

Thomas Sunday - April 19, 2020

CHRIST IS RISEN! ХРИСТОС БОЖЕЖИВЕ!

A little more than a month ago life was normal. People went about their normal, daily life, our faithful attended the Sunday Divine Liturgy, and there was talk of a virus in faraway China. In mid-March the 3rd Week of Great Lent, all houses of worship were put on lock-down. The Corona-19 virus had reached our country and spread around the world. Not only were Christians experiencing Lent, but the whole world was experiencing Lent. Our liturgies are being celebrated in private behind closed doors. Funeral services are limited to the cemetery, with next of kin only, sometimes having to witness the burial of their loved ones in their vehicles. This is reminiscent of the persecution of the Early Church, and when our Ukrainian Catholic Church was in the underground.

Holy Week and Easter arrived. We celebrated the Holy Week services of our salvation through Christ's suffering, death. We blessed baskets via drive thru on Holy Saturday. A passerby asked; **"What are you doing?"** Our response; **"We're celebrating Easter!"** It would all culminate on Easter Sunday, Jesus rising from the dead; whom we celebrated with Resurrection Matins and the Divine Liturgy. Only the priests would be celebrating the Lord's Resurrection. Did not Christianity begin with 12 Apostles and a few loyal women whom came upon an empty tomb and encountered the risen Lord?

In spite of the Corona virus, the risen Christ is victorious. He appeared to His frightened disciples and said to them; **"Peace be with you."** He confirmed Thomas' faith by allowing him to put his finger in the nail marks in His hands, and his hand in His side. Through all of this, and in spite of not having the Liturgy and the Sacraments, the Risen Lord is with us. He has overcome the world, and is victorious over sin and death.

God was being taken out of our society. We thought we could manage by ourselves, without Him. Now we need Him most. Yet God can draw good out of evil. Perhaps the lockdown will bring us closer to God through prayer and making the home a domestic church. It can bring our families closer so that members may reconnect and grow compassionate. Society with its high tech superficiality has made us forget who we are. Isaiah reminds us to; **"Remember the rock from which you were hewn. Remember the quarry from which you were dug."** (51: 1) We now have time in the light of Christ to truly ask ourselves; **"Who am I?"**

We are still at the beginning of this crisis, things can change. But one thing hasn't changed; God is in control. Our churches are empty, but so was the tomb on Easter Sunday! Christ will prevail, and when this pandemic passes we will celebrate His Passover from death to life, and over sin and death. **"I have said these things to you, so in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world."** (John 16; 33).