

LAZARUS SATURDAY — Archbishop Andrei (Rymarenko, 1893–1978)

By raising Lazarus from the dead before Thy passion, Thou didst confirm the universal resurrection, O Christ God...

Great is this Holy Day, brothers and sisters! Just think of it, “Conqueror of death!” There have been many conquerors in the history of humanity: many gifted doctors have conquered many sicknesses, many military leaders have conquered tremendous armies, even entire countries. There have been conquerors of space such as the inventors of automobiles, airplanes; conquerors of distance—the inventors of the telephone, telegraph, and so on. But “Conqueror of death”—the whole world does not know of anyone else but Jesus Christ. He alone. Even the so-called “unbelieving world” cannot mention another name. No one among the most prominent people would ever even attempt to make such a claim. But He is, was, and will be—our Savior and our Lord. During His historical evangelistic life He proved this in three instances: the resurrection of the daughter of Jairus, the resurrection of the son of the widow of Nain, and here in today’s Gospel, the resurrection of Lazarus.

The death of the daughter of Jairus was a recent one. She died while Christ and her father were going to her. Even Christ called it slumber; but the people “laughed Him to scorn, knowing that she was dead. And He put them all out, and took her by the hand, and called, saying, Maid, arise! And her spirit came again, and she arose straightway: and He commanded to give her meat” (Lk. 8:53-55).

In the case of the son of the widow of Nain, death, seemingly stronger, came into its own: the dead man had already been laid on the funeral bier. They had carried him not only from the house, but already through the city gates. In order to touch the bier, the Lord had to stop the carriers. And only then did He say, “Young man, I say unto thee, Arise! And he that was dead sat up, and began to speak. And He delivered him to his mother” (Lk. 7:14-15).

And now Lazarus. The victory of death here was final, one hundred percent. Lazarus had been in the tomb four days already. There was weeping, but no one had any hope of an instantaneous resurrection. Even one of the dead man’s sisters said to the Lord: “I know he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day.” Even the Lord Himself, when He “saw her weeping, and the Jews also weeping which came with her, He groaned in the spirit,

and was troubled,” and He wept. Finally He said, “Take ye away the stone.” Here, even the sister of the dead man could not contain herself and said to Him: “Lord, by this time he stinketh: for he hath been dead four days.” So the stone was removed from the tomb where the dead man was lying, and Christ cried with a loud voice, “Lazarus, come forth! And he that was dead came forth bound hand and foot with grave clothes: and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go” (Jn. 11:17-44).

Besides physical death, there is spiritual death. Physical death is visible to everyone, but spiritual death is usually not noticeable to people. It is felt only by the dead person himself. Bishop Theophan the Recluse said much about this. Sometimes it happens that a sinful thought darts into your mind and awakens a sinful feeling, but the soul catches itself and calls to the Lord in repentance. And the Lord, as with the daughter of Jairus, will as if stretch out His hand and say, “Soul, arise!” And life will return to its joyous flow. But sometimes it happens that we do not catch ourselves in time and sin enters more deeply into our soul (like going out from the house) and the result will be full acceptance of the sin, and turmoil. But also here, by the prayers of our Mother, the Church of Christ, who cries before the Lord for her children, we can be alerted; and the Lord will tell us as He did the son of the widow of Nain: “Soul, I say unto thee, Arise!” This is salvation.

But what shall we do if sin completely enslaves our soul, as if covering it with a tombstone; and so day after day goes by and passions start to exude their sinful stench, just as with Lazarus? What should we do then? Well, then we need confession, the sacrament which Christ established after His Resurrection, when He said to His disciples, “Receive ye the Holy Spirit: Whose so ever sins ye forgive, they are forgiven” (Jn. 20:22-23). See how all this is reflected in the resurrection of Lazarus. Lazarus, on his own, could not go out from the tomb because it was blocked by a stone. He couldn’t even walk, because he was bound hand and foot with funeral bandages. And here Christ said to His disciples, “Loose him.” In application to us, this means that the Lord orders our clergy, who have received in the Sacrament of the Priesthood the gift of the Holy Spirit, to loose our sins. What joy!

And more: death is not the cause but only the

INFORMATION

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result, the consequence of sin. And Christ is, first of all, the Conqueror of sin, and then along with it, the Conqueror of death. So let us triumph: “Hosanna in the highest!”

