That First Pascha (Easter)
Mark 16: 1-8
Very Rev. Timothy G. Bakakos

Many years ago, when Margaret Thatcher was prime minister of Britain, a terrorist's bomb exploded in the conference room where many of the government meetings were held. Margaret Thatcher survived this blast, but some of her cabinet members were killed.

The following Sunday, Margaret Thatcher went to church as she always did. But that particular Sunday seemed different. As Margaret Thatcher sang the hymns, listened to the message, and saw the candles upon the Altar and the sunshine streaming through the stained-glass windows, she began to weep. She wept because everything around her had been changed by the loss of her friends. The familiar had now become strange. The goodness and beauty of the world around her seemed almost too much to bear. She knew she would not only miss her friends, but also the wonderful times they had had together. If we can relate to Margaret Thatcher's grief, maybe we can relate to the grief of Jesus' disciples and friends on that first Easter morning. If there is one proverb which describes the followers of Jesus in those days following his crucifixion, it has to be Proverb 29:18 which reads, "Where there is no vision, the people perish."

Though Jesus' followers may not have been physically dead after His crucifixion, emotionally and spiritually they were in shock and devastated at what they saw happen before their very eyes. THEY HAD NO VISION. But as our Gospel Reading from Saint Mark that was read at the Resurrection Service at midnight so beautifully and vividly captures for us, Mary Magdalene goes to Jesus' tomb, not in anticipation of His resurrection, but to complete His burial. Like Maggie Thatcher after the death of her friends, Mary was crushed. For in her mind, her closest friend, her mentor, her Lord was dead! And now on that first Pascha Sunday, our Gospel passage tells us that “Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome, bought spices, that they might come and anoint Him.”

But as we well know, the good news of Pascha is that it does not end with women anointing a life-less body. It doesn’t end with disillusioned disciples retreating into their houses. And it should not end with us giving up the search for joy and purpose. Pascha ends with Mary testifying to her frightened and discouraged friends: "I have seen the Lord." Pascha ends with the disciples opening their eyes to Jesus as He breaks bread with them. And, if we keep the faith, Pascha can mean more to us than chocolate bunnies, lamb dinners and adding Turf-Builder to the lawn. It can mean a new life. But, first, we need to place ourselves in the story and recall our own moments when we have thought, "I had hoped, but I hope
That First Pascha (Easter)

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no more."

What serves for us all to affirm as we proclaim the words, “Christ Is Risen”, is that Jesus' resurrection is a positive answer to the question that life does exist beyond the grave. Doubt has always existed in man about what happens to him after he dies. We can look back to the Old Testament, where a man named Job had raised the same question centuries earlier. Just like the disciples, Job's world had come crashing down on him. He lost his property, his health, and even his family. And in his pain, he asked a question he could not answer, "If a man dies can he live again?" With the resurrection of Jesus Christ, we are given the answer to Job's question. A person, indeed, can rise from the dead. To the believer, the Resurrection is an enormous answer to the problem of death. The idea is that the Christian goes with Christ through death to everlasting life. And thus, death becomes an event, like birth, that is lived through."

My dear brothers and sisters, Pascha IS the center of our Orthodox Faith. It is called the Feast of Feasts, upon which all other Feasts of our Church Calendar revolve around. And so, for man and woman, Pascha has as much impact upon life in this world as it does in life after death. That's what Mary Magdalene and the disciples found on that first day of the Resurrection. They were in low spirits because their spirits had been so high only a few days earlier. For them, it was the time was Passover, always a hopeful season, for the themes of Passover are freedom and deliverance. And they knew that Passover recalls how God delivered the Jews from slavery in Egypt, and it was their hope was that if God did it once, God could do it again. And giving them hope was the fact that they saw Jesus enter the city of Jerusalem further fanning the people's hope for a militaristic Messiah who would throw the Romans out. The people waved palm branches in joy, expressing their willingness to allow Jesus to lead them in ousting the Romans! No wonder the disciples were excited…their turn had come, but now, less than a week later, the death of Jesus had shattered their hope. No wonder they said, "we had hoped . . ." Where there is no vision, the people perish.

However, IF we take that to be a truth, then its corollary must also be true: "Where there is vision there is life." And, my dear faithful, we see this become true for the disciples as they go out and become His soldiers and messengers proclaiming His message, sometimes to their very last breaths. Mary Magdalene and the disciples of Jesus, who had no hope when Jesus died, received new hope that first Pascha. We could say that it was their awakening.

