



Crossroads

The Monthly Newsletter of the Orthodox Church of the Holy Cross

11 Wilkins Station Road-Box 805-Medford, NJ 08055

Rectory Phone: 856-665-2491 - Fr. John's Cell Phone: 609-315-2894 - Email: frjs@aol.com

www.holycrossmedford.org

MAY, 2019

The Resurrection and the Rise of Christianity

by Fr. Steven Kostoff

Orthodox Christians believe that the New Testament Church and the Christian faith itself appeared at a particular point in history because the crucified Jesus of Nazareth was raised from the dead. The cause behind the emergence of the Church and the Christian Faith was not a crucified, dead and buried Jesus. Rather, that very crucified, dead and buried Jesus was revealed to be both Lord and Christ following His Resurrection “on the third day.”

God vindicated the messianic claims of Jesus when He raised Jesus from the dead “according to the Scriptures.” Contemporary Orthodox Christians readily agree with the Apostle Paul’s insistence on the absolute centrality of the bodily resurrection of Christ as the foundation of Christian faith in Jesus: “If Christ is not raised, then your faith is in vain and our preaching is in vain” (1 Corinthians 15). Among all Christians this has been an overwhelming consensus since the initial witness of the apostles to the Risen Lord.

But since the emergence of critical biblical scholarship within the last two centuries or so, we find Christian scholars and those influenced by them questioning, reinterpreting or openly denying the bodily resurrection of Jesus. This process may be more accelerated today, or simply more prominent and public in its expression. A vivid—if not lurid—expression of this skeptical approach to the resurrection claims of the first Christians can be found in the work of the New Testament scholar Dom Dominic Crossan. In his reconstruction of events, the body of the crucified Jesus was discarded in a shallow grave, there to suffer the further humiliation of becoming the food of ravenous dogs. That is also the kind of counter-claim that will attract a good deal of publicity.

This threatens to undermine a consistent and long-standing witness among all Christians that points to the uniqueness of Jesus Christ among the great “religious founders” within human history. That uniqueness was articulated by Prof. Veselin Kesich in the following manner in his book, *The First Day of the New Creation:*

“For the members of the first Christian community in Jerusalem, the resurrection of Christ was above all an event in the life of their Master, and then also in their own lives. After meeting Christ following his resurrection, they could have said with Saint Paul that necessity was laid upon them to preach the gospel of resurrection (1 Corinthians 9:16). Christianity spread throughout the Greco-Roman world with the proclamation that Jesus who died on the cross was raised to a new life by God. The message of Christianity is without parallel in religious history in its content and in its demand.”

The Risen Christ spoke to His disciples about “belief” in His resurrection even among those who did not “see” Him as those very first disciples did. This was in response to the Apostle Thomas’ movement from unbelief to belief when Jesus appeared to Thomas and offered him to probe the wounds in His hands and side: “You have believed because you have seen me. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believed” (John 20:29).

Clearly, the presence of faith is essential in confessing that Jesus has been raised from the dead: “If you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved” (Romans 10:9). However, in perhaps challenging a misconceived understanding of faith, this does not mean that believing that Jesus was bodily raised from the dead is an irrational leap into the unbelievable and indefensible.

On the one hand, the Resurrection is an overwhelming and awesome event that invokes “trembling and astonishment” in those who are presented with its reality—and perhaps initial silence because of its numinous quality (cf. Mark 16:8). On the other hand, Christians do not believe in the resurrection of Christ in the face of evidence that clearly contradicts or “disproves” that claim. It is not as if the first disciples of Jesus were confronted with His (rotting) corpse in the tomb, but then said, “Nevertheless, we still believe that He is risen!”

The resurrection of Christ is not about the fate of the “immortal soul” of Jesus, which is quite irrelevant to the Christian claim that death has been overcome in the resurrected Christ. Resurrection is the claim that the body—and thus the whole person conceived biblically—has been raised and glorified to a new mode of existence in an eternal relationship with God. What many Jews believed would occur *at the end of history*, happened with Jesus *within history*. And that is why the Apostle Paul called Christ “the first-fruits of those who have fallen asleep” (1 Corinthians 15:20)....

To return to an initial point, I do not believe that Christians should attempt to compel faith in Christ by a careful gathering of the evidence concerning Christ’s resurrection from the dead. This is not a courtroom trial. And Christian faith is not based upon the “jury’s” verdict. A commitment to Christ as the Crucified and Risen One Who has “trampled down death by death and upon those in the tombs bestowing life” begins with faith, based on trusting the witness of the apostles of Christ—a witness for which they were prepared to die.