“The joy which permeates these services stresses one central theme: the forthcoming victory of Christ over Hades. Hades is the Biblical term for Death in its universal power, for that unescapable darkness and destruction that swallows all life and poisons with its shadow the whole world. But now — with Lazarus’ resurrection — “death begins to tremble.” For there the decisive duel between Life and Death begins and it gives us the key to the entire liturgical mystery of Pascha. In the early church Lazarus Saturday was called ‘announcement of Pascha’ for it announces and anticipates, indeed, the wonderful light and peace of the next—the Great and Holy Saturday, the day of the Life-giving Tomb.” —*Fr. Alexander Schmemmann*

The **Matins for Lazarus Saturday will be celebrated on Friday, April 11** at 6:15 PM. This Resurrectional Matins is about one hour in length. **Divine Liturgy will be celebrated at 9:30 AM, April 12.**

HOLY SATURDAY

HOLY SATURDAY is not just the day between the sorrow of Holy Friday and the joy of Pascha. It is a unique day of the exodus of Christ from death to life, a day of sorrow becoming triumph. Consider: there is no morning Divine Liturgy on Holy Saturday. That’s because Holy Saturday is a strict fasting day, the only Saturday strict fast of the year, and ideally, we do not eat or drink anything, because we are keeping

vigil before the tomb, whether we are in Church or at home. A morning Liturgy would break the fast, and end our vigil. At 1 PM in the afternoon of Holy Saturday (the Typikon prescribes it be 4 PM; we begin at 1 PM for convenience sake), we assemble for the Evening Service—Vespers—just as we do each and every Saturday evening.

As we know, the liturgical day begins at sunset. The Lord’s Pascha is no exception, and it is during the Vespers on Holy Saturday afternoon that the Church begins to celebrate Christ’s resurrection from the dead. We sing the hymns of the day, then three which begin with the words “Today Hades groans and cries aloud...” We listen to fifteen Old Testament lessons, prophecies about resurrection, baptism, the second coming and new creation, then we baptize catechumens, then the Epistle from *Romans* about Baptism, then the hymn “Arise, O Lord, judge the earth...” during which all the purple hangings of Lent are changed to white of Pascha. And then the priests and deacons, now in white vestments, read from the Gospel that “He is not here, He is risen...” Fr. Alexander Schmemmann, in his synopsis of Holy Week, wrote that on Holy Saturday “the Church proclaims that Christ has ‘trampled death by death.’ It means that even before the Resurrection, an event takes place, in which the sorrow is not simply replaced by joy, but is itself transformed into joy. Great Saturday is precisely this day of transformation, the day when victory grows from inside the defeat [it appears that XC is defeated], when before the Resurrection, we are given to contemplate the death of death itself...all this is expressed, and even more, all this really takes place every year in this marvelous Vespertal Liturgy, in this liturgical commemoration which becomes for us a saving and transforming present.”

We recall that the realm of death, so-called *Hades* (Greek) or *Sheol* (Hebrew) is the breaking apart of **soul and body**, which were created together and meant for glory together, the separation from life and from God Who gives life. Father Alexander continues: “The Righteous One is crucified, abandoned by all, and endures a shameful death. He also becomes the partaker of ‘Hades,’ of this place of darkness and despair...the Man who dies is God, or to be more exact, the God-Man. God is the Holy Immortal; and only in the unity ‘without confusion, without change, without division, without sepa-

ration' of God and Man in Christ can human death be 'assumed' by God and be overcome and destroyed from within, be 'trampled down by death... Life enters the Kingdom of death. The Divine Light shines in its terrible darkness. It shines to all who are there, because Christ is the life of all, the only source of every life. Therefore He also dies for all, for whatever happens to His life—happens in Life itself... This descent into Hades is the encounter of the Life of all with the death of all..."

John of Damascus wrote that Christ, as the Sun of Righteousness, brought light to those in Hades just as He did for those in Galilee and elsewhere: "...He brought the message of peace to those upon the earth, of release to the prisoners and of sight to the blind. He became to those who believed the Author of everlasting salvation and to those who did not believe a reproach of their unbelief; so He might become the same to those in Hades. He did this that every knee should bow to Him, of things in heaven, and things in earth and things under the earth (Phil. 2:10). After He had freed those who had been bound for ages, immediately He rose again from the dead, showing us the way of resurrection." He took captivity captive, as St Paul wrote in Ephesians 4:8, quoting Psalm 67, which is the Psalm we sing on Pascha, *Let God Arise*. In "leading captivity captive" St. Paul was referring to raising the righteous out of captivity in Hades where they had been held captive awaiting their redemption.

