



# SAINT GEORGE

ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH  
EL PASO - TEXAS

**His Eminence Metropolitan SABA**

RT. Rev. Archimandrite Fadi Rabbat  
Pastor

Rev. Dcn. Miguel 'Michael' Sifuentes  
Deacon

**“And the Disciples were first called Christians in Antioch”. Acts 11:26**

Tel.: 915-584-9100

[www.stgeorge-elpaso.org](http://www.stgeorge-elpaso.org)

office@stgeorge-elpaso.org

**“My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations.” Mark 11:17**

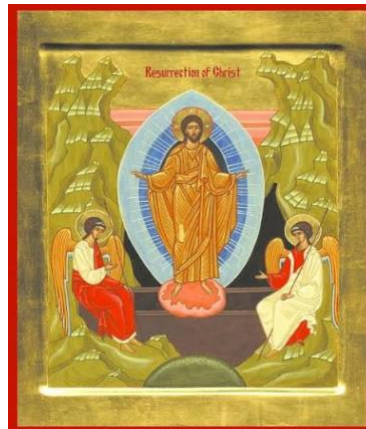
**“The Church is a hospital, and not a courtroom for souls, she does not condemn on behalf of sins but grants remission of sins. – St. John Chrysostom**

**Fourth Sunday of Pascha  
Sunday of the Paralytic**

Martyrs Timothy the reader and his wife Maura of Egypt; Peter, archbishop of Argolis

**SUNDAY MAY 3rd, 2026**

**Tone 3/ Eothinon 5**



**English: Christ is Risen! Indeed (Truly), He is Risen!**

**Arabic: Al Maseeh Qam! Haqan Qam!**

**Greek: Kristos Anesti! Alithos Anesti!**

**French : Christ est Ressuscité ! En vérité, Il est Ressuscité !**

**Russian: Kristos Voskresey! Voyistino Voskresey!**

**Spanish: Cristo ha resucitado! En verdad ha resucitado!**

**Ukrainian: Khristos voskres! Voistinu voskres!**

**Saturday Vespers Service: 5:00 PM**

**Sunday Service: Orthros (Matins) 9:30 AM, followed immediately by Divine Liturgy (10:30 AM)**

**Inquirers are encouraged to attend the Divine Liturgy at 10:30 AM**

**Sunday Epistle Reader: Calvin Perfilio**

### **THE EISODIKON (ENTRANCE HYMN) OF PASCHA**

In the gathering places bless ye God the Lord, from the springs of Israel. Save us, O Son of God, Who art risen from the dead, who sing to Thee: Alleluia.

### **RESURRECTIONAL APOLYTIKION IN TONE THREE**

Let the heavens rejoice and the earth be glad, for the Lord hath done a mighty act with His own arm. He hath trampled down death by death, and become the first-born from the dead. He hath delivered us from the depths of Hades, granting the world the Great Mercy.

### **APOLYTIKION OF ST. GEORGE IN TONE FOUR**

Since thou art a liberator and deliverer of captives, a help and support of the poor and needy, a healing physician of the sick, a contender and fighter for kings, O great among Martyrs, the victory-clad George; intercede with Christ God for the salvation of our souls.

### **THE KONTAKION OF PASCHA IN TONE EIGHT**

Though Thou didst descend into the grave, O Immortal One, yet didst Thou destroy the power of Hades, and didst arise as victor, O Christ God, calling to the myrrh-bearing women, Rejoice, and giving peace unto Thine Apostles, O Thou Who dost grant resurrection to the fallen.