There are a couple of important lessons we might draw from Mary Magdalene’s experience on this Pascha Day. THE FIRST IS THAT JESUS CAME TO SAVE SINNERS, NOT TO CONGRATULATE SAINTS. This may be the most difficult lesson of all for Christians. In our Churches, many times we have the temptation to be critical of the flaws we see in people and try to elevate the ones we view as “saints”. How does that tend to go contrary to the Gospel? Jesus’ death and resurrection serve as a lesson on where our emphasis and priorities should lie: that we must strive to bring the sinner to Christ and His eternal mercy.

AND THE SECOND LESSON IS THAT CHRIST’S LIFE IS AVAILABLE TODAY TO ANYONE WHO WILL RECEIVE IT. Perhaps you are standing today at the tomb of a dead relationship, or of dead hopes and dreams. Life has been a severe disappointment to you. You've tried to get your life together, but

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That First Pascha (Easter)

you've found nothing but failure and frustration. The GOOD NEWS for us is that we have the message of PASCHA SUNDAY. Someone is speaking your name, just as He spoke Mary Magdalene’s name over two thousand years ago. It is the resurrected Jesus. And on the Sunday of Pascha, together with the affirmation that Christ IS Risen From The Dead, we celebrate new possibilities. This is the day when we affirm our faith in God, when we affirm our faith in Jesus Christ, and when we affirm our faith in hope without end.

Finally, when former President George H. Bush was Vice-President of the United States, he represented our country at the funeral of Leonid Brezhnev. Bush noted the funeral's military precision and icy coldness. Since the Soviet Union was officially atheistic there were no prayers, no comforting hymns, and no mention of God. Mr. Bush was close to the casket when Mrs. Brezhnev came forward for her final good-bye. He related what he saw: "(Mrs. Brezhnev) walked up, took one last look at her husband and traced the DESIGN OF THE CROSS ON HER HUSBAND'S CHEST . . . In that single act," says Bush, "God had broken through the core of the Communist system." What a statement! And with the resurrection of Jesus on that special first Pascha Day, God broke through the gates of hell and death, conquered it, and brought us the hope and realization of eternal life!

This, my dear friends, is the Good News of Pascha! Mary Magdalene and the other women went to the tomb and the stone had been rolled away. Death had been conquered. Jesus' teachings had been validated. And nothing again would ever be the same. The lives of those who followed Jesus would now have extraordinary meaning and purpose and energy because the stone had been rolled away. The Feast of Pascha promises us more than the stars in our darkness. Pascha promises us that in the midst of our deepest darkness, the Son rises to overwhelm the darkness forever. So as we triumphantly celebrate the resurrection of our Lord, Jesus, let us go forth for the next forty days and proclaim the words which tell our faith that Christ truly DID die and resurrect for our sins and in order to give us eternal life. Χριστος Ανεστη ...Christ Is Risen!

+ A M E N
The spring began with a wonderful Apokreatiko Glendi held at the Diplomat Banquet Hall. Our Philoptochos arranged a wonderful evening of Safari themed events at this highly successful gala.

On March 7, we officially started Lent off by coming together to worship and enjoy fellowship with a Lenten meal after services. A special thanks to the Boudros, Tsiolis and Spyropoulos families for sharing their seasonal culinary talents and for preparing the hall for our meal.

The Lenten retreat was held on March 19, with many children and families participating in this gathering. Thank you to our Sunday School staff and parents who assisted in getting the day’s activities prepared (as well as lunch) and, of course, Father Timothy for leading the religious education for the day.

Our community was also fortunate to host the Youth Choir Conference the weekend of April 2nd and 3rd. It was wonderful to see so many of our youth participate from all over the metropolis and to hear the young voices fill our church. Thanks to Marika Panton for her efforts in putting this event together. I personally want to thank all who supported the choir conference by assisting both days to make this event so successful.

As a reminder, please mark Thursday, May 26th on your calendar and plan on attending the annual Grand Raffle at the Diplomat in Elmhurst. Tickets are available please contact one of our parish council members or the church office to purchase your ticket(s).

As we move to the summer season it’s hard to think about Labor Day, but Our Festival needs you! We are in need of a Chairperson(s) and Team Leads to work together to manage the food, bar, children’s activities and raffle. We are anxious to hear your ideas and listen to your thoughts. Planning begins soon and many veteran volunteers will be on hand once again to continue this tradition.

