

THE MESSENGER

ST. PAUL THE APOSTLE ORTHODOX CHURCH • PO BOX 12635 • 5400 ANNIE OAKLEY DRIVE
LAS VEGAS, NEVADA 89112-0635 • 702.898.4800 • WWW.LASVEGASORTHODOX.COM

MAY 2017 • CHRIST IS RISEN! A Life of Ascent and Spirit

Christ is Risen! Indeed He is Risen!

We are in the middle of the beautiful Paschal season, with the sights and sounds of our celebration still ringing in our ears and inspiring us. We soon will complete the Paschal journey by celebrating the Great and Holy Feasts of the Ascension of our Lord (40 days after Pascha) and then Pentecost (the Descent of the Holy Spirit, 50 days after Pascha). Last month, we reflected on what it means to live a life of resurrection. As we near the fulfillment of Christ's mission with His ascent back to the Father, and the sending of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles and then the Church, we must complete our reflection by now asking, "What does it mean to live a Spirit-filled life of ascent?"



The Lord ascended back to His Father after sojourning for forty days on the earth and appearing to those able to receive Him. His appearances were meant to assure, inspire, and strengthen His followers. His appearances also a demonstration of the reality of His humanity and His resurrection. That humanity (and in that humanity, each of us), has been restored to its proper place – Paradise – with His ascent back to the Father. The human nature that He received from His mother has been redeemed and sanctified in Him, and through Him, in us. Before He left His disciples, He promised that He would send the Comforter, the Holy Spirit, who would teach them all things and make Him eternally present in His body, the Church. And so He did, when the Spirit came down in the form of fiery tongues and gave birth to the Church and her mission.

So? What does that mean to me here and now? What does that mean to a 21st-century Christian trying to make his or her way in an increasingly secular society that is more than willing to marginalize, ridicule, and even persecute those who believe in and try to follow the Lord's commandments and live the life of the Church?

First of all, it would seem that to "ascend to heaven" ourselves with the Lord might be better seen as "transcending the world." It is what the Lord meant when He said, "Be in the world, but not of the world." It is one thing to talk in lofty, even theological, tones of "ascension," "theosis," and being more "God-like." But it is entirely another to fit that into a life that might include a puking child, or a job that I hate, or troubles with family and neighbors, or stress over how to pay my bills. To simply say to someone, "Ascend to God and your troubles will go away," is actually giving a stone to someone who needs bread.

Rather, our "ascension" seems to be intimately linked to how well we accept and allow the Spirit of God to be alive in the depths of our souls. St. Paul says to the Galatians, "... "the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control." (Galatians 5:22-23) We can live lives of ascent when we begin to shine with the fruits of the Holy Spirit. The depth of our relationship with God while *in* the world but not *of* it can be measured not in how well we do in "not sinning," but by how well the fruits of the Spirit direct us

