

My Beloved Ones,

*ΧΡΙΣΤΟΣ ΑΝΕΣΤΗ! Christ is Risen!*

Last Sunday we were blessed to experience, in the Sunday of St. Thomas, a story which helped to strengthen our belief in the reality of our Lord's Resurrection.

This Sunday, we have a story of unwavering love, as seen through the Myrrhbearers: those women, who, out of love and devotion for Jesus Christ, followed him during His public ministry—and even to Golgotha.

Sincere believers in the Jewish faith, they wished to perform the appropriate rituals in anointing His body after death. However, because they were pious, they chose not to break the Passover Sabbath—the highest Sabbath of the year.

For this reason, it was not until Sunday that they went to the tomb, just before dawn to perform their solemn duties. Imagine then their surprise, when they found that not only had the stone been rolled away from the tomb, but that the Body of Christ was missing; for inside the tomb, a young man proclaimed the Good News of the Resurrection to them; charging them to go tell His Disciples, and Peter!

The Gospel of John tells us that Mary Magdalene was sad when she found the empty tomb. Even when she herself saw the Risen Lord, she did not recognize Him, mistaking His Resurrected form for that of the gardener; begging him to bring the Myrrhbearers the Body so he could be anointed. Eventually, Mary recognized the reality of Christ's lifesaving appearance, believing, and sharing the message with His disciples.

This is a powerful example for all Christians, but especially women. Christ Himself saw their love and zeal for His teachings, and He chose to appear to them first (rather than to His disciples, who hid themselves out of fear after His arrest).

I hope and pray that all the women of our Metropolis—devout mothers and daughters; kindhearted members of Philoptochos and enthusiastic volunteers—will seek to find the same inner strength that the Myrrhbearers demonstrated. Then, they can begin to change themselves, their families, their neighbors, and the rest of this troubled world.

Turning back to Christ can happen easily when we all seek to emulate the examples of these strong and pious women, whose strength and power comes from our Risen Lord.

**+ALEXIOS**

Metropolitan of Atlanta

