts out bare.
3. Label one branch as "The Preparatory Sundays."
4. Each Sunday add a leaf with that week's theme.
  - ❖ Place the Sunday of the Publican and Pharisee, the Sunday of the Prodigal Son, Judgment Sunday and Forgiveness Sunday leaves on the branch marked "Preparatory Sundays."
  - ❖ Place the Sundays of Orthodoxy, Saint Gregory Palamas, the Cross, Saint John Climacus, Saint Mary of Egypt and Palm Sunday throughout the tree, as well as some blank leaves to fill in the tree.
5. Since there are no classes on Pascha / Easter Sunday, be sure to visit your classroom during Holy Week to add flowers and butterflies.
6. When the students return on SaintThomas Sunday, they will find their tree will have "bloomed."



## QUESTIONS ABOUT THE MYRRHBEARERS

### QUESTION 1

**Who is commemorated the 3rd Sunday of Pascha? List all nine names.**

The Church commemorates seven myrrhbearing women on the third Sunday of Pascha: Mary Magdalene, Mary, another Mary, Martha, Salome, Joanna, Susanna, as well as Righteous Joseph of Arimathia and Nicodemus.

### QUESTION 2

**Who was the myrrhbearer who was the mother of two of the apostles?**

Salome, daughter of St. Joseph the Betrothed, was the wife of Zebedee, and the mother of the holy apostles James and John.

### QUESTION 3

**One of the myrrhbearers was married to one of the seventy apostles, who saw the risen Lord before the eleven. Who was she and who was her husband?**

Mary was the wife of Cleophas, as the Holy Evangelist John reports: *"Now there stood by the cross of Jesus his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene"*. (John 19:25). Cleophas was a brother of St. Joseph the Betrothed and, along with St. Luke, met Jesus on the day of the resurrection, while on the way to Emmaus. This incredible story is recounted in the 5th Matins Gospel: Luke 24:12- 35... After a long enlightening discourse with Him, they finally recognized Him after He broke bread and blessed it.

### QUESTION 4

**Which 2 myrrhbearers were sisters? Mary and Martha, whose brother was Lazarus.**

### QUESTION 5

**One myrrhbearer was demon possessed and cured by Christ. Who? How many devils? For what Pascha tradition is she responsible?**

Mary Magdalene was formerly possessed by seven devils (demons): *"... And certain women, which had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities, Mary called Magdalene, out of whom went seven devils ..."* (Luke 8:2)

St. Mary Magdalene showed a red egg to a Roman Emperor as proof of the power of Christ, and to this day, it is traditional to have red eggs at Pascha.

### QUESTION 6

**What was the contribution to the burial of Christ by the men commemorated today?**

The Righteous Joseph obtained the body of Jesus, and along with Nicodemus, anointed Him as best they could and buried him in a tomb that Joseph had intended for himself. *"When the even was come, there came a rich man of Arimathaea, named Joseph, who also himself was Jesus' disciple: He went to Pilate, and begged the body of Jesus. Then Pilate commanded the body to be delivered. And when Joseph had taken the body, he wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, And laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out in the rock: and he rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulchre, and departed. And there was Mary Magdalene, and the other Mary, sitting over against the sepulchre. (Matthew 27:57-61)*

*"And after this Joseph of Arimathaea, being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews, besought Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus: and Pilate gave him leave. He came therefore, and took the body of Jesus. And there came also Nicodemus, which at the first came to Jesus by night, and brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about an hundred pound weight. Then took they the body of Jesus, and wound it in linen clothes with the spices, as the manner of the Jews is to bury. Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden; and in the garden a new sepulchre, wherein was never man yet laid. There laid they Jesus therefore because of the Jews' preparation day; for the sepulchre was nigh at hand." (John 19:38-42)*

### QUESTION 7

**Why were the myrrh-bearing women going to the tomb early Sunday morning? Why did they not do this earlier? According to the teaching of the fathers and services, what was the nature of their thoughts.** The women wanted to anoint the body of Jesus, since they did not have enough time

## Myrrhbearers Q&A

before the Passover began. They were going to the grave to anoint a dead man. They as yet did not understand that He would rise from the dead.

### QUESTION 8

**The Gospels mention a "Mary the mother of James", and "Mary the mother of James the less". Who was this Mary?**

According to the witness of the majority of the Fathers, "Mary the mother of James" was none other than the Theotokos. Blessed Theofylact, in his commentary on St. Luke chapter 24 states this quite plainly: "Mary the mother of James is the Theotokos. They gave her this name as the apparent mother of James the son of Joseph, whom also they called James the Younger, that is, the brother of the Lord. For there was also James the Elder, one of the twelve, the son of Zebedee" (Blessed Theofylact, Commentary on St. Luke, Pg. 317).

