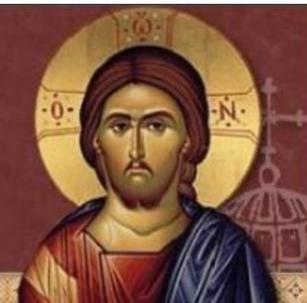


# THE SPIRIT

## EASTER EDITION

### APRIL 2013



#### UPCOMING EVENTS

##### ACOY Retreat

26th -28th July

Mark | 0401 127 586

##### Youth Night

Every Thursday 7pm

Micha | 0403 277 488

#### QUOTE OF THE MONTH

We cannot attain to the full the love of the Mother of God, so we cannot thoroughly comprehend the grief. Her love was complete. She had an illimitable love for God and her Son, but she loved the people too with great love.

What, then, must she have felt when those same people whom she loved so dearly, and whose salvation she desired with all her being, crucified her beloved Son? We cannot fathom such things, since there is little love in us for God and man.

Just as the love of the Mother of God is boundless and passes our understanding, so is her grief boundless and beyond our understanding.

St. Silouan the Athonite

#### WHAT CAME FIRST, THE CHOCOLATE OR THE EGG?

**W**e all know that annual Easter tradition. You know, the one where we decorate boiled eggs with red colouring, bust our Dad sussing out the strongest egg and, best of all, the long anticipated egg-cracking competitions on Easter morning! But how many of us can truly say we understand the significance of these actions? Or more broadly, how many of us are actually aware of the Easter egg's origin?



Society has long recognised the egg as the symbol of fertility, rebirth and new life. But Christians views it in a whole new and philosophical dimension. In Christianity, the egg symbolises the empty tomb of Jesus Christ. Just as a bird hatches from an egg, similarly, the Easter egg reminds us that Jesus rose from the grave and those who believe will receive eternal life.

In this way, the Orthodox and Eastern Catholic Churches dye eggs red to represent the blood of Christ shed on the cross. As the hard shell of the egg symbolises the sealed Tomb of Christ, our 'egg-cracking' tournaments symbolise His resurrection.

Bless, O Lord! We beseech thee, this thy creature of eggs, that it may become a wholesome sustenance to thy faithful servants, eating it in thankfulness to thee on account of the resurrection of the Lord.

But how does this correlate with the shelves and shelves of chocolate-y goodness sprawled across our supermarkets today? Gifting eggs dates back to its earliest presentation to the ancient Sumerians and Egyptians' graves, and in the 17th and 18th centuries when egg-shaped toys were given to children to represent the gift of new life.

Then came the Victorians and their 'plush' egg toys, then the Russian jeweled egg creations and, finally, the chocolate 'Easter' egg we recognise today, which more often than not focuses more on the commercial aspect of Easter rather than its theological importance.

So before you stuff yourself with chocolate this Easter, make sure you leave some room to remember the true essence and significance of the egg's historical and traditional origins, the resurrection of Christ and the rebirth of humanity.

Samantha Antoun

## THE MIRACLE OF THE HOLY FIRE



Imagine thousands of Orthodox pilgrims gathered at the Church of Resurrection in Jerusalem. Imagine a fire so divine, it does not burn when you touch it. Imagine oil lamps and pilgrims' candles lighting up spontaneously. Imagine this happening every single year at the same place and time for centuries. This is the Miracle of the Holy Fire.

Pilgrims camp outside the Church of Resurrection on Holy Friday, eagerly anticipating the miracle of Holy Saturday. The day begins with Christians chanting traditional hymns loudly at 11am. Arabic drums are played, drummers are carried on shoulders and excitement builds among the crowd. But when the clock strikes one, a tense silence fills the air as pilgrims await God's divine power.

To ensure the miracle isn't a hoax, the Israeli authorities make their way to Jesus' tomb and scope the area for anything that may spark a fire. After completing their checks, they seal the tomb with wax. This mirrors the Romans in Jesus' time, as they also sealed the tomb with wax so the disciples wouldn't steal His body and claim He has risen.