MAY 2017

St. Paul the Apostle Orthodox Church • Las Vegas, Nevada

	1	2	3	4 ERITREAN SERVICE, 8:00 AM NO COFFEE CHAT	5	6 GREAT VESPERS, 5:00 PM CONFESSIONS CHOIR REHEARSAL
		DIOCESE OF THE WEST CLERGY RETREAT, MAY 2-4 ALHAMBRA, CA (FATHERS JOHN AND STEPHEN AWAY)				
7 DIVINE LITURGY, 9:00 AM HOURS: YOUTH EPISTLE: YOUTH POST-COMM: YOUTH LAST CHURCH SCHOOL	8	9	10	11 ERITREAN SERVICE, 8:00 AM NO COFFEE CHAT	12	13 RUSSIAN CONFESSIONS 9 AM SLAVONIC LITURGY, 10:00 AM
		FATHER JOHN ON VACATION, MAY 9-18				
			DAILY VESPERS, 6:30 PM ADULT FAITH FORUM			GREAT VESPERS, 5:00 PM CONFESSIONS
14 DIVINE LITURGY, 9:00 AM HOURS: HUFFMAN EPISTLE: HOOD POST-COMM: W. DEMKO MOTHERS DAY	15	16	17	18 ERITREAN SERVICE, 8:00 AM NO COFFEE CHAT	19	20 FEEDING THE HOMELESS, 10:30 AM
		FATHER JOHN ON VACATION, MAY 9-18				
			DAILY VESPERS, 6:30 PM ADULT FAITH FORUM			GREAT VESPERS, 5:00 PM CONFESSIONS
21 DIVINE LITURGY, 9:00 AM HOURS: H. DEMKO EPISTLE: WHEELER POST-COMM: BITSKO	22	23	24	25 ASCENSION OF OUR LORD DIVINE LITURGY, 8:00 AM ERITREAN SERVICE, 9:30 AM	26	27 GREAT VESPERS, 5:00 PM CONFESSIONS
		PARISH COUNCIL, 6:30 PM	VESPERS/LITIYA, 6:30 PM			
28 DIVINE LITURGY, 9:00 AM HOURS: BROOKS EPISTLE: JARLSON POST-COMM: HALLIDAY	29 MEMORIAL DAY	30	31	GREETERS MAY 7: MCAULEY/OSBURN MAY 14: MURPHY/CAMPBELL MAY 21: STAFFORD/CHONG MAY 28: DEMKO/WHEELER		
			DAILY VESPERS, 6:30 PM ADULT FAITH FORUM			

St. Paul the Apostle Orthodox Church

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Karen Short, Treasurer
Catherine Wilkalis, Secretary

Gregory Brooks
James Brophy
Kevin McAuley
Karen Murphy
Litsa Osburn
Joseph Wheeler

SUB-COMMITTEES

Building & Grounds
Kevin McAuley

Eritrean & Ethiopian Outreach
Tekeste Nuguru

Russian Outreach
Natalia Minkoff

Church School/Youth
Fr. Stephen Osburn, Jr.
Amy McAuley

Fellowship Committee
Charity Committee

away from those sinful actions we all fall into from time to time.

Love is not some *thing* we try to acquire. Love is a Person – the resurrected Lord. When we acquire Him and embrace Him, it becomes the catalyst for the other fruits. Joy and peace are not emotions, but virtues that affect the very way we look at the world and each other. Joy is not mere happiness, but the realization that Christ has redeemed all of creation and so we can rejoice in the communion with Him that opens up. Peace is not mere serenity, but the abiding Presence that quiets the tumult of creation and the world around.

Longsuffering and kindness go hand in hand as virtues that deal with how we treat each and every person that God allows to cross our paths. No one who has the fruit of longsuffering can't be kind. No one who is kind cannot be longsuffering, at least to some degree. It is a reflection of the way that God treats us.

We tend to think of “goodness” as rather “not bad.” We convince ourselves that if we don't daily engage

in obviously heinous or evil actions that we are “good.” But Jesus said, “Why do you call me good? Only One is good.” *Goodness* as a fruit of the Spirit to acquire is not a “passive” act (i.e., to not do something “bad”), but is the conscious act of making present the One who is Good. Tears of repentance flow when we grow in our realization that we fail to make the Good One far more regularly than we usually admit.

Faithfulness is hard to measure. Oftentimes, it is demonstrated in how well we weave our way through the crosses and sufferings of this world. But it can also be in the persistent “knocking down the doors of heaven” by turning to Him in all things, both what we think is good and we think is bad, thankfully remembering that our very existence is a gift from Him.

Gentleness and self-control, on the other hand, is fairly easy to measure. In the very depths of our hearts we can question our faithfulness, our doubts, our treason. But I don't have to question whether I am gentle and demonstrate self-control. For the most part in today's world, we are neither gentle

AT A GLANCE...