Holy tradition and the gospels place the Theotokos at the cross of Christ, as St. John states: "*Now there stood by the cross of Jesus his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene.*" (John 19:25)

The Evangelist Mark mentions the mother of God by this other, more cryptic name when he describes those who were near the cross: "*There were also women looking on afar off: among whom was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the less and of James, and Salome; (Who also, when he was in Galilee, followed him, and ministered unto him;) and many other women which came up with him unto Jerusalem.*" (Mark 15:40-41)

The Holy Church often refers to the Theotokos quite cryptically, from the Old Testament prophecies into the New Testament evangelical writings. ...

### QUESTION 9

**What were the women concerned about at that very early hour as they went to the tomb to anoint a dead body? What obstacle was curiously missing from their worried thoughts? What happened? Relate the instructions they were given, and in particular, why a particular apostle was singled out by name.**

The women were mostly concerned about the great stone in front of the tomb, and seemed to not even be considering that the tomb was guarded by an elite contingent of soldiers! "*And they said among themselves, Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre?*" (Mark 16:3)

They saw the stone rolled away from the tomb, and were met by an angel when they entered it: "*And when they looked, they saw that the stone was rolled away: for it was very great. And entering into the sepulchre, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, clothed in a long white garment; and they were affrighted.*" (Mark 16:4-5)

The angel told them to tell the apostles, but especially singled out Peter: "*And he saith unto them, Be not affrighted: Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified: he is risen; he is not here: behold the place where they laid him. But go your way, tell his disciples and Peter that he goes before you into Galilee: there shall ye see him, as he said unto you.*" (Mark 16:6-7)

It had only been a few days since Peter had denied Christ three times. He was in a bewildered state, with his conscience pricking him terribly, and needed to be encouraged. A sessional hymn sung in matins expresses what surely must have been Peter's feelings: "*After Thy Resurrection on the third day / and the act of worship of the Apostles, / Peter called out unto Thee: / "The women ventured while I was afraid; / the thief confessed God while I denied Him. / Will Thou continue to call me a disciple? / Will Thou not make me again a fisher of the deep? // Rather accept me repenting, O God, and save me."* (Sessional Hymn after the 2<sup>nd</sup> Psalter reading of, Sunday matins, 5<sup>th</sup> tone)

### QUESTION 10

**Which myrrhbearer was affiliated in some way with Herod?**

Joanna was the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward. "*And certain women, which had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities, Mary called Magdalene, out whom went seven devils, And Joanna the wife of Chuza Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others, which ministered unto him of their substance.*" (Luke 8:2-3)

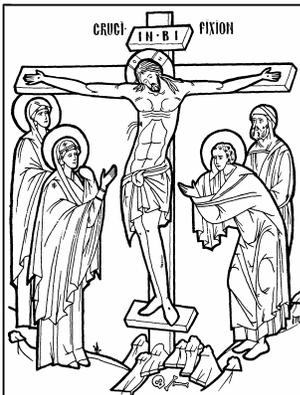
[PMO: Joanna is also the individual who retrieved the head of John the Baptist after Herod had it discarded it in an unclean place.]

These Q & A's are found on the website of St Nicholas Russian Orthodox Church, McKinney, TX.

<http://www.orthodox.net/questions/index.html>

## Fact-Finding Lesson on the Myrrhbearers

By Phyllis Meshel Onest, M.Div.



### Objectives:

1. The students will state on which Sunday the Orthodox Church remembers the Myrrhbearers.
2. The students will be able to name 3 of the 7 women Myrrhbearers.
3. The students will be able to identify the two men who cared for Jesus' body.
4. The students will relate the story of the Myrrhbearing Women at the Tomb of Christ.

### Materials:

1. Question & Answer Sheet: **QUESTIONS ABOUT THE MYRRHBEARERS**
2. An icon of the Myrrhbearers. If possible, multiple copies of the same or various icons. (This is where a "stash" of past icon bulletin covers is useful.)
3. An icon of the Crucifixion of Christ that includes several Myrrhbearers.
4. The icon of St Mary Magdalene holding a red egg. Opt.
5. Myrrh – available at craft stores. Opt.

### Vocabulary:

1. **Myrrh** - an aromatic gum resin that exudes from several trees or shrubs growing in eastern Africa; used in medicine. Also used in the anointing of the dead in the Bible.

### Procedure:

**Opening Prayer:** Chant: *Christ is Risen ...*

**Motivation:** Put a dab of myrrh on each student's wrist. Have them smell it. *Can anyone guess what this is?* [fragrance, essential oil, myrrh] *How is it used?* [various medicinal uses and in anointing the dead]

### Lesson:

1. Distribute paper icons to each student or group of 2-3 students. Otherwise, place the icon in an area visible to all the students. [If various icons are used, compare the different scenes.]
2. Invite the students to describe the scene. [cave, large stone, maybe guards asleep, angel, how many women, what are they holding, ...]
3. What are the expressions on the women's faces?
4. Use the questions (those that are age-appropriate) as a guide for the discussion.

Resource: *Lesson Plan - Sunday of the Myrrhbearers* by Vasiliki Tsigas-Fotinis, Ph.D.