We can easily understand how unique Great and Holy Saturday is, and that it gives meaning to all the other Saturdays of the year, making them days of expectation of the Second Coming of the Savior and our resurrection. Such a day needs the right approach, so we should carefully consider how to properly prepare ourselves? I would advise as follows:

- Upon rising, say the Prayers Before Communion, according to your rule.

- Some people prefer to fast from all food and drink until after Communion. However, since you will not be receiving Communion until around 3 PM, some of us may not be able to fast so strictly. In that case, drink plenty of water, coffee if you need it, and eat something very light, but not after 10 AM. Being strict with ourselves is good, and we may surprise ourselves by what we can and cannot do. But remember that the day will be long.

- Most importantly, this Blessed Sabbath is a day of quiet: radios, TVs, internet surfing, video games and social media are intrusions into the holiness of the day. In fact, come Great and Holy Monday, shut off anything that makes noise. Missing a few ballgames and some TV news won't impact you very much. We are keeping watch on our souls, guarding them from the passions by prayer, keeping our attention on the tomb and resurrection.

- Of course, we have duties: our children have many needs, some will be making kulich bread, cheese pascha, preparing Paschal Baskets, cleaning their homes to welcome the Day of Resurrection (this cleaning is far more spiritually important than many people realize), and other responsibilities. Just don't lose sight of what it is all about. Plan ahead, keep from rushing around, stay calm. You may have some crisis or emergency—pray for help.

- Some light work will be going on here at the Church, and help is needed: to set up for the meal after the Vespers Liturgy, to move picnic tables around for the Pascha BBQ, and to help decorate in the Church. There are sign-up sheets for all these tasks.

If you attended the Services on Holy Thursday and Holy Friday, you will have a sense that Holy Saturday is a day of expectation, a day of exodus to the Kingdom, where sorrow is turned to joy. The Vespers Liturgy begins at 1 PM. Be in Church by the time the bells ring.

— *Fr. Lawrence*

BAPTISM

Christians, have we understood the great responsibility that we have taken on before God through baptism? Have we come to know that we must conduct ourselves as children of God, that we must align our will with the will of God, that we must remain free from sin, that we must love God with all our hearts and always patiently await union with Him? Have we thought about the fact that our heart should be so filled with love that it should overflow to our neighbor? Do we have the feeling that we must become holy and perfect, children of God and heirs of the Kingdom of Heaven? We must struggle for this, so that we may not be shown unworthy and rejected. Let none of us lose our boldness, nor neglect our duties, nor be afraid of the difficulties of spiritual struggle. For we have God as a helper, who strengthens us in the difficult path of virtue. —*St. Nectarios of Aegina, The Path to Happiness*

Great and Holy Saturday

Death and damnation began with my body still my own,
began when I was ousted from my place,
and many creatures still were left unnamed.
Gone are some, now extinct and nameless,
as though they had never been.
In hades I feel their anxious breath, see their accusing
eyes.
My guilt is heavier than was the weight of flesh.
I bear the waste of time spent in recriminations
("You should not have..." "But you told me..." "Nay, it
was you who...").
And yet I knew my wife, and this was good.
But all good turned to guilt. Our first-born
killed his brother. Only Seth gave us no grief.
I grew old, and was afraid; afraid to die, even knowing
that death had come, and been endured, when we
were forced to leave our home, the one and only home a
human man has ever known. The rest is exile.
Death, when it came, was no more than a dim
continuation of the exile. I was hardly less a shadow
than I had been on earth, and centuries
passed no more slowly than a single day.
I was not prepared to be enfleshed again,
reconciled, if not contented, with my shadow self.
I had seen the birth of children with all its blood and pain
and had no wish ever to be born again.

The sound, when it came, was louder than thunder,
louder than the falling of a mountain,
louder than the tidal wave crashing down the city walls,
stone splitting, falling, smashing.
The light was brutal against my shaded eyes,
blinding me with brilliance. I was thousands
of years unaccustomed to the glory.
Then came the wrench of bone where bone had long
been dust.
The shocking rise of dry bones, the burning fleshing,
the surge of blood through artery and vein
was pain as I had never known that pain could be.
My anguished scream was silenced as my hand was held
in a grip of such authority I could not even try to pull
away.
The crossed gates were trampled by his powerful feet
and I was wrenched through the chasm
as through the eye of the hurricane.
And then—O God—He crushed me
in his fierce embrace. Flesh entered flesh;
bone, bone. Thus did I die, at last.
Thus was I born.
Two Adams became one.
And in the glory Adam was.
Nay, Adam is.