### **THE EPISTLE**

*O chant unto our God, chant ye. Clap your hands, all ye nations.*

#### **The Reading from the Acts of the Holy Apostles. (9:32-42)**

In those days, as Peter went throughout all regions, he came down also to the saints who dwelt at Lydda. There he found a certain man named Aeneas, who was bedridden for eight years and paralyzed. And Peter said to him: "Aeneas, Jesus Christ heals you; arise and make your bed." And immediately he arose. And all who dwelt at Lydda and Sharon saw him, and they turned back to the Lord. Now there was at Joppa a certain disciple named Tabitha (which means Gazelle). She was full of good works and of charitable deeds which she did. And it came to pass in those days that she fell sick and died; and when they had washed her, they placed her in an upper chamber. Since Lydda was near Joppa, the disciples, hearing that Peter was there, sent two men to him entreating him: "Come to us without delay!" So Peter arose and went with them. And when he arrived, they took him into the upper chamber. All the widows stood by him weeping, showing the tunics and other garments which Tabitha made while she was with them. But Peter put them all outside and knelt down and prayed; then turning to the body, he said: "Tabitha, arise!" And she opened her eyes, and when she saw Peter, she sat up. And he gave her his hand, and raised her up. Then he called the saints and widows and presented her alive. And it became known throughout all Joppa, and many believed in the Lord.

### **THE GOSPEL**

#### **The Reading from the Holy Gospel according to St. John. (5:1-15)**

At that time, Jesus went up to Jerusalem. Now there is in Jerusalem by the Sheep Gate a pool, in Hebrew called Bethesda, which has five porticoes. In these lay a multitude of invalids, blind, lame, paralyzed, waiting for the moving of the water. For an angel of the Lord went down at certain seasons into the pool and troubled the water; whoever stepped in first, after the troubling of the water was healed of whatever disease he had. One man was there, who had been ill for 38 years. When Jesus saw him and knew that he had been

lying there a long time, He said to him, "Do you want to be healed?" The sick man answered Him, "Sir, I have no man to put me into the pool when the water is troubled, and while I am going another steps down before me." Jesus said to him, "Rise, take up your pallet, and walk." And at once the man was healed, and he took up his pallet and walked. Now that day was the Sabbath. So the Jews said to the man who was cured, "It is the Sabbath, it is not lawful for you to carry your pallet." But he answered them, "The man who healed me said to me, 'Take up your pallet, and walk.'" They asked him, "Who is the man who said to you, 'Take up your pallet, and walk?'" Now the man who had been healed did not know who it was, for Jesus had withdrawn, as there was a crowd in the place. Afterward, Jesus found him in the temple, and said to him, "See, you are well! Sin no more, that nothing worse befalls you." The man went away and told the Jews that it was Jesus Who had healed him.

### **THE SNAXARION**

On May 3 in the Holy Orthodox Church, we commemorate Martyrs Timothy the reader and his wife Maura of Egypt; and Peter, archbishop of Argolis.

On this day, the fourth Sunday of Pascha, we commemorate the Paralytic and, as is right, we celebrate the miracle wrought for him.

#### ***Verses***

The word of Christ was strength for the paralytic;  
So that this word alone was the man's full healing.

Jesus healed the Paralytic at the Sheep's Pool, located near the Sheep's Gate of Jerusalem, where people sacrificed their beasts and washed their insides. The pool had five sides, with a porch and arch on each. A number of people, afflicted with various diseases, passed through them, waiting at the water for an angel to come down and stir it. Once it moved, whoever stepped into the water first was instantly healed. One poor man, whose story is recounted in today's Gospel lection in the Divine Liturgy, waited 38 years for someone to lower him into the water, because he was unable to move into the water himself. However, the Savior merely commanded the man to get up and walk, and he was healed.

In Thine infinite mercy, O Christ our God, have mercy on us. Amen.

### **PROSPHORA IS OFFERED BY**



For the health of the Calvin and Magdalena Perfilio and their children Leon and Elena, and for the Horton family, Laila Ferris, Sheila Hernandez, and Diego Acosta.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY for James Alexander Shaheen on May 3rd! OUR LOVELY SON AND Gift of God. God bless you and give you a long healthy and happy life! We're very proud of you!!! Love, mom and dad.

### **DONATIONS**

Carol Abraham in memory of Byran Abraham, for the health and safety of Abraham, Plundo and Kennard families. For the Ladies society.