No Coffee Chat during the month of May (resumes June 1)

May 2-4: DIOCESAN CLERGY RETREAT (FRS. JOHN & STEPHEN AWAY)

May 6: Choir Rehearsal after Vespers

May 7: Last Church School Class for 2016-2017

May 9-18: FATHER JOHN ON VACATION

May 10: Adult Faith Forum resumes (Vespers 6:30 PM)

May 13: Russian Confessions, 9:00 AM; Slavonic Liturgy, 10:00 AM

May 14: MOTHERS DAY

May 20: FEEDING THE HOMELESS, 10:30 AM

May 23: Parish Council Meeting, 6:00 PM

May 25: ASCENSION OF OUR LORD

June 4: HOLY PENTECOST

Send email addresses and corrections to:
fatherjohn@lasvegasorthodox.com

nor in control of ourselves. Each is actually seen as a character flaw by most today. But the One who was meek says that they will inherit the earth.

How do I “ascend” to live a life of the Spirit? St. Paul has already told us. The Church has called us to a wonderful journey with the resurrected Lord – to His (and our) ascension and to the reception of the Gift of the Holy Spirit. Making this journey is not running away from the world, but learning how to remain **in** the world, but not **of** it. What a great time of year!

Father John

FEASTDAYS

During May, we celebrate the following feastday:

ASCENSION OF OUR LORD

May 25

VESPERS WITH LITIYA, 6:30 PM (WED)
DIVINE LITURGY, 8:00 AM (THUR)

TRAVELS

There is a mandatory retreat for the clergy of our diocese May 2-4 in Alhambra, California. Fathers John and Stephen will be away for this event. If you have an emergency, please call Father John’s cell number.

Father John and Matushka Liz will be away on vacation May 9-18. Father Stephen will cover any emergency or pastoral need that arises during Father John’s absence. All regular services will be conducted as usual.

CHOIR REHEARSAL

There is one scheduled choir rehearsal during May. It will be held after Vespers on Saturday, May 6. All choir members are asked to try to be present.

SLAVONIC SERVICES

Father Alexander will be here as usual

on the second Saturday of the month, May 13, for services. Russian Confessions begin at 9:00 AM, and the Slavonic Liturgy at 10:00 AM.

CHURCH SCHOOL

The last class of the 2016-2017 school year will be held on Sunday, May 7. We will have our customary annual remembrance and thanks for our teachers and staff on Pentecost Sunday, June 4, with prayers and a cookout.

ADULT CLASS

Our Adult Faith Forum will resume classes on **Wednesday, May 10**, with Daily Vespers at 6:30 PM, following by discussion. We will complete our discussion on *The Parables of Christ*, then break for the summer.

FEEDING THE HOMELESS

Our next Feeding the Homeless project will be held on a May 20. We will construct the lunches and bag all of the items which we distribute at 10:30 AM. We then take them downtown and distribute them and are usually done by 1:00 PM. Please join us! If you can donate any of the items needed for the lunches (or funds to provide such), it would be appreciated.

PARISH COUNCIL

Our regular monthly meeting of the parish council has been moved from May 16 to May 23 due to Father John’s vacation. All members please note the change.

PROJECT MEXICO

It’s on! We are going to be sending another mission team to Project Mexico next summer to help build a house. You can help support this trip by doing your Amazon shopping using our “smile” account:

<https://smile.amazon.com/>

ch/88-0242982

Also, a gofundme page has been set up to allow direct donations. Please consider making a donation and sharing the link!

<https://www.gofundme.com/stpaulmexicotrip>

IOCC

Joe Wheeler has been serving as our parish liaison to International Orthodox Christian Charities (IOCC). His schedule no longer allows him to carry out these duties. If you are interested in helping us out in this position, please talk to Joe to see what it entails and then see Father John.