This trust slowly begins to transform each Christian so that that faith is a living and personal faith. As that faith matures, all Christians may reach a point when they can make their own the words of the Apostle Paul: “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ Who lives in me; and the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, Who loved me and gave Himself for me” (Galatians 2:20).

Yet, the Christian claim is that God acts within human history, that God enters into the time and space of our world to create, sustain and redeem us as the Lord of history Who has prepared a glorious future for us. The ultimate manifestation of that divine activity within the world is revealed in the Incarnation of the eternal Son of God. And His death and resurrection from the dead fulfills the promises of God as He remains faithful to His faithless people throughout history.

This historical aspect of our Christian faith means, to repeat this again, that any historical evidence that can disprove the resurrection of Christ would immediately and definitively undermine that faith. But no such evidence exists. On the contrary, it points us toward the genuineness and authenticity of those very claims – incredible and “unbelievable” though they may initially appear.

[Note: This is an edited form of Fr. Steven’s reflection. The whole piece is available at: <https://oca.org/reflections/fr.-steven-kostoff/the-resurrection-and-the-rise-of-christianity>]

On the Way to Emmaus Icon Project



UPCOMING MEETINGS & EVENTS

- **THURSDAY , MAY 9: PARISH COUNCIL MEETING, 7 PM**
- **SATURDAY, MAY 11: SERVICE FOR THE BLESSING OF ANIMALS — 10 AM**
- **SATURDAY, MAY 18: YOUTH GROUP TO THE PHILADELPHIA ZOO**
- **SATURDAY, MAY 25: COMMUNITY LUNCHEON — 9 AM**
- **SUNDAY, MAY 26: INREACH/OUTREACH MEETING, following the Liturgy**

+++++

MARRIAGE BANNES: *Julia Mosser and Keith Schauder* will be married in our church on **Saturday, June 2.**

WOMAN2WOMAN ACTIVITIES: 1) **Monday May 13:** W2W will meet at Diana Pasca’s home on Monday. / **Wednesday May 15:** W2Woman Lunch at Al Fresco, Mt. Laurel.

PARISH COUNCIL MEETING: No Meeting was held in April. The next one will be on **Thursday, May 9**, at 7 PM.

FANTASY AUCTION – Save the date - Saturday, June 8th, 5-8 pm

Mark your calendars and plan to attend our spring FUNdraiser! Please consider supporting the Auction by donating your time, talent, and/or items. Look for sign-up sheets for basket donations and gift card donations in the Fellowship Hall. Our goal is to have 70 Live Auction items. We gladly accept cash/check donations and will create a basket for you if you'd prefer. We especially need help soliciting donations from local businesses. Donation request letters on church letterhead are available.

We will sell admittance tickets **in advance for \$10**, which will enable pre-registration of guests and streamline check-in at the door. The admittance ticket entitles you to refreshments, a door prize ticket, and a bidder's program book. Tickets will also be sold at the door the night of the Auction for \$15. See Leslie Lane, Valerie Olesnovich, & Phyllis Pritchard for advance tickets. Our goal is to have 100 bidders, so please invite your friends & family to attend our FUNdraiser. The more bidders we have, the more competition, and the more money we will make. Remember the exciting bidding war over the Lottery tickets?

We will collect donations now through May 25th. Since there won't be a draw ticket raffle this year, we're asking for donations of only new and almost new items to be used in baskets and as door prizes. Please help us to keep the Fellowship Hall tidy by placing items in the marked boxes in the library area.

Please contact event chair Val Olesnovich at voles09@gmail.com or 856-381-9771 or Phyllis Pritchard at phyllis.pritchard@gmail.com or 609-315-1258 with questions or to volunteer. Thanks in advance for your support!

MAY 2019 COFFEE HOUR ASSIGNMENTS

If you are unable to host the coffee hour on the scheduled date, it is your responsibility to contact someone else on the list and arrange to switch your date with that person. Please mark the switch on the list so we can keep the list current. **VOLUNTEERS ARE ALSO WELCOMED TO FILL OPEN SUNDAYS.**

May 12: *Mother's Day, hosted by the parish men* / May 19: *open date* / May 26: *Ela Plachuta*

To Volunteer, contact **Diana Bisinger (856-988-1277 / dbisinger1@verizon)**

RESPONSIBILITIES:

On your Sunday, you are host/hostess for the day. You will be responsible for setting up the coffee hour, making the coffee & hot water for tea, and cleaning up (sweeping the floor, wiping down the tables, cleaning the coffee pot, and **taking out the trash**) afterward. A suggested coffee hour could include 3-4 dozen bagels, cream cheese, butter/margarine, fruit (such as sliced apples or oranges, grapes, fruit salad, etc.) and cookies or cut-up cake. Please bring 1 pound of coffee (to replace what was used that morning), creamer, and juice (2-64oz. bottles of juice). Please take home all items that are not consumed.