The Orthodox Patriarch is the only person that can enter the darkened tomb of Jesus alone. He kneels and says prayers that have been handed down through the centuries and awaits the miracle to occur. Orthodox Patriarch Didier says an indefinable light pours forth from the stone where Jesus lay. "It cannot be described in human terms," he said. "It almost looks like the stone is covered by a moist cloud."

The light behaves differently each year, but one thing that doesn't change is its inability to burn when touched. The Patriarch has never had his beard, face or hands burnt by the light. Once the light appears, the Patriarch lights two candles and steps out of the tomb. The light is passed through the crowd and pilgrims put

their hands and faces through the fire without burning themselves. The light is seen to randomly travel and light the oil lamps in the Church. Skeptics are silenced by the testimonies of thousands of pilgrims whose candles lit spontaneously.

**"It cannot be described in human terms," he said. "It almost looks like the stone is covered by a moist cloud."**

This Holy Light only appears by the invocation of an Orthodox Archbishop. There have been three known attempts by non-Orthodox to obtain the Holy Light. Each attempt failed. Two separate priests from the Roman Church tried forcing the Orthodox out but sated it ended with God's Punishment.

In 1579, the Armenians paid the Turkish to allow their Patriarch to enter the Holy tomb. The Orthodox Patriarch stood sorrowfully near a column at the exit of the Church with the pilgrims. While waiting, the Holy light split the column vertically and flashed near the Orthodox Patriarch. The split in the pole still exists today and is embraced by Orthodox Christians.

A Muslim at the time saw the miracle from the adjacent mosque and immediately abandoned the Muslim faith and became an Orthodox Christian. He leapt ten meters to the ground from the mosque, but did not die as the stones beneath him became as soft as wax. The footprint left on them still exists today, despite the Turkish trying to remove them. The Turkish later burned him to death for acknowledging Christ as God. His remains were gathered by the Greeks and lay in the monastery of Pangaea until the 19th century shedding chism.

Isabel Antoun



## AN EASTER PRAYER

Lord, the resurrection of Your Son has given us new life and renewed hope.

Help us to live as new people in pursuit of the Christian ideal.

Grant us wisdom to know what we must do, the will to want to do it, the courage to undertake it, the perseverance to continue to do it, and the strength to complete it.

## FUN EASTER FACTS

Our fun 'egg-cracking' tournaments are actually a seriously competitive event in England. Known as 'egg-jarping,' the annual world championships donate their proceeds to Macmillan Cancer Support Charity.

The Priest uses 33 candles during the paschal service to symbolize the number of years Christ was alive.

The white trumpet lily is the most popular flower during Easter. It symbolizes grace, purity and virtue.

Kite flying is an Easter custom in Guyana, as it symbolizes Christ's ascension to heaven.

Parents in France tell their children that Easter eggs come from Easter Bells, not bunnies.

## SAINT MARY OF EGYPT

**S**aint Mary of Egypt was a desert ascetic who repented a life of prostitution. She was born in Egypt, leaving her parents at a young age of 12 to live the next 17 years of her life in wrongdoing and submission to worldly sin. One day Mary noticed a crowd of pilgrims and, curious to see what was going on, followed them to the church. However, an invisible force prevented her from entering the church. Mary realised it was impurity that she was unable, or rather unworthy, to enter the church. Seeing an icon of the Mother of God, she prayed to her. She suddenly felt herself free and able to enter. There she humbly venerated the Holy Cross and proclaimed to the icon of Mary that she was ready to follow the path shown to her. A voice replied to her, *"If you cross the Jordan, you will find rest."*

So Mary travelled to the desert, living solely on 3 loaves of bread. She remained in the desert for 47 years without encountering another person.