ICONOGRAPHY

The next phase of our iconography project will be to complete the east walls of the church (to the left and right of the sanctuary). Renderings are available in the church hall and you are urged to take a look. This is a MAJOR project which will require substantial funding. The two renderings posted in the hall will cost \$36,000 each, a total of \$72,000. **We are once again accepting donations to the Icon Fund. Please consider making an offering above and beyond your normal support of the parish!**

CHARITY

Our normal collections of food for Friends of the Desert continue. Needs: jelly, jam, peanut butter, canned fruit, canned tuna/chicken. Thank you!

ORTHODOX VENDORS

A list of businesses that our parish uses or are owned and operated by Orthodox Christians (some parishioners). We provide this information for you to consider if you need services.

CB Air Conditioning
Cedomir Blagojevic

(702) 493-0295

Kyklos Café (Greek food)
Galleria Mall
Sophocles Frangakis
(702) 450-1515

Makeup and Hair Artist
Natalia Kasimtseva (Baker)
(I travel to client location)
Text or call: (702) 336-8300
View portfolio at:
www.facebook.com/NataliaKasBeauty

Taffer Computers
Website Design, Marketing,
& Computer Repair
Fr. Stephen Osburn
(702) 521-6988

PRAYER FOR OUR PARISH

We ask everyone to remember our parish in daily prayer:
Lord, God and Savior of all, we thank You for the blessing of St. Paul parish in our lives. May Your word become alive in each and every one of us who strive to follow You. Please bless and multiply all the gifts – time, talent and treasure – which are given in thanks to benefit our mission and glorify Your name. Bless and multiply the givers and help us all to make present Your Kingdom. For You are the Giver of all that is good, O Christ our God, and to You we give glory, together with Your Father who is without beginning and Your all-holy, good and life-giving Spirit, now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

SACRAMENTS/SPECIAL SERVICES

Please follow these guidelines.

- Baptisms. A personal meeting scheduled with Fr. John will be necessary to schedule any baptism requested.
- Matrimony. A date and time for weddings must be requested at least six months (preferably twelve) in

advance. There will be premarital sessions for both bride and groom to attend.

- Memorials (Panikhida). Requests for a memorial must be made at least one week in advance. If possible, the service should be served on Saturday. Other requests will be met as pastorally possible.

PARISH COUNCIL SYNOPSIS

APRIL 18, 2017 MEETING

Rector's Report: Fr. John thanked everyone for their help in making all the many Holy Week and Pascha activities run smoothly. The only major concern was that there were not enough volunteer Tomb Watch readers signed up to keep the church open between the end of Holy Saturday Liturgy and the Paschal services at 11 PM. Fr. John expressed disappointment over the lack of participation and re-emphasized his desire that the church should be kept open during this time to allow people to come in for prayer. This problem needs to be addressed before next Pascha. If there is still a lack of volunteers, parish council members may have to be available for this function.

Agape meal will be served Sunday April 23. Chef Viorel Ionescu was given the cash to purchase the meat items; Matushka Liz Dresko is coordinating with him and his wife Cornelia on the hall and food service logistics. There will be an egg hunt for the parish children in tandem with the Agape meal.

Fr. John gave special thanks and appreciation to Fr. Stephen for all his support during Lent and Holy Week. Both priests heard a total of about 220 confessions while serving a full schedule of services.

There will be a Diocesan Clergy Retreat May 2-4 in Alhambra, CA. Fr. John and Fr. Stephen are both

required to attend.

Matushka Liz and Fr. John will be on vacation from May 9-18; Father Stephen will cover here.

Associate Priest's Report: reports that his new daughter Zoe will be baptized on June 10 at 10:00 AM. Both mother (Lindsey) and Zoe are doing well.

Vice President's Report: commented on the flowers for Pascha; we are working with a new florist and there was some confusion on the arrangements. A suggestion was made to construct form fitting stands for the flowers fitted to the tomb.

Reported Luis cleaned the church carpeting on Monday. Cost: \$675.

Noted there was poor visibility going down the outside stairs to the parking lot during the night time Paschal procession. Better lighting on the stairs is needed even if it is only two people holding flashlights.