Allen & Patricia Borschow for food for the hungry.

Patrick Doolin for the health of all St. George Parishioners and all Christians persecuted around the world.

Jamie Isaac in memory of Bryan Abraham.

Jamie Issac for the health of Blanca Anapaikos.

Hend Odeh & family for the health of Sylvana Aldouri.

Nabil & Doris Shaheen for the health of Sylvana Aldouri.

Drs. Hassan & Maha Salloum for the health of Sylvana Aldouri.

Deanna Nasser in loving memory of her dear mother Surella Cecile Nasser on her 9 month memorial May 3, in loving memory of her dear brother Dale Elias Nasser, Jr. for his Heavenly birthday on May 5, in loving memory of her beloved father Delfone Elias Nasser, and for the health of Daniel Nasser, Deanna Nasser, Ellen Nasser, Joseph and Andrea Nasser and family, Wynston and Alyse Nasser Cooper and family, Danielle Nasser and Kade Brasel, Theo Zounis, Dale III and Nicholas Nasser, the Elias, Harmier, Kautz, Ferris and Cass families and all our living and departed relatives and loved ones.

### ST. GEORGE CEMETERY PLOT INTEREST SURVEY

Please click below to answer this quick survey using this link:

[https://forms.office.com/pages/responsepage.aspx?id=0oNUtgt82UqBujcWpDOWbe0ennr79\\_5Dq4SNcSDBs\\_JUNEo3Slg1RDBQV0NEOVNFT1Q0RFpJSTNWSi4u&route=shorturl](https://forms.office.com/pages/responsepage.aspx?id=0oNUtgt82UqBujcWpDOWbe0ennr79_5Dq4SNcSDBs_JUNEo3Slg1RDBQV0NEOVNFT1Q0RFpJSTNWSi4u&route=shorturl)

### MOCK BIBLE BOWL – MAY 3rd



FOR TICKETS SEE ANY SOYO MEMBER OR ANNE THOMAS 915-373-2259

**Menu**

**APPETIZERS**  
Fruit & Vegetable Tray  
Chips and Salsa

**LUNCH**  
Salad  
Chicken and Pasta Rolls

**DESSERT**  
Cookies  
Cupcakes  
Donuts

**DONATIONS ACCEPTED!**  
ADULTS \$15  
CHILDREN 10 AND UNDER \$10

3RD OF MAY 2026  
St. George Teen SOYO

TEEN SOYO will still be selling tickets to their annual Bible Bowl luncheon this Sunday. **The last day to purchase will be April 28th.** You can message me if you would like tickets and pay on May 3rd. **There will be no tickets sold at the door for this event due to the event being catered.** Please join us for this fun event that will support our teen group! Thank you in advance. Donations are also welcome.

Adults are \$15 and kids 10 and under are \$10. Please see the flyer for additional information.

Anne Thomas  
Teen Advisor  
915-373-2259

### ST. GEORGE FEAST DAY PICNIC

Christ is Risen!

Father Fadi, Deacon Michael, and our beloved St. George Parish,

Thanks to everyone who came to support our 4th annual St. George Feast Day Picnic! It was a rousing success, with about 150 attendees on Sunday, April 19th. Thanks especially to all those who made it possible, the men who donated huge amounts of time and energy to making sure it was a successful event. St. George, pray for us!

We look forward to seeing you all at future events, glory to God!

Kyle Horton,  
President, St. George Men's Society



## COFFEE HOUR & FELLOWSHIP AFTER LITURGY



In our parish life, let us foster brotherly love by gathering after worship for coffee hour as a warm, sharing family; it is wonderful when, atop the coffee, there is a small bite to accompany the drink—so we have a simple, inviting table for all to enjoy. Please know you are not required to sponsor everything; even a partial contribution—whether a pot of coffee, a tray of treats, or a small snack from home—blesses our communal table, so that we can welcome one another as brothers and sisters in Christ.