— by *Madeleine L'Engle*

SANCTIFY THE LORD GOD IN YOUR HEARTS — 1 PETER 3:15

Within the spiritual heart, in the "hidden man of the heart" (1 Peter 3:4), is the holy altar in which God is glorified, and it is there that the "mystical sacrifice of the *nous*" must be made, according to the exhortation of the Apostle Peter: "sanctify the Lord God in your hearts." It is there that the "priest of God's grace" serves with unceasing prayer, even if he is not a clergyman, according to the words of the apostle, "pray without ceasing" (1 Thess. 5:17). Within the spiritual heart, after it has been purified, the *nous* finds the grace of baptism and chrismation. It meets the sacred altar of the inner holy temple where through noetic prayer the ceaseless internalized liturgy is performed. When this happens it ignites even more the desire for participation in the Divine Liturgy that is performed in the holy temple on earth, and it increases the desire for communion of the Body and Blood of Christ. This inner liturgy moves man to glorify the Trinitarian God for everything performed in the Church; it incites him to revere the priesthood, honor the saints, love whatever God loves, and rejoice in Orthodoxy. — from *My Elder Joseph the Hesychast*, postscript by Metropolitan Hierotheos Vlachos

EVENTS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

- **PARISH SPIRITUAL RETREAT:** On Thursday, April 3, 9 AM, we will serve the Matins of the Fifth Thursday of Great Lent, during which we once again sing the Great Canon of St. Andrew of Crete. This hymn is a meditation using scripture, teaching us the meaning of sin, repentance and how the Lord constantly seeks and loves His creation. In the midst of this great poem we will also read the Life of Saint Mary of Egypt. The Liturgy of the Presanctified will follow Matins. Altogether, we expect the Services to last about three and a half hours, to end about 12:30 PM.
- **ON THE FIFTH FRIDAY** of Lent we celebrate the Matins of the Akathist Hymn to the Theotokos (April 4, 6 PM). This particular Akathist, attributed to the sixth century hymnographer Romanos the Melodist, may be considered the most profound expression of honor, praise, theology and love for the Theotokos that the Church possesses. In poetic form, with magnificent refrains at the end of each section, the hymn recalls the story of the Virgin Mary, the birth of Christ, Symeon's prayer in the Temple, and in general, the mystery of the incarnation. The Virgin is called Jar that held the Bread of Life, Ladder whereby God came down, Dawn of the Mystic Day, and numerous other tender words of praise and honor. Being near the end of the Great Fast, this hymn is given for our spiritual refreshment and strength, reminding us of the intercessions of the All Holy One. In Greece, Romania, Russia, Serbia, and the Middle East, Orthodox Churches are packed for this Service. You are invited to share the same experience here.
- **PLEASE PLAN AHEAD:** No Confessions will be heard after Holy Wednesday. "Now is the acceptable time, now is the day of repentance" (2 Cor. 6:2) — Holy Week is the time of the Lord's passion and many Services, and to enter into that great mystery, we confess first, then place our attention on the Lord, not ourselves.
- **ONCE THE DIVINE LITURGY** begins priests are expected to be in the Holy Altar. Although our clergy have not kept to this practice, we will, over the next few weeks, work toward this end. The clergy thank you for understanding that the Liturgy takes precedence over all other activities in the Church.
- **CHOIR REHEARSAL:** To all Choir members—our 27th Annual Fifth-Saturday-of-Lent Rehearsal will be on Saturday, April 5 at 10:30 AM. This rehearsal is mandatory.
- **THE POPLAR TREE** between the Hall and the Rectory is diseased and should be removed, according to an arborist that was consulted. There is danger that branches may crack off at the weak points and seriously damage the Hall or Rectory. We are acquiring bids for cutting down the tree, removing the stump and planting a new tree.
- **GOD-WILLING**, baptisms of "those preparing for Holy Illumination" will take place as usual on Holy Saturday. Exorcisms and Blessing of the Water at Noon; then the Vespereal Liturgy at 1 PM. The Baptisms will take place immediately after the fifteenth Old Testament Reading.
- **HOLY WEEK SIGN UP SHEETS** will be posted next week. You are invited to sign up for reading the Psalter before the Tomb on Holy Friday night thru Saturday morning, and on Saturday afternoon until 11:30 PM, the Book of the Acts of the Apostles. Also, help will be needed each day of Holy Week to work at the Candle Desk in the evenings, to clean after the Presanctified, to assist with setting up for the Holy Saturday meal, the Paschal Agape Meal in the Hall and the Potluck BBQ on Pascha afternoon.