Treasurer's Report: Karen Short distributed our financials before the meeting:

Capital Fund: \$247.42
Rainy Day: \$42,344.50
Icon Fund: \$3,148.00

Income for March was \$25,562.37, with expenses of \$25,129.80 for a surplus of \$432.57.

2017 YTD FINANCIALS

2017 Inc	\$ 84,341.47
2017 Exp	\$ 68,127.33
Inc over Exp	\$ 16,214.14

Accounts Payable is totally current. Holy week income was \$1,100.00. Pascha income was \$6,855.00 - bulk of the money was from pledged parishioners; change collected was \$143.50 and will be donated to Project Mexico. Candle sales totaled \$2200.00

Karen reported she transferred \$15K to the Rainy Day (savings) fund

prior to Pascha plus the usual \$250 per month. Icon (restricted) fund has \$3,148 now.

Joe Wheeler reported the parish insurance rate has increased by 15-16%, he will check to determine the cause for the increase and will try to negotiate a reduction if possible.

COMMITTEES

Buildings and Grounds:

Doors: Kevin will contact contractor and get church doors done.

Sound Panels: The final panels still need to be put up in hall. Ongoing.

Courtyard: Kevin will draw up specs for removal of trees in the courtyard and the pouring of a stamped concrete pad. Future plans will include construction of a gazebo cover. Estimates just for the pad already \$9500, so a special parish meeting will be necessary to approve a capital expenditure of this amount. Greg Brooks moved, Joe Wheeler seconded; council unanimously approved calling special parish meeting for patio improvements. When we have details of the plan and costs, a special parish meeting will be scheduled.

Carpeting: Sean Campbell is working with a company in South Carolina for oriental style carpets to replace our current, well-worn carpets. He is trying to get them donated. He should have the details by April 25.

Ladies Room: One toilet non-functional. Kevin will arrange to fix.

Kitchen Cabinets: Falling apart. Fr. John proposed getting estimate for new cabinets from Bill Murphy. Karen Short stated we have enough money in the sinking fund but will need to figure in costs of church doors, sealing the parking lot and replacing the roof. Parish has enough in the savings account to replace cabinets.

Charity: Next Homeless feeding will be announced; need to coordinate with Fr. John. There is a balance of \$172.87 in the account. Nonperishable food collection ongoing for Friends in the Desert Food Bank; people have been contributing.

IOCC: no report. Replacement for Joe is still an ongoing effort.

Church School/Youth: Last church school class May 7. Adult Class resumes May 10.

Project Mexico: Fundraisers did well. \$1200 left to pay. Final payment of \$7,860 due April 30. See's Candy sales totaled \$600. Hummus and sambusa sale did well. For next year 2018, the possibility of doing a Parish cookbook sale is being explored.

Some issues involving Mexican insurance are being worked out with van rental companies, Jamie Campbell and Fr. Stephen.

Eritrean/Ethiopian: There will be a wedding at the church April 19.

Fellowship: International dinner was originally planned for May 20 but no preparatory work has been done. Council decided to postpone it to a more convenient date to be determined.

Outreach/website: status quo.

Russian: status quo. Fr. Alexander will be here in May.

Stewardship: no report

OLD BUSINESS

Greeters Training: Status quo. Will meet with greeters; date/time TBA. Seeking new greeters. Noted gate on stairs to loft is working well for controlling access.

Sunshine Group: status quo

Choir Director: Discussions are beginning with Grace Brooks to help

relieve some of the choir-directing burden from Matushka Liz. Ginny Hood proposed, Karen Murphy seconded, offering an incentive stipend of \$300 per month to be paid on the last Sunday of the month starting May 31, 2017. Approved unanimously by council with one abstention (Greg Brooks).

Legal Matters: Although we have made every effort to be accomodating and have determined that the water problems for our neighbors is natural and beyond our control, we have been threatened with legal action by April 1 if we "do not rectify the matter." Father John has a meeting with our attorney on Wednesday, March 22, to engage services for our protection.