If you are interested in contributing and/or sponsoring a Coffee Hour, please contact Vanessa Salloum at (915) 373-5550.

## SUNDAY SCHOOL



Every Sunday students should be present at 9:25 AM to be with Fr. Fadi for the opening prayers.

**STUDENT ATTENDANCE ROSTER FOR SUNDAY, APRIL 26, 2026**  
– 25 students

**Pre-School (ages 3 and 4 years old)**

**Doris Shaheen**

Ayana Artis, Laila Cass, Rafael Herredia & Xander Valenzuela

**Grades Kinder/1<sup>st</sup>**

**Jehan Al-Hanna**

Zyla Aldouri, Olivia Artis, Marylaine Del Corral, Ezra Espinosa, Ezme Ferris, Jack Horton, Leon Perfillio

**Grades 2/3**

**Adriana Anzaldo**

**Grades 4/5**

**Anne Thomas**

John Baptist Del Corral, Delilah Ochoa & Christina Sarah

**Grades 6/7**

**James Shaheen Jr.**

Caleb Crawford & Rosalie Ochoa

**Grades 8-12**

**Johnny Odeh**

Elias Al Dayoub, Majd Al Dayoub, Phoebe Del Corral, Stephnie Chloe Del Corral, Noah Espinosa, Annabelle Horton, Melaina Horton, Joseph Salloum & Amira Thomas

**Sunday School Director:**

**Laila Ferris**

**Co-Director:**

**Anne Thomas**

**Special Projects:**

**Jaclyn Ferris**



**ANTIOCHIAN  
HOUSE of STUDIES**

## ANTIOCHIAN HOUSE OF STUDIES (AHOS)

AHOS enrollment is now opened for the academic year 2026-2027. For more information you can visit <https://ahos.edu/open-enrollment-2026-2027/>. Answer the call to serve the Lord in His parish and community, pursue excellence in theological education and pastoral formation, and deepen your relationship with God.



## TEACHINGS FROM METROPOLITAN SABA

Dear parishioners and friends, you will periodically be receiving the **weekly teachings** by His Eminence Metropolitan Saba, in English and Arabic. When we receive them from the Archdiocese Office we'll send it under a separate church email.

## HOMILY BY FR. FADI RABBAT

The homily given by Fr. Fadi on Sunday April 26<sup>th</sup> is located at the end of the bulletin.

## THE ADULT STUDY GROUP

St. Symeon the New Theologian (949–1022) is highly significant to the Orthodox Church as one of only three saints granted the title "Theologian" (alongside St. John the Evangelist and St. Gregory of Nazianzus). He is a pivotal mystic and ascetic teacher who emphasized direct, conscious experience of God's grace, the reality of deification, and the necessity of repentance.

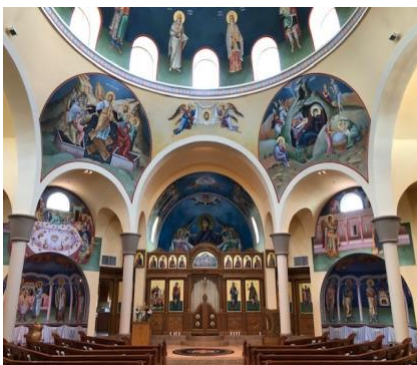
As a Hesychast, he taught that the goal of Christian life is to experience God as direct Divine Light, placing mystical experience within the reach of all sincere believers.

- He strongly emphasized the Eucharist as central to spiritual life and stressed the need for guidance under a spiritual father.
- He is a major author in the *Philokalia*, and his works, such as *Hymns of Divine Love* and *Catechetical Discourses*, remain vital to Orthodox spirituality."

For future planning, here are the Adult Study Group meeting dates. Please note we **DO NOT MEET** on September 6, Labor Day weekend. We'll meet 5/3, 5/17, 5/31, 6/14, 6/28, 7/12, 7/26, 8/9, 8/23, 9/13, 9/27, 10/11, 10/25, 11/8, 11/22, 12/6, and 12/20. The Group meets in the mini hall from 9:15 a.m. to 10:30 a.m.

