



# ST OLYMPIA ORTHODOX CHURCH

POTSDAM, NEW YORK 13676

ORTHODOX CHURCH OF AMERICA  
DIOCESE OF NY AND NJ



**Welcome to St. Olympia Orthodox Church,  
a young and, God willing, growing community of worshippers.**

**Join us for prayer and fellowship.**

**Divine Liturgies are held every Sunday  
and are preceded by Great Vespers every Saturday evening.**

**Services are primarily in English.**

## Next Services

**Saturday**

**April 28th**

**Great Vespers at 5:00  
pm**

**Sunday**

**April 29th**

**Sunday of the  
Paralytic**

**Divine Liturgy  
at 10:00 am**

**at**

**St. Olympia Chapel  
123 Main Street**

**Potsdam, NY**

**All welcome!**



# CHRIST IS RISEN!

## Sunday of the Myrrh-bearers (Mark 15:43-16:8)

*Note: the following article has been written by an anonymous contributor.  
It is included here by permission.*

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the single most important event in world history, even more important than the Cross. In the Roman Empire thousands of people suffered death by crucifixion, a common form of execution for people who were not Roman citizens. So, if Jesus did not rise from the dead, His cross would be at best a monument to the brutality of capital punishment, and certainly a sad story, but nothing more. It is the Resurrection alone which proves that Jesus was and is Who and what He claims to be and that all He said is true. And we know that now. But as we see in today's Gospel, Mark 15:32-16:8, on that first Pascha 2,000 years ago, no one stood by His grave expecting to see the stone rolled away and Jesus walking out. Rather, most of Jesus' disciples were hiding, afraid of being arrested. Some very brave women, the same women who stood by Him at the cross, did venture out before sun-up to go to the tomb where Joseph of Arimathea had laid Him. But they went in love to finish properly the hasty preparation of His body for burial that horrible Friday. They went expecting to find a stone-cold corpse.

So it was that "When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, that they might come to anoint Him. Very early in the morning, on the first day of the week, they came to the tomb when the sun had risen. And they said among themselves, 'Who will roll away the stone from the door of the tomb for us?'" As they went, the women realized there was an obstacle to their task: a giant stone disk covering the entrance to the tomb, too big for them to move. And what they didn't know was that there were also guards over the tomb, soldiers who'd keep them from their goal, even if they could manage the stone.

And nothing has changed. The world, the flesh, and the devil continue to throw up roadblocks to keep believers from living in and serving Christ. But unlike the women, we sometimes over-think our situation, look at it from too many different angles, and paralyze ourselves into inaction. These women did wonder about how to overcome the obstacle, but they kept walking. And that's always the most important thing. When we face that "impossible" task or "impossible situation," we might not know ahead of time either how we'll handle the inevitable obstacles; but if out of fear we hold back from serving God, we will never see the incredible things He does for those who in simple love follow Him.

"But when they looked up," says verse 4, "they saw that the stone had been rolled away---for it was very large." Often the tombs, at least of the wealthy, were cut out of the rock hillsides; that's why the women "looked up." In front of the entrance to the tomb was a groove cut into the rock, along which a stone disk could be rolled to close off the tomb. That stone weighed a lot and took several men to move. But Matthew 28:2 tells us that there'd been "a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat on it." And for good measure, "the guards shook for fear of him, and became like dead men;" these big tough men fainted dead away. Get it? While the women were still on their way, God provided what they'd need even before they needed it. And that's our first lesson: when God appoints us a task, He provides the grace, the help, whatever we need to accomplish that task.

