



Simple Catechesis Drawn from the Experience of the Orthodox Church



The Resurrection of our Lord... ...the Feast Day of Women

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For Edification and Consolation
April 2014



The Resurrection of our Lord is the day when women celebrate their feast day. It is not a personal, but rather a collective feast—a feast day of their sex. When the Lord delegated women to proclaim the good tidings of His Resurrection to His Apostles, He gave honor to the female sex.

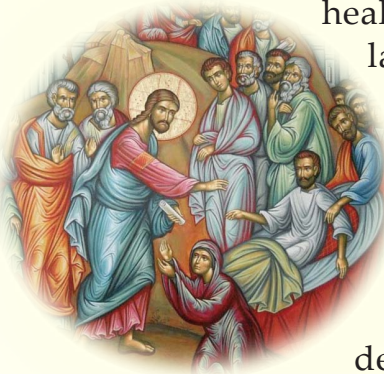
The Lord and Women...

During the Lord's earthly life, He showed His love for women, who were held in disdain, and they in turn showed Him their gratitude. Not one woman who turned to Christ left discontented.

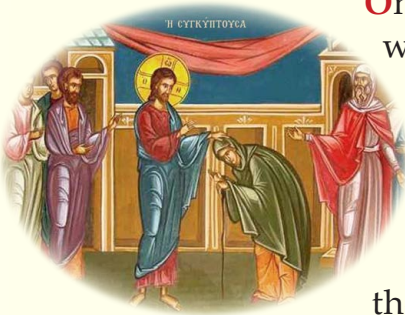
At the beginning of His public life, He restores to health Peter's mother-in-law, who lay ill with a fever, thereby rewarding Peter's concern for her.

Taking pity on Mary Magdalene, who was possessed by seven demons, He heals her.

Moved by the widow's tears, He raises her only son from the dead.



Though He had been sent to the sheep of Israel, He hearkens to the pleading of the woman of Canaan—who, not being of the Jewish race, is likened to a dog—and makes her daughter whole.



On the Sabbath day, He heals the woman who had been bowed down for eighteen years, notwithstanding the indignation of the ruler of the synagogue.

He raises Jairus' daughter from the dead and cures the woman who had an issue of blood for twelve years.

The woman taken in the act of adultery, hunted like a partridge by the hawk-like Pharisees, arrives at His feet and is shielded by the words: “He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her.”

Defending the sinful woman weeping at His feet, He refutes the condemnations of the hypocritical Pharisee.

He accepts the hospitality of Martha and Mary, more greatly rewarding Mary's attention to His words than Martha's hustle and bustle.

And the most astonishing of all: He converses with the Samaritan woman—His ethnic “enemy”—who had had five husbands, and the one whom she had at the time was not her lawful husband. To this woman, then, He reveals for the first time that He is Christ, the awaited Messiah.

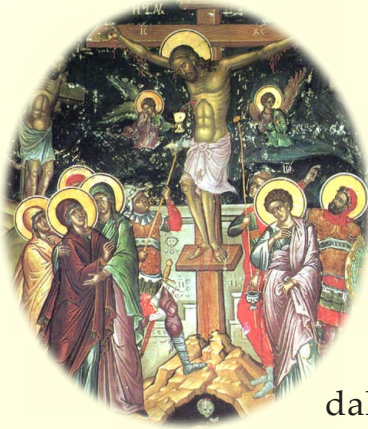


He does so, notwithstanding the Rabbinical injunction, whereby one must burn the Holy Scripture rather than allow a woman to hear it, and despite the astonishment of His disciples, who were amazed to see Him speaking with a woman.

It was to women that He first appeared after His Resurrection.



...Womanly Love



When the Body of Christ had been taken down from the Cross, Joseph and Nicodemus brought It to the garden nearby and handed It over to the women to prepare It for burial.

The Theotokos, Maria Magdalene, Salome, and “many other women” had stood by the Cross. Having, as women, more experience than men in such things, they went about the preparations.