KEEP IN MIND THAT COFFEE HOURS SHOULD BE SIMPLE AND SERVE AS A SNACK AFTER CHURCH AND NOT A MEAL. Also, if anyone plans on bringing a cake or anything additional to celebrate an occasion during coffee hour, please contact that week's host and inform them of your plans. This will avoid duplication of refreshments.

CHURCH CALENDAR: MAY-JUNE

MAY

Sunday May 5	Sunday of St. Thomas
Saturday May 11	Service for the Blessing of Animals – 10 AM
Sunday May 12:	Last Church School Class of the Year / Mother's Day
Monday May 13:	W2W at Diana Pasca's (date changed) – 7 PM
Wednesday May 15:	W2W Lunch at Al Fresco, Mt. Laurel
Saturday May 18	Youth Group at the Zoo
Sunday May 19:	Church School End of Year Celebration
Saturday May 25	Community Luncheon – 9 AM
Sunday May 26	Inreach/Outreach Meeting

JUNE

Saturday June 1	Wedding of Julia Mosser and Keith Schauder (2:00)
Sunday June 2:	Summer Time Change (9:00 AM) / <i>Healthy Choices Program with Fotini Birbilis</i>
Monday June 3	7:00 PM – W2W meeting
Wednesday June 5:	Vesperal Liturgy for the Ascension (7 PM)
Saturday June 8	Fantasy Auction (5:00-8:00)
Sunday June 9	<i>Healthy Choices Program 2 with Fotini Birbilis</i>
Sunday June 16:	Pentecost / Father's Day
Sunday June 23:	<i>Healthy Choices Program 3 with Fotini Birbilis</i>
Friday June 28:	7:00 PM – Vesperal Liturgy for the Feast of SS Peter and Paul
Sunday June 30	Calendar Planning for the Rest of the Year



CROSSWALKS

The Orthodox Church of the Holy Cross Youth Ministry Newsletter
May 2019



Our youth were a big part of Archbishop Michael's visit



Sharing the joy of Pascha
Christ Is Risen! Indeed He Is Risen!

Saturday, May 11 -- **Blessing of the Animals** at 4:00 pm

Sunday, May 12 -- **Last Church School Class**

Saturday, May 18 -- **Youth Group Trip to Philadelphia Zoo** See SignUp Genius for details. Tickets will be purchased Monday May 6, so please sign up as soon as possible!!

Sunday, May 19 -- **Church School Closing Ceremony** at the end of Liturgy

Community Service Opportunities

Monthly Community Luncheon with Diana Pasca to help prepare food for a shelter in Mt. Holly, NJ. They are usually about 2 hours on a Saturday morning. All dates are listed in Crossroads on the church calendar. (eligible for community service hours)



Orthodox Church of the Holy Cross – MAY, 2019

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1	2	3	4 <i>Great Vespers: 5</i>
<i>5 DIVINE LITURGY—10:00 St. Helena's Guild Meeting, following the Liturgy</i>	6	7	8	9 <i>Parish Council Meeting – 7 PM</i>	10	11 <i>Service for the Blessing of Animals — 10AM</i> <i>NO Great Vespers:</i>
<i>12 Mother's Day DIVINE LITURGY—10:00 Last Day of Church School</i>	13 <i>Woman2Woman at Diana Pasca's 7:00</i>	14	15 <i>W2Woman Lunch at Al Fresco, Mt. Laurel</i>	16	17	18 <i>Parastas for Sue Dowiak — 4:30</i> <i>Great Vespers: 5</i>
<i>19 DIVINE LITURGY 10:00 Church School Celebration</i>	20	21	22	23	24	25 <i>Community Luncheon – 9 AM</i> <i>Great Vespers: 5</i>
<i>26 DIVINE LITURGY 10:00 Inreach/Outreach Meeting</i>	27	28	29	30	31	<i>1 June Wedding of Julia Mosser and Keith Schauder – 2:00 Vespers will follow immediately</i>