NEW BUSINESS

None

Next Council Meeting:

Tuesday, April 18, 2017, 6:00 PM

PARISH DIPTYCHS

This list of parish departed is to remind us all of those whom we love and miss and to spur us to remember them in our daily prayers.

MONTH OF MAY

Bagdan Kerkez

May 1, 1996

Jakov Kaganovitch

May 2, 1999

Ana Nestor

May 2, 2009

Irene Stump

May 5, 1990

Michael Kor

May 5, 2006

Barbara Stokich

May 7, 2000

Fautine Papamoros
May 8, 2002

Holly Ann Lowey
May 11, 1989

Mary Skreagin
May 14, 2003

Alexander Townsend
May 16, 2008

Wesley Kabbush
May 18, 1993

Milan Zatezalo
May 19, 2007

Victor Sokoloff
May 23, 2006

Nathalie Novic
May 27, 2005

Nadezda Ashuts
May 30, 2008

FATHER STEPHEN'S CORNER HOW TO ARGUE ORTHODOXY ON THE INTERNET

Christ is Risen!

As someone who works on the Internet designing websites and managing social media accounts for my secular job, I spend a lot of time perusing Facebook and Twitter. As much as I don't like it, it is imperative for my industry to stay up to date on the latest trends, happenings, memes, and outrage or else it can cost me and my clients lost business and income. It is a necessary evil. Yet, every now and then something interesting, rather, something good, will hit my timeline or feed.

In Orthodox circles on social media (mainly on Facebook) there has been

a lot of controversy surrounding the conversion of the Bible Answer Man, Hank Hanegraaff, to the Orthodox Church. It has been met by Orthodox with a lot of cheer and by Protestants with a lot of anger. Now I should preface by saying that I don't know much about Hank but what I do know is that he is an outspoken figure in the Christian countercultural movement, hosts a radio show, and has written extensively on many social and doctrinal issues. That said, Protestants were unhappy because they felt the man known for his expertise on biblical literacy was leaving biblical Christianity (although if you ask me, it was more like returning to biblical Christianity, but I digress) for the Eastern Orthodox "cult" (as one commentator put it).

Hit piece after hit piece has come out in wake of the controversy and I saw one blogger write it is like seeing Tom Brady leave the Patriots to go play for the Giants. I don't know if I would go that far but you can see that people were pretty upset. It feels like a betrayal to them.

Orthodox, on the other hand, were flooding the comment sections, writing their own response articles, sharing church articles, and posting videos in defense of the Faith. Some of this was good. Most of it was bad. Sometimes one has to defend but it is important to remember that the words we say have impact.

There may be people who are interested in Orthodoxy who will see the comments we write and turn their back on Christ and the Church. These discussions turn into missed opportunities when we engage in argument rather than fruitful discussion. I have often said in my own political leanings that I believe we achieve compromise

when we allow both sides to put forth their ideas and let the best ideas win out. This also applies to the Church.

We are presenting the best idea and it will win out if we present it in a calm, respectful manner. It is very tempting to fight back when we are attacked. But I will say this as clearly as I can: we don't have to compromise our beliefs like we may have to in politics, but we do have to represent our faith in a loving manner.

So I want to offer a solution to those who do engage because I believe that there can be some good that comes from these discussions:

- 1) Talk about these issues in a respectful and charitable way.
- 2) Remember St. Paul's words that it is God's kindness that leads us to repentance.
- 3) Invite them to ask you questions about your life as an Orthodox Christian.
- 4) Pray for them and ask them to pray for you.
- 5) Ask them to explain their beliefs to you.
- 6) Don't come off as superficial or superior.
- 7) Invite them to go to an Orthodox Church.
- 8) You don't have to have all the answers, so it is okay to simply say, "I don't know but I can find out for you."
- 9) Love them, forgive them, and ask for the same.