Then "as they entered the tomb, they saw a young man dressed in a white robe sitting on the right side, and they were alarmed." Angels usually take human form when they appear to humans, but they're different enough that the angel usually has to say, "Fear not!" So this angel says, "Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid him. But go, tell His disciples---and Peter---that He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him, just as He said to you." The angel's mission was simple: move the stone, tell them that the same Jesus Who was crucified is now risen and He wants them to verify this is the same tomb in which they had seen Him laid on Friday, and then tell the women to spread this good news to the disciples. Sounds simple enough, yes? But verse 8 says the women "went out quickly and fled from the tomb, for they trembled and were amazed. And they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid." From Luke 24:9-11, we know that after they calmed down the women "returned from the tomb and told all these things to the eleven and to all the rest," but probably wished they hadn't, because when the apostles heard what the women had to say, "their words seemed to them like idle tales, and they did not believe them," until the men-folk checked it out for themselves.

So? So our second lesson is that Jesus goes before, and He goes after. The Lord knew that the women would come to the tomb; He knew that even though He had told them He would rise and meet them in Galilee, they were going to hang out in Jerusalem. But the Lord posted an angel or two at the tomb to tell them the good news, and put them right back on the path they were supposed to be on. The point? Our God takes even our failures and foibles into account, and makes room for them in His plan. Mary and the others went to the tomb to mourn and perform burial rituals for their dead Master; but Jesus worked it out so that they saw conclusive proof that He had risen: an angelic messenger explaining an empty grave.

And then look at how the angel said: "Go tell His disciples---and Peter." Even though by his triple denial of any connection with Jesus Peter had totally blown it, Jesus wanted him to know that he was still part of the team. Peter's failure didn't derail God's plan or exclude him from God's love. The Lord goes before us, preparing the way; and He goes after us when we fail, not to condemn us, reject us, discard us like so much garbage, but to pick us up and set us on the right road again. Now, I don't know about you; but knowing how often I totally blow it, I find this word to Peter both freeing and comforting.

Thirdly, note that Jesus looks for faith, but doesn't fault sincere effort. The evening of that first Pascha, says Mark 16:14, the risen Jesus "appeared to the eleven as they sat at the table; and He rebuked their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they did not believe those who had seen Him after He had risen." But He didn't fault them for sticking together, and He didn't fault the women for going to the tomb. And while that does warn us against slipping into unbelief, it also tells us that if we get it wrong our failure is not fatal. Jesus told His disciples over and over exactly what was going to happen, even about their own betrayal. They didn't get it; and because they didn't understand, they didn't consider that Jesus really would rise from the dead. And of course we get into that same situation by failing to listen to what Jesus actually says, instead hearing only what we want to hear, especially when what we want to hear is "It's gonna be easy-peasy; no struggle, no sacrifice, no growth involved or demanded." Think now: Jesus had told them over and over that being in His kingdom was not like the world's kingdoms, because being in His kingdom required denying self and taking up one's cross daily, and following Him in servant-hood and self-sacrificing love. But the disciples didn't listen. Nor did they listen to what Jesus was trying to tell them about His real mission: going to the Cross

And that's spiritual immaturity, clinging to our carnal nature and failing to apply the truths of God's Word to our own life. We need to let go, repent, and be cleansed so we can believe and grow and hold on to the things that the Lord tells us in His Word, constantly using those things to help us distinguish between good and evil, right or wrong, good choice or bad choice. That's the "how" of doing what Ephesians 4:15 says we must do: "speaking the truth in love," we're to "grow up in all things into Him Who is the head, Christ." We have to let God make us spiritual grown-ups.

But by the same token, Jesus never discourages sincere efforts. Think of Apollos in Acts 18:24-28. Paul's co-workers, Priscilla and Aquila, heard Apollos preach powerfully, yet inaccurately about Jesus. So "they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately;" and he became one of the most important apologists the Church has ever known, "showing from the Scriptures that Jesus is the Christ." So we mustn't be afraid to step out in witness, ministry and service for the Lord; if we get something wrong, He'll set us on some course corrections, but at least we won't be coasting.

Again, we must listen carefully to what Jesus says, not to what we want to hear. Too often we gauge what God tells us on what we think we know instead of what God really says. Don't listen with just one ear--and be prepared for some surprises, because in rising again on the third day, the Jesus we serve pulled off the greatest surprise in history!