I hope that your Lenten Journey has provided you peace and comfort to enjoy one of the most beautiful weeks our church offers. May you all have a blessed and beautiful Easter! Kali Anastasi.

Sunday Church School…
**Philoptochos...**

*Current Events*
*By Ann Dervis*

**Women’s Heart Health Month**
On February 20, Sunday, members were asked to wear something red to help call attention to and raise awareness of women’s heart health. Symptoms for heart attack in women are dramatically different from those of men.

**Apokreatiko Glendi**
The annual Apokreatiko Glendi was held on Sunday, February 27th at the Diplomat West Banquet. Over 200 people attended, some in jungle, safari or animal costumes. Between courses of the delicious meal, games were organized for the children. A raffle was held for cash prizes. Proceeds will go the various Philoptochos philanthropies. Thank you to all who helped with this event.

**Loukoumades**
On Sunday, March 6 and Sunday, March 20 the Philoptochos sold loukoumades, those delicious puffs of honey, after Divine Liturgy. Many thanks to the Woods family for preparing these treats and to the many people who bought and enjoyed them.

**March Meeting**
Our March meeting was held on Thursday, March 17th in the St. Catherine’s Meeting Room at 10:30am. The budget for 2010 was reviewed and the new budget for 2011 was approved. Thank you to Sophia Vlahos for her expertise. Following the meeting a light luncheon was served.

**Easter Bake Sale**
An Easter bake Sale was held on April 17th. Orders were placed in advance and the ladies spent Saturday, April 9th and 16th baking and packing orders. Proceeds will benefit our various philanthropies.

**Holy Week**
Metropolitan Iakovos celebrated Holy Thursday evening with us. After the service there was a small reception with light refreshments served by the ladies.

**Welcome**
We welcome women of all ages who are not active in Philoptochos to come and help us in the mission of our organization. Our philanthropies include national ministries such as St. Basil Academy, Hellenic college/Holy Cross Seminary, medical funds, our Patriarchate and others. In addition we help support our Metropolis fund, our own Assumption Church, St. Catherine’s Chapel and various Chicago area charities.

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**Dates to Remember**

June 23rd Philoptochos Nursing Home Visit, Wheeling
August 14th Panagia Vespers
August 15 Panagia Liturgy Reception
Parish Happenings...

Apokreatiko Glendi, February 2011
Stewardship...

**Being a Steward of the Church**
*By Jack Woods*

"...We commonly refer to the “three T’s” of Stewardship, but one “T” may be missing or perhaps taken for
granted: “Truth.” Truth in Stewardship means that we make an honest effort to focus on the call of Christ to
commit ourselves to prayer, to work, and to give so that the body of Christ, the Church, may live and meet Her
mission. Saint Paul writes: “It is required in stewards, that a person be found faithful” (1 Cor. 4:2). With this
thought in mind, we must be willing to meet the challenge to strengthen the sacred work of our Church in Amer-
ica..."

Stewardship is an important part of our Orthodox faith and is part of a total commitment to Christ. Stewardship is part
of a Christian lifestyle that is expected by God as a loving way to give back to God for thanks of what He has given us in
life. The Stewardship Program our Assumption Church consists of four facets:

**Ordinary Stewardship** is the regular practice of returning to God a portion of all that God has given us. It involves
teaching ourselves how to create a life built upon the notion that all that we have is a gift from God. This includes
spreading the teachings of Jesus Christ and the concept that giving regularly of our time, talent, and money to God's
work on this earth is as much a spiritual practice as prayer and worship.

**Time and Talents** is getting involved with the Church both in your participation in ministries and offering your volun-
teer time as well as your talents to help further the Church's mission and ministries.

**Extraordinary Stewardship** involves the special occasions that arise in the life of our Community that call us to give
beyond our ordinary habit. They involve increased risk and encourage us to experiment with sacrificial giving in order
to help the Community realize critical and important goals and programs. The best example of extraordinary steward-
ship is our capital campaigns for renovation and outreach.

**Legacy Stewardship** is the way in which we address the matter of disposing of the accumulations of our blessing from
God that we have accumulated through our lifetime. It is the opportunity to provide a planned gift that constitutes both a
legacy to generations yet unborn, and presents a final testimony of the belief in our Orthodox faith.

