continued from front page

week the Church comes to the same central experience: "Having beheld the Resurrection of Christ . . ." Every Saturday night, when the Priest carries the Gospel from the Altar to the center of the Church, after he has read the Gospel of the Resurrection, the same fundamental fact of our Christian Faith is proclaimed: CHRIST IS RISEN! St. Paul says, "If Christ has not been raised then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain" (I Cor. 15:14). There is nothing else to believe. This is the heart of our Faith; and it is only the reference to Pascha, as the end of all merely natural time and the beginning of the new time, that we can understand the whole liturgical year.

by the VeryRev. Alexander Schmemann

APRIL 13 - THE HIEROMARTYR ARTEMON

He was a priest in Laodicea in the time of the Emperor Diocletian. He spoke thus of himself before the torturers' tribunal: 'I am called Artemon, a servant of Christ my God. Sixteen years I was a reader, and read the services in the Church of my God; twenty-eight years a deacon, and read the Holy Gospel; and have now completed thirty years as a priest, teaching the people and setting them on the way of salvation with the help of Christ.' The judge took him to the temple of Aesculapius, where the priests kept great snakes, regarding them as gods. They meant the snakes to bite Artemon, but he made the sign of the Cross, and by its power riveted the snakes to the ground so that they could not bite him. He then brought them out to the courtyard and breathed on them, and they died instantly. All who saw this were filled with amazement. But the chief of the pagan priests of that temple, Vitalis, seeing this marvel, fell to his knees before Artemon and cried: 'Great is the Christian God!' The martyr baptized him, along with several of his friends. But the evil judge stood firm in his wickedness and tortured the aged Artemon in various ways. He intended at one time to cast him into burning pitch, but fell off his horse into it himself and was burned. Two eagles were seen to descend on him, lift him from his horse and cast him into the pitch. St Artemon remained free for a certain time and went about teaching the people, accompanied always by two tame deer. But he was arrested afresh and beheaded in the year 303. And his soul went to the Kingdom of Christ our God, whom he had served so faithfully.

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O.ι.δ.α.; 2 Lakeshore Boulevard, PO Box 35; Grand Isle, VT 05458
Phone: (802) 372-4361; oida@aol.com
Go Forth...and teach all nations. (Matthew 28:19)

Go Forth

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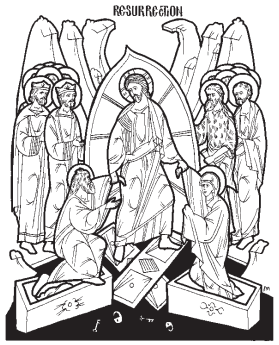
THE FEAST OF THE RESURECTION



This is the starting point for our understanding of the sanctification of time. It is the Orthodox experience, which goes back to the apostles themselves, that in the centre of our liturgical life, in the very centre of that time which we measure as year, we find the Feast of Christ's Resurrection. What is the Resurrection? Resurrection is the appearance in this world, completely dominated by time and therefore by death, of life that shall have not end. The One who rose again from the dead does not die anymore. In this world of ours, not somewhere else, not in any "other" world, there appeared one morning someone who is beyond death and yet in our time. This meaning of Christ's Resurrection, this great joy, is the central theme of Christianity; and it has been preserved in its fullness in the liturgy of the Orthodox Church. There is much truth expressed by those who say that the central theme of Orthodoxy, the centre of all its experience, the frame of reference for everything else in her, is the Resurrection of Christ.

