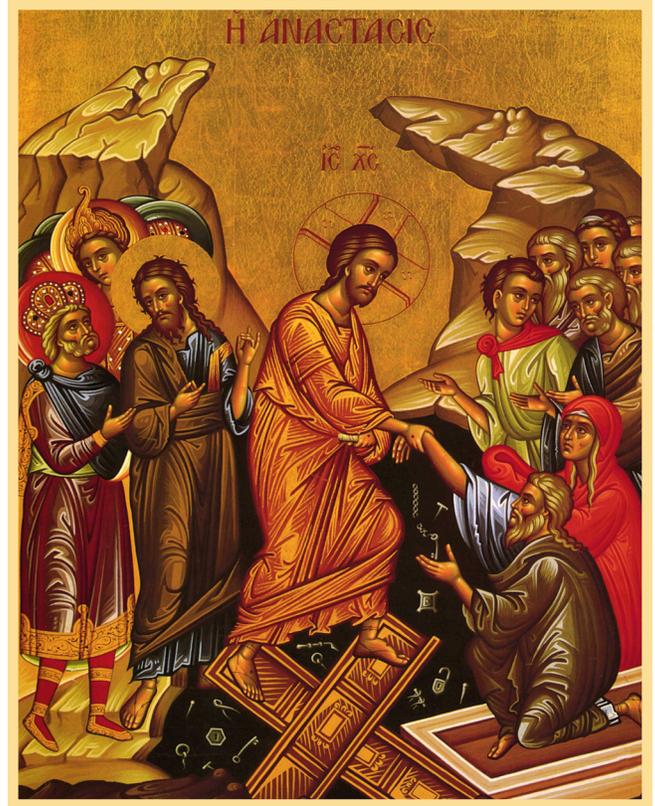


FAMILY GOSPEL LESSON

John 1:1-17

On this day we celebrate the Resurrection of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. By dying upon the Cross, taking on Himself the sins of the world, Jesus, the author of life, conquers death. Because of His kenosis (self-emptying), heaven is opened to us and we can now, with the thief, petition Him “Lord, remember us in Your kingdom.” The word “Pascha” is translated from the Hebrew word for Passover. The Jewish celebration of Passover commemorates when death passed over the Hebrews in Egypt who had signed the blood of a lamb on their doors. In the new or final Passover, Jesus becomes the lamb whose blood saves those who believe in Him from spiritual death. Christ, through His suffering, has opened the gates of Hades that we may pass over from death into eternal life.



With this bold passage assigned for the “Feast of Feasts,” John begins His Gospel as if to say, “Before you read anything else, I want you to be very clear about whom this Jesus is.” It paints a strong and beautiful portrait of our Lord. Jesus is the Word, the living Bible Himself. He came to show and to give us the way to salvation through His life. He is our Light, the Sun that shines brightly in the darkness of this life. While listening to the reading of this Gospel, the light of the Resurrection burns brightly from the Pascha candles in our hands and hopefully from our hearts having experienced the Passion and Resurrection of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

For Consideration

- What (or Who) is the Word? What does this passage say about the Word?
- What (or Who) is the Light? What does this passage say about the Light?
- What does this Gospel passage mean for our lives?

TO DO TOGETHER

Pascha Cookies

Every step of making these cookies teaches children about Pascha. The recipe and teaching instructions can be found at www.phyllisonest.com in the “Resources” section under “Lent and Pascha.” Start making them on Holy Saturday and they will be done when you return from the Resurrection service—with a special surprise awaiting your family.

Compare Icons

Read the account of the first Passover in Exodus 11—13. Discuss how Pascha has fulfilled the Jewish Passover. Instead of the blood of the Lamb, the blood of Christ redeems humanity! Instead of the sign of the cross marked on door-posts, the Lord is lifted up on the Cross! Make a chart with two columns—one entitled “Passover” and one entitled “Pascha” to help you track the parallels. Make sure to write down questions that arise and check with your priest for answers if necessary.

Journey with the Lord

After the midnight service, plan on bringing the light of the Resurrection home. Purchase one of the five-day candles from your parish and light it with the Pascha flame as you leave the church. Keep the flame lit during bright week and gather as a family to pray the Paschal Hours and sing “Christ is Risen” before it at your family iconostasion each day.

CLOSING PRAYER

What shall we give in return to the Lord for His gifts?

For us He became human and on account of our corrupted nature the Word became flesh and dwelt in our midst. He was the benefactor to those who were ungrateful, the liberator to those in bondage, and the sun of righteousness to those who dwell in darkness.

He who was incorrupt ascended on the Cross, the light descended into Hades, the life suffered death, and He was the resurrection for those who had fallen.

Let us sing to Him: Our God, glory to you!

-From the Matins of the Resurrection

FINAL THOUGHT

In old Russia, a service was held every Easter Sunday afternoon in the village cemetery. Having ended the service in the cemetery chapel, the priest accompanied by acolytes and choir led a procession through the cemetery singing “Christos Boskres” or “Christ is Risen.” Stopping by graves where family members stood by in memory of their departed loved ones, the priest greeted each group with this proclamation, “Christ is Risen!” and they replied with the same happy assurance, “Truly, He is Risen!” What a dramatic expression of our Orthodox Christian faith to walk through a cemetery on Easter Sunday and sing, “Christ is Risen!”

-from “Daily Vitamins for Spiritual Growth: Volume 1” by Anthony Coniaris



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