CONFESSIONS

THE PARISH CLERGY commend those who come to the Holy Mystery of Confession with such seriousness, contrition, preparation and frequency, and thank God for this. We encourage all of our faithful to make frequent confession—**at least once a month, if not more**—not only as a required preparation for Holy Communion, but in order to seek God's help in overcoming and conquering our sinful passions, and finding purity of heart. Confessions are heard:

Saturdays: from 4–5 PM before the Vigil/Vespers. If there is a non-serving priest present, then he will hear Confessions during the Vigil (or Vespers) at various times, depending on the liturgical action (for example, not during the Six Psalms or the Gospel). Confessions will also be heard after Vigil/Vespers.

Sunday: from 9–10 AM. Once the Divine Liturgy begins, priests are expected to be in the Holy Altar.

Tuesday–Friday: After Matins, or call to set an appointment for after 12 noon or in the evening.

Wednesdays before Presanctified: Starting at 5 PM, before the Presanctified, and then during the Service until the reading of the Old Testament, provided there is a non-serving priest present. After *Let My Prayer Arise...* confessions may be heard until the *Lord's Prayer*.

PROTECTION OF THE HOLY VIRGIN MARY ORTHODOX CHURCH

APRIL 2014

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
March 30 - St. John Climacus <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9–10 AM, Confessions • 10 AM, Liturgy • 11:45 AM, Church School • Noon, Agape Meal 	March 31	1 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8 AM, Lenten Matins, Feast of St. Innocent of Alaska (moved from 3/31) 	2 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8 AM, Lenten Matins • 3 PM, Catechism • 6:15 PM, Presanctified 	3 - Spiritual Retreat <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9 AM, Matins, Canon of St. Andrew, Life of St. Mary of Egypt and Presanctified 	4 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6:15 PM, Matins of the Akathist to the Theotokos 	5 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10:30 AM, Choir Rehearsal • 4:30 PM, Panikhida • 5 PM, Holy Vespers
6 - St. Mary of Egypt <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9–10 AM, Confessions • 10 AM, Liturgy • 11:45 AM, Church School • Noon, Agape Meal 	7	8 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8 AM, Lenten Matins 	9 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8 AM, Lenten Matins • 3 PM, Catechism • 6:15 PM, Presanctified 	10 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8 AM, Lenten Matins 	11 - Last day of Great Lent <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8 AM, Lenten Matins • 6:15 PM, Matins for Lazarus Saturday • 7 PM, Catechism 	12 - Lazarus Saturday <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9:30 AM, Divine Liturgy • Agape Meal • 2 PM, Church cleaning and decorating • 5 PM, Vigil for Palm Sunday, blessing palms
13 - Entrance into Jerusalem <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9–10 AM, Confessions • 10 AM, Liturgy/Procession • 11:45 AM, Church School • Noon, Agape Meal 	14 - Holy Monday <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6:30 AM, Matins • Confessions * • 6:15 PM, Presanctified 	15 - Holy Tuesday <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6:30 AM, Matins • Confessions * • 6:15 PM, Presanctified 	16 - Holy Wednesday <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6:30 AM, Matins • Confessions * • 6:15 PM, Presanctified <p><i>(last day for Confessions)</i></p>	17 - Holy Thursday <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 11:30 AM, Vesperal Divine Liturgy (“Last Supper”) • 7 PM, Matins of Holy Friday (12 Readings of the Passion Gospels) 	18 - Holy Friday <p>Strict Fast Day</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9 AM, Royal Hours • 3 PM, Great Vespers for the Blessed Sabbath • 7 PM, Matins of Holy Saturday/Procession 	19 - Holy Saturday <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Noon, Exorcisms • 1 PM, Vesperal Liturgy and Baptisms • 11:30 PM, Midnight Service, Paschal Matins and Liturgy
20 - HOLY PASCHA <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 PM, Agape Vespers • Potluck BBQ to follow 	21 - Bright Monday <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9 AM, Matins and Paschal Liturgy (Archbishop Benjamin to serve) • Agape Meal 	22 - Bright Tuesday <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9 AM, Matins and Paschal Liturgy • 6 PM, Paschal Vespers 	23 - Bright Wednesday <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 PM, Paschal Vespers 	24 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 PM, Paschal Vespers 	25	26 - Bright Saturday <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9 AM, Matins and Paschal Liturgy
27 - St. Thomas Sunday <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9–10 AM, Confessions • 10 AM, Liturgy • Noon, Agape Meal 	28	29	30 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 PM, Vespers, Potluck and lecture on 			

* Confessions on Great and Holy Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday can be heard after Matins and before Presanctified. If you are able to come during the day at an hour convenient to you, please make an appointment with Fr. Lawrence