

## *A TRUE EASTER STORY and an UPDATE on Parish Life*

Dear Brothers and Sisters,  
Christ is Risen! Indeed He is Risen!

While I do not have profound words of wisdom in these uncertain times, I do have simple truths to share that I learned from all our people, in last nearly 30 years of being your priest, in our beloved parish.

It is certain and true, that our people love each other. It is certain and true, that our people love their church. It is certain and true, that our people love our beautiful Divine Services. It is certain and true, that our people love God. It is Certain and True that: "Christ is Risen from the dead, Trampling down death by death, and upon all those in the tombs bestowing Life!"

I also would like to share with you a simple true Easter story, taken from the "God with Us" Catechetical Series, told and retold numerous times by our forefathers.

"It was not an unusually cold day as Russian winters go, that day in 1924. The Russian government was increasing its campaign against religion and was sponsoring many rallies and meetings to make fun of religion and the Church. Today was one of those days.

Commissar Vasili had organized this demonstration. The soldiers had their orders: they were to find two thousand people and bring them to the appointed spot so that there would be an audience. The program itself was all arranged: Dr. Burdikoff, the famous anti-religious speaker, was going to talk. His subject: Jesus' resurrection is a lie.

The people gathered and Burdikoff began to speak. For over an hour he attacked the Gospels, made fun of the Christian faith, and laughed at the Church before his captive audience. Finally, he threw out a challenge. If anyone here thinks he can prove that what I have been saying is false, I dare him to come up here now. The microphone is his."

The people stood silently, unmoving. No one would dare challenge the speaker. Poor workers, simple people - they could not match Burdikoff's keen mind and quick tongue, no matter how strongly they held to their faith. Besides even if someone could outtalk the Doctor, the soldiers would probably kill him on the spot.

Suddenly a murmur rose in the crowd, because it seemed that someone was actually going to accept the Doctor's challenge.

An old man, a peasant, was making his way slowly to the speaker's platform... Even Burdikoff was stunned - he never expected that anyone would try to debate him.

After the first momentary shock, however, he began to laugh within himself. What can this old fool have to say. I will make him the laughing stock of the city," he thought. By that time the man had reached the speaker's stand and looked out over the silent sea of faces: thousands of believing Christians afraid of what was to come. For several moments the old man looked out over the crowd as if he were trying to look into the eyes of each person there. At last his lips formed three words, the Easter greeting: "Christ is Risen!"

There was silence for a moment until the people realized what had happened. Then, suddenly, two thousand voices shouted back the reply, with overwhelming joy - "Indeed He is Risen!" Again, and again the old man screamed out the greeting: "Christ is Risen! - Indeed He is Risen!" Until the soldiers dragged the old man off the platform. When the crowd saw that, they began to

sing the Easter Troparion - CHRIST IS RISEN - over and over. The Commissar was furious: a simple old man had turned his rally into a Prayer Service with the Christian's Paschal Cheer - "Christ is Risen!"

Once again, we want to update everyone on continued work of your parish, in this challenging time, when it seems that the whole world came to a halt, due to corona virus. We remain strong and optimistic in our faith in Risen Lord, and that He will continue to protect all our loved ones and our parish for Many Years!

We want to express our most sincere and heartfelt gratitude and appreciation for your continued love, prayerful support, generosity, and stewardship for our beloved parish, especially now.

Most importantly, our liturgical services not only continue, they have increased. We served Divine Services 7 days a week, "on behalf of all and for all." We added healing services on all weekdays (with "skeletal crew"), where we pray for the health and well-being of all of our parishioners, loved ones and friends, with special prayers for protection from corona virus and healing, during the Great Lent, as well as conducted all prescribed Services for the Holy Week, Pascha and Bright Week. Thanks to Matushka Michele Holowatch, you can view two short videos she has recorded during Holy Week and Bright Week. You can view them by clicking on the following links: <https://youtu.be/T52CggFilm0>

and <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1s26S0Zp-9P8k7UQIWdu16KH7N8QgVR84/view>

With sadness, but also with full faith in Resurrection, we want to inform our parish family of falling asleep in the Lord of our beloved parishioner and friend, Connie Devine, on Bright Monday. Funeral Service was served on Bright Friday. Because so many of our parishioners expressed their regret of not being able to be present at the service, and thanks to wonderful know-how and abilities of our own Bill Scheider, who managed the funeral, we are able to provide you with the video recording of this Paschal Funeral Service at the following link: <https://youtu.be/7RnOwIyDfq8> Our thanks to Nikki Scheider and Mike Pylypsiw for their kindness and help in ensuring state compliance and social distancing guidelines, both at Funeral Home and at the Cemetery. May Connie's Memory be Eternal – Christ is Risen!