In Christ,  
Dr. Sandra Edwards, Master of Theological Studies (MTS).  
Instructor, The Adult Study Group

## ST GEORGE CHURCH ICON PROJECT



**From the Prayer behind the Ambon for the Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom and written in Arabic on the archway above the iconostasis “...sanctify those who love the beauty of Thy house.”**

Icons are representations of the Heavenly. They are expressions of Orthodox faith, teaching, and worship. The Orthodox Church uses icons to assist in worship. Icons are a 'window to heaven' and they help us to focus on divine things.

Fr. Fadi is overseeing the Icon Project to have icons written on the bare interior walls in the church. This project continues beautifying the Church for the glory of God. **If**

you wish to make a monetary donation towards the Icon Project in memory of a loved one(s) and/or the health of your family, please contact Fr. Fadi at (973) 780-0221. Please address your check to St. George Church, earmarked Icon Project Donation. A warm thank you to all who have donated toward the Icon Project. Based on your gifts from the heart there will be more icons to come.

### **ONLINE LITURGICAL GUIDE FOR CHURCH SERVICES**

Being present, prayerful and present in the church community and in the celebration of the Divine Liturgy is key to being orthodox. Please click on the following link to access the liturgical services for Saturday Vespers, Sunday Orthros, Sunday Divine Liturgy, and special services:  
<https://www.antiochian.org/liturgicday>

Click on the SELECT DATE in the top calendar. The services will appear under the DAILY LITURGICAL TEXT on the right column. Click on the service you need. You can follow the service using your cell phone or print a copy for your use.

To use your cell phone to access the above information while in church, you can link to the church's Wi-Fi Network. Information is posted at the church entrance.

When using the small red Service Book found in the church pews, the general services can be found on the following pages:

- **Vespers**, page 24 – 43      - **Orthros**, pages 44 – 80      - **Liturgy**, pages 91 - 127

Please note that some of the prayers may change based on the Tone of the day.

### **PASCHAL NOTES**

- (a) There will be no fasting on Wednesdays and Fridays, not only during Bright Week but until the Feast of the Ascension, for the whole forty days. (This was the decision of the Holy Synod of the Church of Antioch in 1997.)
- (b) If a death occurs in any of our parishes between Pascha and Ascension, the funeral service for Bright Week must be celebrated and not the regular funeral service.
- (c) From Pascha Sunday to the Sunday of Pentecost, the troparion "O Heavenly King..." is not sung. And from Pascha Sunday to its leave-taking, instead of "Holy God," "O come, let us worship and fall down..." in Orthros, the Hours, and Vespers; and "We have seen the true light" in the Divine Liturgy, we say "Christ is risen."
- (d) From the Great and Holy Sunday of Pascha through Bright Saturday, we read the Paschal Office in place of Morning and Evening Prayers at our homes, as well as in place of Compline, Midnight Office, the Hours, and the Prayers of Thanksgiving after Holy Communion. It is also read on the leave-taking of Pascha. You can download it from the Online Liturgical Guide.

### **OFFERING PROSPHORA FOR LITURGY**

Dear St. George parishioners, offering Prospora to be used in the Liturgy is an offering of oneself to God. If you plan to offer Prospora on a Sunday for your health and your loved ones, or in memory of a departed one, please indicate your offering on the sign-up board located in the Narthex (entrance) of the church or email Rev. Dcn. Michael [by the prior Monday at deacon@stgeorge-elpaso.org](mailto:deacon@stgeorge-elpaso.org) to have it placed in the week's Church Bulletin. Rev. Dcn. Michael will then contact you to make the necessary arrangements for the

Prosphora. The usual cost for preparing the five loaves is \$30. **A bulletin board is available in the Narthex if you would like to sign-up to offer Holy Bread for the year 2026.**

### **WHO CAN RECEIVE COMMUNION IN AN ORTHODOX CHURCH?**

Only Orthodox Christians who prepared for Communion through confession, prayer, and fasting can go up to the chalice to receive the Holy Eucharist from the priest. When you approach the chalice and the Priest or Deacon say, "The servant of God...", please say your first name or that of your saint.