We Orthodox living in the West are in danger of losing this resurrection spirit of Christianity. We are concerned with death much more than with resurrection, and church life sometimes is dominated by the funeral rather than the resurrection type of piety. Yet no one can understand the real structure of the liturgical cycle of the year unless he understands that the center, the day that gives meaning to all days and therefore to all time, is the yearly commemoration of Christ's Resurrection at Pascha. Pascha is always the end and always the beginning. We are always living after Pascha, and we are always going towards Pascha. The whole spirit and meaning of liturgical life is contained in Pascha, together with the subsequent fifty-day period which culminates in the feast of Pentecost, the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the apostles. This unique Paschal celebration is reflected every week in the Christian Sunday, the day which Russians, for example, still call Voskresenie, "Resurrection." Though it man seem strange to you, it is important to realize that every Sunday is a little Pascha. I say "Little Pascha," but it is really "Great Pascha." Every

continued on back page

APRIL 15 - SAINT CRESCENS

The ancient city of Myra in Lycia of Asia Minor is generally remembered for giving to the world one of Christianity's most famous saints, the ever-popular St. Nicholas. Myra also happens to be the birthplace of a much more obscure saint named Crescens who suffers in comparison to St. Nicholas. Not only that, but the dimness of the details of his life are all but lost in the shadows of ecclesiastical history which cannot determine with complete accuracy the exact years that spanned the dedicated life of this more or less neglected servant of God.

It is enough to know that not only did Crescens hail from the city that gave us the eminent St. Nicholas, but that he came by the name of Crescens to honor the apostle of Christ mentioned in the New Testament. St. Paul in his Second Epistle to his beloved friend Timothy, Chapter 4, Verse 10, says, "Crescens has departed into Galatia." The biblical Crescens went to many parts of Asia Minor, including Myra. There a young couple came to accept Christ after listening to the missionary's word. Thereafter, when a son was born to this couple, he was named for the saint who had brought them the light of the Savior. From this we can assume that the venerable St. Crescens was to give his life for Christ as the apostle did within a span of years that did not exceed two generations.

In the timelessness of God, the first century is no more distant than yesterday. Thus, if man's perception of earthly time assumes the abstract concept of infinity, the St. Crescens of the first century is separated from the most modern of saints by a void as thin as a page of the history that records the progress of mankind. With this in mind, St. Crescens and all the other saints remain as fresh in the hearts of Christians as the morning sunrise, reminding all who believe in Jesus Christ that in his Kingdom there is no darkness, only heavenly light. This was the theme of the mission of Crescens who, like the other apostles, stressed the importance of heeding the word of the Savior in daily life in preparation for that which is to come.

The St. Crescens of Myra was not just an imitation of the holy man for whom he had been named, but a genuine missionary in his own right who held aloft the torch of Christian truth with a zeal undampened by the pagan resistance he encountered. There is no indication that he was a formally ordained cleric of the Church, but it mattered little in his day when the first threads of the Christian fabric were being woven and when Christians were forced to worship in secret. Raised by courageous and dedicated converts, he knew nothing of the security to be found in paganism. He was only a generation removed from pagan beliefs, but he looked upon them with mixed emotions of loathing and compassion which spurred him to even greater efforts to bring to the spiritually darkened the light of the Messiah.

Unlike the apostle for whom he was named, Crescens appears to have spent his entire life, which stretched into old age, in and about the city of Myra. He chose to remain where he believed he could do the most good in bringing about a cohesive community that could worship and flourish in a hostile environment. He is known to have welcomed the peripatetic missionaries of the Savior, providing for their comfort and safety. He did not restrict his hospitality to guests, but made a practice of assisting anyone in need, particularly the oppressed younger generation of Christians in whom he saw the hope for a stronger, more glorious, and eventually universally accepted Church of Jesus Christ.

When Crescens sought to step up the conversion to Christianity, he saw the many thousands who were accessible to him only in the public forums. He thus threw caution to the winds and preached openly, defying laws prohibiting such action. When advised by his friends that he would impale himself on a pagan sword of vengeance with his public outcries in the name of Christ, he said simply that there was precious little time left for him to fulfill his mission. He would put his remaining time to the best possible use, regardless of the consequences.

There is no telling how many converts were swept into the Christian fold by this last courageous move of Crescens who was seized and put to death on April 15 of an unknown year.

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