As we are sending this parish update, we are requesting everyone's prayers for the Newly-departed Olga Kulasza, who fell asleep in the Lord yesterday, Wednesday April 29<sup>th</sup>. We want to express our condolences, love and prayers to Marie and Dave Williams and all the relatives and friends, on falling asleep of Olga and pray that God grants her rest eternal in blessed repose with the Saints, and make her Memory to be Eternal – Christ is Risen!

In keeping with my previous email update "Your Parish Hard at Work", we want to inform everyone of the upcoming projects, your parish council is researching and considering, for nearest future. Yes beloved, "Your Parish Hard at Work" is continuing!

The long overdue beautification and repairs in our Parish Cemetery will be moving forward, pending the approval of our May council meeting, whether in person or via an email discussions and vote. This will include fixing and repairs of multiple monuments and tombstones, some of which are lopsided, some broken, and some fallen over. Some of those stones are from 1800's, and we know that it is our responsibility, as a parish family, to show our love to fathers and mothers, children and even grandchildren interned in the Lord, and to keep their resting place beautiful, sacred and consecrated by prayers of the faithful. May their Memory be Eternal – Christ is Risen!

Concurrently, we are working on the project of replacement our old and inefficient air-conditioning and heating systems, with new and energy efficient Mitsubishi System, that is whisper quiet and Eco-friendly, capable of cooling and heating square footage of the church proper and the hall. In addition, it removes humidity and dust and dirt particles, soot and pollen, and makes air healthy to breathe. We are in the process of reviewing necessary work to be done with several contractors and are in the process of securing at least three bids. Once this part of the project is completed, it will be reviewed by your parish council, and recommended contractor, job description and bid will then be presented to the Special Parish Meeting, for everyone's vote and approval, in keeping with our Parish Bylaws. This Special Parish Meeting will have one item on the Agenda and the vote will be held either in person, or by electronic means, per Diocesan and State regulations at that time. This project, in addition to making our air in the church healthier and temperatures comfortable, will also help to preserve the beauty and cleanliness of our newly repainted church, iconostas, shrines, mosaics, icons and other sacred articles, so generously and lovingly donated by our people.

We also want to thank our young and younger members, who continue a wonderful outreach to our parishioners, shut-ins and friends, during Pascha and Bright Week Celebrations, bringing messages of Faith, Hope and Love in Christ' Resurrection. They have purchased materials and crafts, designed, created and delivered dozens of Easter Cards and Door Handle Hangings and Crosses with Scriptural messages, reminding all of us of courage, strength, faith and God's eternal presence, in Risen Christ. I'm attaching some pictures for everyone to see. While many see darkness on the news in the world today, you show us the Light, Who is Christ! Thank you!

Our thanks goes to them also for not only being able to get some palms and pussy willows and for decorating our tetrapod in the middle of the church, for the Palm Sunday and Holy Week Services, but also for being able to locate, purchase and deliver to our church enough Easter flowers to decorate our beautiful Tomb and the Shroud of our Lord, for Great and Holy Friday (in spite of closures of all florists and flower shops), and remove the Tomb and rearrange the flowers during Procession at Paschal Service, that was held inside the church. Those flowers were lovingly offered in memory of the departed members of our parish families, and for the health and healing of our loved ones. Great Job!

For the first time ever, we are attaching our regular "Monthly Mailing" with this update, as well as sending it out by regular mail, for those who have no computer access, as well as some pictures and videos. We hope you enjoy them and thank all those who made it possible!

Be assured of our continued love and prayers for you, your families, and our entire parish family. We miss all of you and love all of you very much and look forward to seeing everyone, God willing, soon!

With love in Risen Christ,  
Fr. Alexey