All visitors are welcomed to worship with us; however, non-Orthodox Christians may not partake of the Holy Eucharist but rather wait till the Dismissal of the Divine Liturgy and partake of the blessed bread (called Antidoron in Greek) placed in front of the Solea.

### **CHURCH ETIQUETTE – THE DO'S AND DON'TS - MOST HELPFUL!**

The web site below is a guide for how to show proper respect and reference in church. This guide is also meant for personal reflection, not as a means of judging others. Keep in mind that there are different traditions even among the Orthodox faith. We come to church to pray and worship God above all else, and that should be our only focus.

<https://antiochianprods.blob.core.windows.net/websiteattachments/ChurchEtiquetteBooklet.pdf>

### **THE IMPORTANCE OF PUNCTUALITY**

The time to arrive at Church is before the service starts. If you arrive after the Divine Liturgy begins, try to enter the Church quietly and observe what is happening. If the Epistle or Gospel is being read or the Little or Great Entrance is taking place, wait until it is finished to quickly find a seat. If Father is giving the sermon, stay in the back until he has concluded. Try not to interrupt the Liturgy by your entrance. The best way to avoid this situation is to arrive on time.

### **2026 MEMBERSHIP PLEDGE (TITHING) TO ST. GEORGE ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH**

*"Return to Me and I will return to you," says the Lord Almighty....Return now in this," says the Lord Almighty, "and see if I will not open for you the floodgates of heaven and pour out for you a blessing until it is overflowing."* – Malachi 3:8-10

We would like to remind you of the importance of giving. Our church relies on your financial support to continue to provide the ministries and maintenance of St. George church. **If you are an Orthodox attendee and want a pledge envelop box for 2026, please contact Kyle Horton, Parish Council Treasurer.**

The minimum financial contribution of at least \$500.00 pledge per Baptized or Chrismated Orthodox person, ages 18 and older is required or \$1000 per family (or more from the gift of the heart). **You can either pay your pledge immediately, or make payments throughout the year, however, the final amount must be met by December 31st of each year.** **The met pledge makes you eligible to vote at the Annual General Assembly of Voting Members in January each year.** Please make checks payable to St. George Church in the donated amounts. In the purpose line indicate **Church Pledge.**

If you have financial difficulties, please see the priest for available options.

Thank you for your continued support in maintaining the church.



## PRAYER FOR THE SICK

Please let us know if you are ill and/or hospitalized by contacting Fr. Fadi Rabbat. We too will add your name to the prayer list for Sunday's Divine Liturgy.

## CONTACT INFORMATION

For Pastoral needs, emergencies, visitation to hospital, homes, and prayer/holy communion during the year, contact Fr. Fadi Rabbat directly and not through the Deacon. Fr. Fadi will not visit without permission extended to him from the sick person and/or their family.

Confessions are by appointment with Fr. Fadi Rabbat. PLEASE contact Fr. Fadi TWO days in advance to ensure his schedule is free.

Fr. Fadi Rabbat at:  
*Cell phone:* 973.780.0221  
*Email:* [fadi.rabbat@icloud.com](mailto:fadi.rabbat@icloud.com)

Rev. Dcn. Michael Sifuentes at *Cell Phone:* (915)309-1511 *Email:* [deacon@stgeorge-elpaso.org](mailto:deacon@stgeorge-elpaso.org)

## CHURCH BULLETIN STAFF

The RT. Rev. Archimandrite Fadi Rabbat, Chief Editor

Rev. Dcn. Michael Sifuentes, Editor

Vanessa Salloum, Assistant Editor

Jameelie Dayoub, Web Site Poster

Please note the weekly church bulletin is always posted on the church web site page at:

<https://www.stgeorge-elpaso.org/>

## ONLINE ORTHODOX STORES

Below are some online stores that have a large selection of traditional Orthodox religious items and books on the Eastern Orthodox faith and service books.

