

CHRIST IS RISEN!
ST NICHOLAS ORTHODOX CHURCH
CROSS & COFFAGE STREETS, AUBURN

www.stnicholasauburn.com

Fr. Stephen Mack, Pastor
Deacon David Donch

Choir Director Reader Paul Flurschutz

INDEED HE IS RISEN!

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Fr. Michael Speck, Assistant Pastor
Subdeacon Reader Michael Speck

May 7, 2017

Following the Veneration of the Cross there will be a Requiem Service (annual) in memory of Anne Banwell, given by Betsy Hryvko

Wednesday, May 10 at 9AM: I Divine Liturgy of St John Chrysostom

Saturday, May 13 at 6PM: Vespers

Sunday, May 14 at 10AM: Divine Liturgy of St John (A note from Fr Steve: I will be away the weekend of the 13th & 14th; Fr Michael will be here for services)

June 11th – BBQ'D Pork Chop Dinner

CEMETERY CLEAN-UP: This Saturday, May 13 is Cemetery Clean-up Day. If you can help please see or call Jim Perfield (626-6214) for details.

In today's bulletin (or, if you're reading this online you can find it in our Soap Box area) is a pamphlet regarding our Parish Cemetery bylaws. Please take the time to read it and please share it with any relatives you have who may have plots in our cemetery.

St Baldrick's Day: Subdeacon Michael will be raising funds for Children's cancer Research through a St Baldrick's day event on June 11th. Please consider donating to this worthy cause by either seeing Subdeacon Michael or placing a donation in the container in the back of the church.

THE ORIGINS OF PASCHA: AN ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN REFLECTS (BY CHRISTY MA, CHINESE ORTHODOX)

“*Pascha*” is the Greek transliteration of the Aramaic form of the Hebrew word “*Pesach*”, which comes from a word meaning “leap, dance, hop, turn”. In light of the Exodus event, the word may be re-interpreted as the action of the angel of the Lord passing over the houses of the Jews. The present Christian Paschal cycle begins with the Easter Vigil and culminates on the Day of Pentecost. The annual Christian paschal feast was not formed at the birth of Christianity. It is an evolution of a feast like Sunday, of various practices and traditions. The *unitary reality of the paschal mystery* was realized through a progressive understanding of the Church. .

Q1. When did this feast originate? It is no accident that the feast was historically and theologically linked with the Jewish Passover (*Pesach*). Jesus Christ was crucified after He shared the Last Supper with His disciples (Mt 26:20-21, Mk 14:17-18; 22-25, Lk 22:14-20, Jn 18:28 and 19:14, 36) on or before the Jewish Passover. Jesus commanded his disciples to remember this “new covenant” and promised to drink it anew in the Kingdom of God. *Pesach* was made up of three elements: (1) the historic event of testifying God’s saving acts in history, (2) pre-existing nomadic background and (3) an agricultural festival (Exo 12-13, Deut 16:1-8). By the time of Jesus, Passover was a domestic festival linked to the temple but consummated in a domestic seder. The feast itself was rooted in a Jewish background. It was the remembrance of the redemption of Egypt and celebrated in expectation of the coming of the Messiah. “The festival is a reminder and thank-offering for that great migration from Egypt...” (Cantalamessa, *Easter in the Early Church*, 25-31). Apostle Paul later re-framed the meaning of the feast as well as the Protagonist of this Feast. Jesus Christ was perceived as the “True Pascha”.

The early Christians such as Apostle Paul and John (1 Cor 5:7, Jn 19:32-36) transformed the Jewish *Pesach* and reinterpreted the feast in the light of the historical resurrection of Jesus. There Jesus is identified as “the Lamb of God” near the beginning of the life of the Christian communities (John 1:36). The soldiers are said to have refrained from breaking the legs of the dead Jesus and so fulfilled the scripture requiring that no bone of the Passover lamb be broken (Jn 19:32-36; Exo 12:46; Num 9:12). “For Christ, our Passover lamb has been sacrificed” (1 Cor 5:7). Jesus was “paschalized”, and the *Pesach* was “Christianized”. A Christianized version of the paschal feast was gradually observed early on in the light of the understanding of the true Pascha, being Jesus Christ. It is impossible to have a clear understanding of exactly when the Christian Pascha (Easter) began. It is difficult to trace back when Christian Pascha, instead of Jewish *Pesach* was celebrated in the early Christian community. The identity of Jewish-Christians was gradually separated from the mainstream Jewish communities during the first two Centuries after the resurrection of Jesus. It is clear by AD 165 that the Christian communities celebrated Easter, a transformed Jewish *Pesach* as the new Pascha (Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, V, 23-25).

