

## SUNDAY OF THE MYRRHBEARERS



### **Gospel Lesson:** Mark 15:43-16:8

*At that time, Joseph of Arimathea, a respected member of the council, who was also himself looking for the kingdom of God, took courage and went to Pilate, and asked for the body of Jesus. And Pilate wondered if he were already dead; and summoning the centurion, he asked him whether he was already dead. And when he learned from the centurion that he was dead, he granted the body to Joseph. And he bought a linen shroud, and taking him down, wrapped him in the linen shroud, and laid him in a tomb which had been hewn out of the rock; and he rolled a stone against the door of the tomb. Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James saw where he was laid. And when the sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him. And very early on the first day of the week they went to the tomb when the sun had risen. And they were saying to one another, "Who will roll away the stone for us from the door of the tomb?" And looking up, they saw that the stone was rolled back; for it was very large. And entering the tomb, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, dressed in a white robe; and they were amazed. And he said to them, "Do not be amazed; you seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen, he is not here; see the place where they laid him. But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going before you to Galilee; there you will see him, as he told you." And they went out and fled from the tomb; for trembling and astonishment had come upon them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.*

### **The Myrrhbearers:**

Among the great virtues adorning the lives of the holy Myrrhbearing Women, the most striking were their holy zeal for Christ, their reverence, and their courage of soul. The Jews and Pilate placed a protection and fortification at the Tomb of Christ, our Savior, that His disciples could not come by night and steal Him! They rolled a huge stone up against the Lord's Tomb, sealed it off, and placed strong and armed soldiers on watch. But all of this did not scare or frighten the holy Myrrhbearing Women. Their great zeal, sacred reverence, and courage of soul passed over all the Jews' obstacles, and all the guards at the Tomb did not shake their resolve. But one thought, but one desire led their minds and hearts— to serve the funeral of their dear Savior with fullness of faith and with reverence.

Who are these holy Myrrhbearing Women who followed Christ together with the apostles and were accounted worthy to be witnesses to the Lord's sufferings, and to anoint His holy Body with spices as it lay in the Tomb? The holy Gospel briefly provides us their names and deeds.

The first and most full of spiritual zeal and courage is Mary Magdalene, from the city of Magdala in Galilee.

The other holy Myrrhbearers are Maria, the mother of James (Mk. 16:1) and of Joses (Mk. 15:47), who is the cousin of the Mother of God; Mary, the wife of Cleopas (Jn. 19:25), and Salome, the mother of the Sons of Thunder (Mt. 27:56; 28:1; Mk. 16:1; Lk. 24:10). Then there is Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, Susanna, and many others serving Him out of their own means (Lk. 8:3). Among the Myrrhbearers were Martha and Mary, the two sisters of Lazarus from Bethany, where the Savior often stayed with the holy apostles on the way to Jerusalem or Galilee.

What were the main virtues of these holy Myrrhbearing Women? Above all, they firmly believed that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, the Messiah proclaimed by the prophets, Who came to earth to save mankind. Then, they led a life pure and holy, in prayer and fasting, abstinence, and almsgiving, abiding in sacred love for one another, and, as they were able, lovingly rendering hospitality to Jesus and His holy disciples.

However, the faith and zeal of the holy Myrrhbearing Women are not limited to this. They didn't just receive the Lord into their homes, wash His feet, serve Him at the table, and provide Him the opportunity to rest, but more than that, they followed after Christ with zeal, and were witness to His miracles and boldly confessed that He is the Son of God, the Savior of the world.

But the Myrrhbearing Women's greatest bravery was revealed during the Lord's sufferings. After the disciples deserted Him in fear and Peter denied Christ, the only ones following Him from afar were the holy Myrrhbearing Women with the Mother of God at the head, Mary Magdalene, and the apostle of love, John, for it's impossible to ever cast off Divine love.

The bravery and courage of the Myrrhbearing Women was seen on the path of the Cross to Golgotha. They alone, with St. John, accompanied the Lord to the crucifixion and were witnesses to His suffering. They alone prayed for Him with tears and deep sighs, such that the Savior, moved with compassion for them, said, *Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children... For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?* (Lk. 23:28-31).

At Golgotha the holy Myrrhbearing Women, together with the apostle of immortal love, were also the sole witnesses to the crucifixion of our Lord Jesus Christ. They saw Him bleeding and falling beneath the weight of the Cross. They saw Him naked, without a robe, stretched out upon the Cross. They saw how His hands and feet were pierced with nails, and how He fainted under the Cross from pain. They heard the blasphemous words of the Jews, the repentant confession of the thief, and the heart-rending prayer of the Savior: *Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* (Mt. 27:46).

The Myrrhbearing Women saw how the sun was darkened, how the heavens groaned, how the dead arose from the graves, and they heard the prayer of the Son of God for the forgiveness of the Jews-murderers: *Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do* (Lk. 23:34). They, these women, braver than the apostles, more full of zeal than the disciples, saw how they cast lots for Christ's tunic, sewn by the hands of the Mother of God, and heard His last word: *Father, into thy hands I commend My spirit* (Lk. 23:46).

How great was the zeal, the firmness of their faith, and the bravery of soul of the holy Myrrhbearing Women! They didn't fear the Roman soldiers, so bloodthirsty. They didn't fear the Jews' fury, not fearing God, and were by no means afraid of the death of the Lord on the Cross, like those having no hope!