After all of this, you may continue to

disagree with them but you also may come away learning something new. You don't have to change your faith, but the interaction will present to them Christ in a manner well pleasing to Him and not to you. Who knows, they may even be sending you an invite to their Baptism and/or Chrismation because you presented Christ in a loving manner and not solely on superiority and anger.

So I say all of this with a careful bit of warning and heed that we do not need to dignify attacks with hateful responses, but if we are going to engage we must do so with a clear conscience, proper discourse, and consideration. We do not want to see what Christ has to say to us at the dread judgment seat if we drove a brother or sister away because we would rather win an argument than win a soul. Remember this.

Indeed He is Risen!

ASCENSION OF THE LORD FR. GEORGES FLOROVSKY (OCA.ORG)

In the Ascension resides the meaning and the fullness of Christ's Resurrection.

The Lord did not rise in order to return again to the fleshly order of life, so as to live again and commune with the disciples and the multitudes by means of preaching and miracles. Now he does not even stay with them, but only "appears" to them during the forty days, from time to time, and always in a miraculous and mysterious manner. "He was not always with them now, as He was before the Resurrection," comments Saint John Chrysostom. "He came and again disappeared, thus leading them on to higher conceptions. He no longer permitted them to continue in their former relationship toward Him, but

took effectual measures to secure these two objects: That the fact of His Resurrection should be believed, and that He Himself should be ever after apprehended to be greater than man." There was something new and unusual in His person (cf. John 21:1-14). As Saint John Chrysostom says, "It was not an open presence, but a certain testimony of the fact that He was present." That is why the disciples were confused and frightened. Christ arose not in the same way as those who were restored to life before Him. Theirs was a resurrection for a time, and they returned to life in the same body, which was subject to death and corruption—returned to the previous mode of life. But Christ arose for ever, unto eternity. He arose in a body of glory, immortal and incorruptible. He arose, never to die, for "He clothed the mortal in the splendor of incorruption." His glorified Body was already exempt from the fleshly order of existence. "It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption. It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body" (I Cor. 15:42-44). This mysterious transformation of human bodies, of which Saint Paul was speaking in the case of our Lord, had been accomplished in three days. Christ's work on earth was accomplished. He had suffered, was dead and buried, and now rose to a higher mode of existence. By His Resurrection He abolished and destroyed death, abolished the law of corruption, "and raised with Himself the whole race of Adam." Christ has risen, and now "no dead are left in the grave" (cf. The Easter Sermon of Saint John Chrysostom). And now He ascends to the Father, yet He does not "go away," but abides with the faithful for ever (cf. The Kontakion of Ascension). For He raises the very

earth with Him to heaven, and even higher than any heaven. God's power, in the phrase of Saint John Chrysostom, "manifests itself not only in the Resurrection, but in something much stronger." For "He was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God" (Mark 16:19).

And with Christ, man's nature ascends also.

"We who seemed unworthy of the earth, are now raised to heaven," says Saint John Chrysostom. "We who were unworthy of earthly dominion have been raised to the Kingdom on high, have ascended higher than heaven, have come to occupy the King's throne, and the same nature from which the angels guarded Paradise, stopped not until it ascended to the throne of the Lord." By His Ascension the Lord not only opened to man the entrance to heaven, not only appeared before the face of God on our behalf and for our sake, but likewise "transferred man" to the high places. "He honored them He loved by putting them close to the Father." God quickened and raised us together with Christ, as Saint Paul says, "and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus" (Ephes. 2:6). Heaven received the inhabitants of the earth. "The First fruits of them that slept" sits now on high, and in Him all creation is summed up and bound together. "The earth rejoices in mystery, and the heavens are filled with joy."

Thus the Office for the Feast of the Ascension depicts the mystery in a poetical language. As on the day of Christ's Nativity the earth was astonished on beholding God in the flesh, so now the Heavens do tremble and cry out....