Q2. Why did the Church have different practices? “Easter was not originally a fixed institution; rather it was a living reality in continual development” (Cantalamessa, *Easter in the Early Church*, 3). By AD 165, the celebration of the Sunday after Passover being celebrated as Easter was adopted in Rome. However, this was not the universal practice. There were two modes of celebrating Pascha in the early Church. The one kept the feast on the Sunday after the Jewish Passover and focused its celebration upon the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. The other was derived from Asia Minor, and focused on the Passion of Christ. It emphasized Pascha as a memorial of the death of Jesus and situated the feast during the night from 14 to 15 Nisan. Those who followed this tradition were called “Quartodecimans”. There was a distinct mood to both celebrations but the content was similar; sacrifice and liberation were obvious in both traditions (Cantalamessa, *Easter in the Early Church*, 8-9). Which one was the oldest tradition remains unclear. There was a higher probability that the Quartodeciman celebration was the original Paschal celebration of the Church. The Sunday celebration came later to separate Christians from the Jews. Both traditions could go back to apostolic times, but in two different phases. The diversity of traditions brought us to the famous paschal dispute of the 2nd Century.

By the time of the 2nd Century, Sunday was already the occasion of the regular weekly celebration of the paschal mystery. By AD 175, Easter was kept on the Sunday after the Jewish Passover, focusing on the resurrection of Christ. However, we do not have a clear picture whether this came from Rome or Jerusalem.

The Quartodeciman Pascha caused a dispute because Victor, the Bishop of Rome, tried to standardize the day of observing Pascha on the Sunday after Passover. Polycrates, the leading bishop of Asia Minor, fought back. Polycrates and the community in Asia Minor were ex-communicated. Irenaeus tried to mediate the conflict. He urged Victor not to cut off the entire Church of God for observing an ancient traditional custom (Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, V, 23-25). He urged that all could be at peace with one another and that the *difference* could further attest to our agreement in the same faith.

The real issues that brought controversy to the early church before the end of the 2nd Century were the day to celebrate the paschal fast and the day to end the paschal fast. The central controversy, before the end of the 2nd century, was which day to begin and end the Paschal fast. The concern was to observe the “right day” for anticipating the second coming of Christ. The early Church believed the Parousia was *imminent*, and they believed that the bridegroom would come on Easter/Pascha. The bridegroom was not here, therefore, they had to fast to prepare for His coming (Mt 9, Mk 2, and Lk 5). Picking a wrong day in their perception would be like the virgins found without oil in preparation for the coming of the bridegroom.

However, this diversity in celebration had existed among the apostles. Peter and Paul celebrated the Pascha on Sunday, but the Johannine community observed Quartodecimanism and celebrated on 14 Nisan. Having the same understanding of the mystery but expressed in different practices, tested the church as the living Body of Christ right at the beginning of its existence.

Q.3 How did they celebrate the Pascha?

The post-resurrection appearances of Christ and the meal association had already established Sunday as the sign of this Paschal mystery. During the 1st to 2nd Century, the identity of Christianity was separating from its Jewish counterpart. This practice of fasting was further reinforced by the absence of the bridegroom as illustrated by the teaching of Jesus. They also believed the second coming of Christ was imminent. They were vigilant, waiting for the coming of the bridegroom.

Pascha was kept in the night from 14 to 15 Nisan as the memorial of the death of Jesus, the Paschal lamb. This practice might be associated with the Johannine community. It was a vigil extending after midnight and included a Eucharist (anamnesis). The content of the celebration was the entire work of redemption: the incarnation, the passion, the resurrection and glorification, all focused upon the Cross as the locus of Christ’s triumph. The observance was described as a watch, a vigil, and was kept past the midnight hour. The extended vigil or night watch seems to be a characteristic that distinguished the Christian observance from the Jewish counterpart.

Changing from 14/15 Nisan to the Sunday, the character which had primarily focused on Christ as the sacrificial lamb gradually shifted to the resurrection of Christ. The concept of Lent was introduced at the time of Athanasius (Athanasius, *Festal Letter* 6, 13). Good Friday and the other days of Holy Week gradually emerged during the 4th Century to commemorate the various events connected with the last days of Christ’s life. Easter also became the preferred day of baptism by that time. The development enriched the whole paschal season for the Christian. The unitary mystery was still intact. By the time of the 4th Century, the decision of the first Ecumenical Council at Nicaea took the feast once and for all out of its Hebrew matrix. (The First Council of Nicaea, *Decree on Easter*, Report)

BBQ'D

PORK CHOP DINNER

With sides

(Baked potatoes, Baked Beans, Coleslaw, Apple Sauce)

Dessert& Drinks Included

Sunday, June 11, 11:30AM to 1:30PM

\$12.00

ST NICHOLAS CHURCH, AUBURN

Call 252-3423 or 252-1675

For tickets