They took care to remove the crown of thorns placed on His head in mockery by the Roman soldiers, pulling out the thorns that remained in the skin of His head. They untangled and braided the Lord’s hair, which had become matted with blood from the wounds caused by the crown of thorns.

The Lord’s eyes and mouth were open. The women closed those eyes, which they had looked upon with such purity and tenderness when He was alive. They closed that mouth, which they had never dared kiss.

The women’s many tears fell onto His face, which, in the still pallidness of death, had recovered the former sweetness of its countenance. Their tears washed this face more perfectly than the cleanest water, even the water from Jacob’s well.



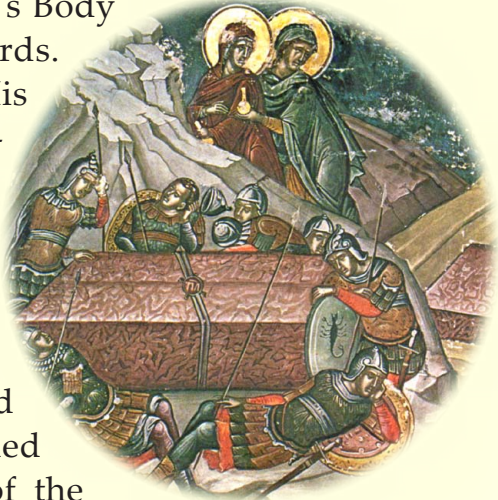
After the face came the rest of the Lord's Body, which was entirely covered by the sweat of agony, the blood of the Cross, and the dust of the crossroad at Golgotha. A bloody fluid still trickled from His hands, feet, and side.



They washed and anointed Him unstintingly with myrrh, including the darkened holes on His hands and feet. After the sinful woman [in the house of the Pharisee] had anointed Jesus' feet and head with myrrh, the Lord had received nothing but beatings and spitting. Now, for a second time, He is anointed with myrrh and tears.

When the one hundred liters—thirty two kilos—of fragrances had been used up, the women wound the shroud around the Lord's Body with linen cloths and cords. They then covered His head with the napkin, after kissing His forehead.

Joseph and Nicodemus the pallbearers then took up this precious cargo wrapped in white linen—Jesus Christ—and placed it in a tomb, rolled a large stone in front of the

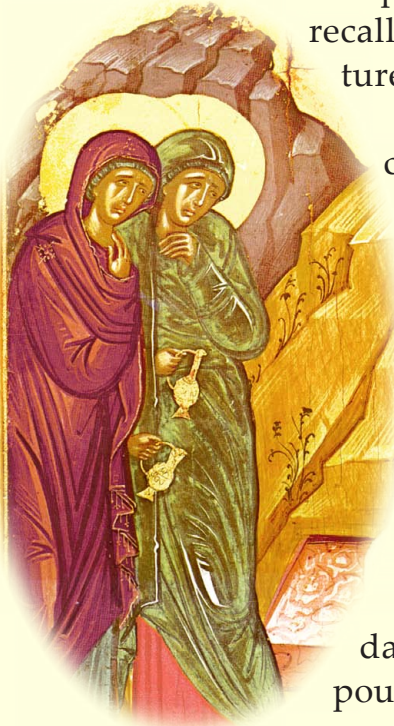


opening, and departed.

The women, however, remained, unable to tear themselves away from the stone, which separated them forever from Him Whom they had loved and to Whom they were devoted.

How could they possibly leave alone, in the twofold darkness of the tomb and of death, Him Who had been so alone in His agony at Gethsemane and on the Cross?

Perhaps they prayed in low voices or recalled some of the words or gestures of their Beloved.



If one of the women would console another, the other would burst into loud sobs. Invoking His Name, they leaned against the stone, now speaking to Him—Whose ears were henceforth closed by the napkin and death—words of love, which they had not dared address to Him during His life.

That evening, in the dark and damp dusk of the garden, they poured forth their love, which was greater than their hearts could contain.

Finally, overcome by the increasing chill and their fear of the night, they departed, their eyes lit up by tears, resolved to return two days later.

O blessed women!



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