As those years passed, a holy elder named Zosimas travelled to the desert. Elder Zosimas saw Mary, who humbly asked the elder for his cloak to wear, as her garments were torn to pieces. Intrigued by Mary, the elder urged her to tell her story. Upon finishing, Mary asked the elder if he could come back next year with Holy Communion. Mary knew at this point her life was coming to an end. When she received Holy Communion she cried aloud, "Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace according to Thy word; for mine



eyes have seen Thy salvation." Mary asked the elder to meet her again the following year. Sadly the next year, the elder found Mary's lifeless body on the ground. He noticed a message inscribed in the ground, "Abba Zosimas, bury here the body of the humble Mary; give what is of dust to dust, after having prayed for me. I died on the first day of April, the very night of the Passion of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, after having partaken in the Holy Eucharist."

The elder tried digging with his stick. Having tried and failed, he saw a lion approach, kiss the Saint's body and lick her feet. The elder ordered the lion to dig a hole with its claws. He then placed the Saint's body in there.

Saint Mary has become a source of hope and a model of conversion. This is specifically why the Holy Fathers placed the celebration of her memory at the end of the Great Fast, to encourage those who have neglected their salvation that repentance can bring them back to God even at the eleventh hour.

Saint Mary of Egypt's Feast Day is commemorated on the fifth Sunday in Great Lent, as well as on the day of her repose.

Micha Chalhoub

## THE RISING OF LAZARUS

On the Saturday before Holy Week, the Orthodox Church commemorates a major feast of the year, the miracle Jesus Christ when he raised Lazarus from the dead after he had lain in the grave for four days. Both this feast and Palm Sunday are joyous festivals of the Church and bright colours are used for vestments and the Holy Table.

As the liturgical texts emphasize, the miracle at Bethany reveals the two natures of Christ the God-man. Christ asks where Lazarus is laid and weeps for him, showing the fullness of His humanity. Then, revealing the fullness of His divine power, Christ raises Lazarus from the dead, even though his corpse has already begun to decompose and stink.

This double fullness of the Lord's divinity and His humanity is to be kept in view throughout Holy Week and, above all, on Good Friday. We see genuine human agony on the cross, both physical and mental. But we see more than this.

We not only see man suffering, but also God suffering.

Jomana Daher

## WHAT IS THE PASCHAL GREETING ?

*Christ is Risen! Indeed, He is Risen!  
Al Massih Qam! Haken Qam!  
Christos Anesti! Alithos Anesti!*

Sound familiar? This is the joyous proclamation, in three of many languages, we chant and say strongly and proudly at Pascha and during the entire *Paschaltide* period.

As Orthodox Christians, we call this the Paschal greeting. Instead of our everyday "hello", we greet another person with "Christ is Risen!", and their response is "Indeed, He is Risen".

In doing so, we imitate the Lord's disciples who, after His Resurrection, said: "the Lord is Risen indeed" (Luke 24: 14-35). This greeting fills our soul with indescribable joy. When you say, or hear the sweet words "Christ is

Risen!", "Indeed, He is Risen!" you feel an unexplainable happiness. It expresses that sweet hope in our own coming resurrection.

Many exchange a kiss during this greeting. What is the meaning of that kiss? Ordinarily, a kiss is a sign of sincere mutual love and has the same meaning in this Paschal rite.

As Saint John Chrysostom said, "The Feast of Pascha is a pledge of peace, a fountain of reconciliation, the destruction of death, the devil's ruin. Today people have become one with the angels..."

Natalie Daher

Got a question you want answered? Email it to [ruperta.daher@gmail.com](mailto:ruperta.daher@gmail.com)

## GETTING TO KNOW YOU-TH



**Name:** Rana Bou-Ghosn

**Age:** 23

**Favourite Colour:** Red

**Favourite Movie:** Kings Speech

**Favourite Quote:** "And though I have the gift of prophecy and understand all mysteries and all knowledge and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing." Corinthians 3:2

**What's a random act of kindness you've witnessed?** I saw an elderly customer give a box of chocolates to a shop assistant to show his appreciation for their genuine assistance. Such a small gesture would put a smile on just about anyone's face!

**Best advice you've been given:** When you learn, you learn for yourself. Education and knowledge is the one thing in life that no one can take away from you.