Ancient Faith Store:	<a href="https://store.ancientfaith.com/">https://store.ancientfaith.com/</a>
<u>Antiochian Village Store:</u>	<a href="https://store.antiochianvillage.org/">https://store.antiochianvillage.org/</a>
Holy Cross Book Store:	<a href="https://holycrossbookstore.com/">https://holycrossbookstore.com/</a>
Holy Trinity Store:	<a href="https://www.holytrinitystore.com/">https://www.holytrinitystore.com/</a>
Eight Day Books:	<a href="https://www.eighthdaybooks.com/">https://www.eighthdaybooks.com/</a>
Alpha Omega ART (New York):	<a href="https://aoart.gr/contact">https://aoart.gr/contact</a>
Holy Transfiguration Monastery Store:	<a href="https://www.bostonmonks.com/">https://www.bostonmonks.com/</a>
Saint Vladimir Seminary Press (SVS):	<a href="https://svspress.com/">https://svspress.com/</a>

Books can also be purchased through online sites such as Amazon, etc..

## Homily of the third Sunday of Pascha, 2026, by Fr. Fadi Rabbat

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, One God, Amen.

Christ is risen! Truly He is risen!

Beloved in Christ,

Today, on the third Sunday of Pascha, our Holy Orthodox Church brings before us the holy Myrrh-bearing women, together with Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus. And through them, the Church teaches us what love looks like when faith is tested, what courage looks like when everything seems lost, and what hope looks like when it stands before a tomb.

The Gospel today begins at the most painful moment. Christ has been crucified. His disciples have scattered. The crowds have gone home. The voices that shouted, “Crucify Him,” have become silent. The body of the Lord hangs upon the Cross, and to the eyes of the world, everything is finished.

But in that silence, love begins to move.

Joseph of Arimathea, a respected member of the council, a man who had been waiting for the Kingdom of God, takes courage and goes to Pilate.

The Gospel says he “took courage,” because this was not a small act. To ask for the body of Jesus was to identify himself with the Crucified One. It was to risk his position, his reputation, and perhaps even his life. Until now he had been a secret disciple, but at the Cross, secrecy could no longer contain his love.

And with him comes Nicodemus, the disciple by night, the man who once came to Jesus in darkness. Now, when darkness seems to have conquered, Nicodemus steps forward with myrrh and aloes. The one who came by night now serves the Light. The one who had many questions now gives his hands to bury the Answer Himself.

My beloved, this is the first lesson of today: true love for Christ eventually becomes visible. There may be moments when our faith is quiet, hidden, afraid, or weak. But when the hour comes, love must act. Joseph and Nicodemus teach us that it is never too late to become courageous. It is never too late to stand with Christ. It is never too late for the secret disciple to become faithful in the open.

Then the Gospel shows us the holy women. Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome come very early in the morning, at the rising of the sun, carrying spices to anoint the body of Jesus. They are not coming because they expect a miracle. They are not coming because they understand the Resurrection. They are coming because they love Him.

This is the beauty of the Myrrh-bearing women. Their theology at that moment was not complete, but their love was complete. Their understanding was not perfect, but their faithfulness was real. They did not know how the stone would be moved. They did not know how they would enter. They did not know what they would find. But they went anyway.

And as they walked, they asked one another, “Who will roll away the stone for us from the door of the tomb?”

How often this is also our question. Who will roll away the stone from my heart? Who will roll away the stone of my fear, my grief, my sin, my weakness, my anxiety, my past? Who will roll away the stone that seems too large for me to move?

The Gospel answers us with quiet power: when they looked up, they saw that the stone had already been rolled away. They worried about a stone that God had already moved.

