

FOR CHRIST'S SAKE, PLEASE HELP!

PLEASE SUPPORT OUR NEWSPAPER 'ORTHODOX FAITH'!
DONATIONS ARE ESSENTIAL FOR OUR EXISTENCE!

Nothing has changed in two thousand years about evangelism. It is still our duty as Orthodox Christians to spread the word of Gospel. We try our best to do this through our newspaper and we need your support!

**EASIEST WAY TO DONATE US –
THROUGH PAYPAL AT OUR WEBSITE:
WWW.ORTHOPRESS.ORG**

Alternatively, you may make a wire transfer or deposit to:

ORTHODOX CANADA PRESS
Account: 1010784
Branch 02162
Royal Bank of Canada
Huntsville Branch, 22 Main St.
Huntsville, ON, P1H 2C9

Please send your checks or money orders in

**US or Canadian currency to:
ORTHODOX CANADA PRESS**
51 King William St.
PO Box 30028
Huntsville, Ontario, P1H 1G4

God Bless you for your help!

Please contact us at: (705) 635-3857
info@pravcanada.com



«ORTHODOX FAITH» SUBSCRIPTION

FOUR ENGLISH ISSUES PER YEAR
ANY SPECIAL ISSUES WILL BE SENT FREE OF CHARGE

Only \$ 20.00 (USD/CND) per year, including Shipping & Handling

First Name: _____ Last Name: _____
Street Address _____
City _____ Province/State _____
Country _____ Postal/Zip Code _____
Tel: _____ email: _____

Please send this slip with the check to:

ORTHODOX CANADA PRESS
51 King William St. PO Box 30028 Huntsville, Ontario, P1H 1G4

Please contact us at: (705) 635-3857 info@pravcanada.com



An unshakable conviction among Jews at the time of Jesus held that the Holy Scriptures had to be «fulfilled.» From the time of their exodus from Egypt and their sojourn in the wilderness of Sinai, the people of Israel viewed all of history, including their own personal and collective destiny, as under the authority and control of the One God, who revealed himself to Moses as YHWH, «I (Who) Am,» «the Existing One» (Exodus 3). In the people's spiritual consciousness, this God became known as the unique and absolute Lord of all, who guides nations and individuals toward a decisive end, an ultimate fulfillment in accordance with his sovereign will. As the people's hope focused more and more on the coming of a Messiah, an «anointed one» of God who would usher in a new age and a new creation, expectation of that fulfillment grew to fever pitch.

For many, Jesus of Nazareth was an immense disappointment. They, and particularly members of the «Zealot» party of political militants, had long struggled to overthrow Roman authority in Israel, with the aim of establishing an earthly kingdom ruled by the Lord's Messiah. They had hoped Jesus would enter Jerusalem as a victorious warrior, which likely explains the enthusiastic reception he received on what the Church honors as «Palm Sunday.» Jesus was no revolutionary, and — despite attempts by some scholars today to rewrite history — he was no Zealot (although at least one of his disciples, Simon, had been). His lordship served peace and reconciliation rather than revolt and political restoration. Hopes among the populace that Jesus and his followers would establish a new reign, and renew within Israel the glory it knew under King David, were clearly not to be fulfilled by this itinerant preacher from Nazareth and his small band of close disciples. If it can be said that Jesus was crucified for political reasons, it was less for what he did than for what he refused to do. Messianic hope in much of Judaism, in other words, had lost its transcendent, eschatological character and taken on a «this-worldly» focus. It may have been disappointment and frustration, then, as much as a perceived undermining of Pharisaic traditions, that finally led the crowd to demand, «Crucify him!»

For Jesus' followers, however, including the Twelve but also large numbers outside that tight circle, this man from Nazareth was precisely the fulfillment presaged by the prophets. They had immediate and personal experience of his living presence with them, following his tragic and undeniable death on the cross. In the opening verses of 1 Corinthians 15, the apostle Paul declares that the risen Jesus appeared not only to his close disciples, but to more than five hundred people at one time, «most

of whom are still alive.» Paul's meaning is clear: if you don't believe that Jesus actually, physically, rose up out of death, just ask those who saw him, who walked and talked with him, as did Mary Magdalene (Jn 20:18), the two disciples traveling to Emmaus (Lk 24:32-35), and on several occasions the full body of disciples (Lk 24:33-43; etc.). Even the guards at the tomb saw and bore witness to that awesome miracle (Mt 28:11).

SCRIPTURE FULFILLED

Shortly before the annual feast of Pentecost, Peter led the disciples to «fulfill the Scriptures» by naming a follower of Jesus to take the place of Judas Iscariot (Acts 1:15-26). With the election of Matthias, the number of disciples was restored to twelve, a «perfect» number corresponding to the twelve tribes of Israel. Groundwork was thus laid for creation of the New Israel, the Church, which would embrace both Jew and Gentile. As such, this newly constituted body of believers would not «replace» Israel, as many have claimed. It fulfilled it, becoming in St Paul's words «the Israel of God» (Gal:16).

Finally, on the day of Pentecost itself, Peter addressed the crowd, declaring about Jesus that «God raised him up, having freed him from death...» (Acts 2:24). This «mighty work,» Peter insists, occurred to fulfill «what was spoken through the prophet Joel,» and through the entire witness of the Hebrew Scriptures. It is in the person of Jesus, the risen and exalted Lord, and in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the congregation of believers, that the prom-

ises of God uttered through the Law and the Prophets are finally, ultimately, fulfilled.

To experience Pascha and Pentecost as they are meant to be lived within the life of the Orthodox Church, it is essential that we rediscover both the fervor and the conviction of the earliest Christian disciples. This is not first of all a summons to announce to the world the Good News of Christ's death and his victory over death by the resurrection. Even before we can move to that stage, it is necessary for us

to make an inward journey, through liturgical worship but also through silence. The true fervor that nourishes faith and enables us «to move mountains» is located in the quiet depths of what the psalmist calls «the secret

heart.» It comes — as it came for Mary Magdalene, for the Eleven disciples, and for the Mother of God herself — as a fruit of contemplation: a still and yet intense focusing upon the Object of our faith, upon the One who continually pours out upon us the «promise of power from On High,» the Holy Spirit. It comes as we distance ourselves from the distractions, noise and confusion that so thoroughly mark our daily life, and listen for the «sound» of the Spirit, become sensitive once again to his presence and movement in our life, and perceive the purpose to which he calls each of us. It comes as we behold the face of Christ with the eyes of the heart, as we see and «know» with a knowledge that surpasses every other, that in the risen Christ, God is truly with us. That fervor comes as a sacred and precious gift, as we walk together through the final days of the Lenten journey, in mutual longing and in mutual anticipation of what is to come.

The faith and the unyielding commitment of those first followers of Jesus can be ours as well. It requires only that we realize and rejoice in the fact that the fulfillment of Scripture is not a thing of the past. It occurs ever again, within our church communities and within ourselves, when we unite ourselves to one another, in faith and in love, to proclaim the ultimate truth, the only truth that matters: Christ is risen!

Very Rev. John Breck