My beloved, many times we spend our lives troubled by stones that the Lord is already preparing to roll away. We walk toward our duties, our prayers, our struggles, and our responsibilities saying, "How will this be possible?" But the Lord does not ask us to move every stone. He asks us to be faithful enough to go to the tomb. He asks us to bring the myrrh of our love, the myrrh of our prayers, the myrrh of our repentance, the myrrh of our service. And when we arrive, we discover that grace has gone before us.

The women enter the tomb, and instead of death, they find a messenger of life. The angel says to them, "Do not be amazed; you seek Jesus of Nazareth, Who was crucified. He is risen; He is not here; see the place where they laid Him."

These words are the heart of our Paschal joy: "He is risen; He is not here."

The tomb is empty, not because someone stole the body, but because death could not hold the Lord of Life. The grave received Him as a dead man, but it could not keep Him, because He is God. Hades opened its mouth to swallow Him, but instead it was destroyed from within. Death touched Life, and death died.

This is why we cry again and again, "Christ is risen!" We are not simply remembering an event from the past. We are proclaiming the victory that changes everything. If Christ is risen, then sin is not the final word. If Christ is risen, then death is not the end. If Christ is risen, then no tomb, no darkness, no despair, no failure, and no stone is greater than the mercy of God.

But notice also the tenderness of the angel's message: "Go, tell His disciples and Peter."

And Peter. Why does the Gospel mention Peter by name? Because Peter had denied the Lord three times. Peter had wept bitterly. Peter may have thought, "I am no longer worthy to be called His disciple." But the risen Christ sends a message especially for him.

This is the mercy of the Resurrection. Christ does not rise in order to condemn those who failed Him, but in order to restore them when they repent. He rises and calls Peter back. He rises and gathers the scattered disciples. He rises and heals fear with peace. He rises and turns denial into repentance, repentance into forgiveness, and forgiveness into apostleship.

So let no one here say, "I have failed too much." Let no one say, "The Lord has forgotten me." Let no one say, "My sin is stronger than His mercy." The risen Christ says, "Go, tell My disciples and Peter." In other words, tell the weak one. Tell the one who fell. Tell the one who is ashamed. Tell the one who thinks he is outside. I am risen, and I am going before him.

The Myrrh-bearing women went to the tomb carrying spices for a dead body, but they became the first preachers of the Resurrection. Joseph gave Christ a tomb, but Christ transformed the tomb into the doorway of life. Nicodemus brought myrrh and aloes for burial, but the fragrance of that love became part of the Church's eternal memory.

This is why the Church honors them today. Not because they understood everything, but because they were faithful. Not because they were powerful, but because they loved. Not because they had no fear, but because their love was greater than their fear.

And this is the calling for us today. We may not have expensive myrrh like Nicodemus. We may not have a new tomb like Joseph. But each of us has something to bring to Christ. We can bring Him a repentant heart. We can bring Him our prayer. We can bring Him our service to the Church. We can bring Him forgiveness toward others. We can bring Him our patience in suffering. We can bring Him our courage to stand with Him in a world that often forgets Him.

The question is not whether our gift is great in the eyes of the world. The question is whether it is offered with love.

The Myrrh-bearing women teach us that love goes early in the morning. Love does not wait until everything is easy. Love does not wait until all questions are answered. Love does not wait until every stone is removed. Love walks toward Christ, even with trembling. And when love reaches the tomb, it finds that Christ is not dead but risen.

Beloved, let us become myrrh-bearers in our own lives. Let our words carry the fragrance of Christ. Let our homes carry the fragrance of prayer. Let our parish carry the fragrance of unity and humility. Let our hearts carry the fragrance of repentance and Paschal joy.

And when we face the stones of life, let us remember: the stone was very large, but it was rolled away. The tomb was sealed, but it was opened. The Lord was crucified, but He is risen.

May the holy Myrrh-bearing women, Joseph of Arimathea, Nicodemus, and all the saints intercede for us, that we may love Christ with courage, serve Him with faithfulness, and proclaim His Resurrection with joy. Amen.

Christ is risen! Truly He is risen!