Leadership 100 Conference...

**Leadership 100 Conference Marks Growth**
*By Louis Malevitis*

At the 20th Annual Leadership 100 Conference in Palm Beach, Florida on February 24-27, the Leadership 100 organization grew in
membership, contributions and the value of its portfolio allowing for an increase in grants.

Membership in this Archbishop Iakovos Leadership 100 Endowment Organization is 863 participants throughout our Holy Greek
Orthodox Archdioceses of America, including more than 10 members are from our Assumption Community.

The Leadership 100 portfolio reached $467,826,000 and grants totaling $1,031,600 for 2010 Archdiocese ministries was approved at
the conference. Also at the conference, Paulette Poulos was appointed as Executive Director of Leadership 100. For any information
about Leadership 100 please call Paulette at 1-212-308-2627 or Father Timothy.
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Stewardship List thru March 2011...

MR LAMBROS KARKAZIS
MR & MRS ANDREW KAROS
MRS MIA KASIMOS
MRS ANTOINETTE KASKAS
MR GEORGE KATSIKARIS
DR NICHOLAS KINNAS
MR & MRS SPYROS KOKOLIS
MR & MRS GEORGE KOLETTIS
MS FAY KOLLIAS
MRS ALICE KOPAN
MR & MRS THOMAS KOSTAS
MR & MRS WALTER KOTT
MR & MRS GUST KOUMELIS
MS SOPHIE KOUTSELAS
MS JENNIFER KRAPEC
ME EUGENIA KRIBALES
MRS HELEN KRIILLIES
MRS BESSIE KUCHURIS
MRS CALLOPE KUTRUBIS
MR PETER LAGEOTAKES
MRS KYRIAKI LAGON
MR AND MRS JAMES LAKERDAS
MRS ANASTASIA LAMBESIS
MR GEORGE LATTAS
MR & MRS JAMES LEAKAKOS
MR & MRS NICK LEKOUSIS
MISS BETTY LEONTIOS
MISS EUGENIA LEONTIOS
MS ALEXANDRA LEVADITIS
MRS DENA LEVADITIS
MR & MRS JAMES LIDBURY
MR CHRIS LIMPERIS
MRS HELEN LIMPERIS
MRS MARY CLARA LIVADITIS
MR & MRS ILIAS LOULOUSIS
MR & DR DEAN MAGGOS
MR LOUIS MALEVITIS
MR & MRS DEAN MAMALAKIS
MR GEORGE MANIATES
MRS HELEN MANIATES
MR & MRS GEORGE MANIATIS
MR & MRS THEODORE MANIATIS
DR CHAD MANSOUR
MR & MRS NICHOLAS MANSOUR
MR & MRS JOHN MAROUTSOS
MR & MRS THOMAS MASSOURAS
MRS BESSIE MAVREAS
MS JANE MAXOURIS
MRS HELEN MIHAIL
MR & MRS JAMES MILLER
MR & MRS THOMAS MITROPOULOS
MR & MRS TIMOTHY NASH
MR & MRS MARK NAUGHTON, JR
MS PHYLLIS NICHOLAS
MR VINCENT NICHOLAS
MRS AMELIA NICHOLS
MRS HELEN NICOLOPULOS
MR & MRS LARRY PALMISANO
MR ANTHONY PANAGAKOS
MR NICK PANAGAKOS
MR & MRS ALEX PANAGIOTOPOULOS
ALEXANDER PANAGIOTOPOULOS
MRS FRED PANAGOS
MR & MRS CHRISTOS PANOS
MR KOSTAS PANTAZIS
DR & MRS JOHN PANTON
DR & MRS PETER PANTON
DR & MRS ROBERT PANTON
MR & MRS DIONYSIOS PAPAFOTOPOULOS
MS SOERTIA PAPAGIANNOPULOS
DR & MRS STEVEN PAPAGIANNOPULOS
MRS ANITA PAPANEK
MRS GEORGIA PAPPADIMITRIOU
MS ANASTASIA PAPPAS
MR GEORGE PAPPAS
MR & MRS THEODORE PAPPAS
MS VIVIAN PAPPAS
MRS ANGELA PARRY-PATERAKIS
MR GEORGE PARRY-PATERAKIS
MS KATHERINE PATRINOS
MR & MRS MARK PATTERSON
MR & MRS ANDREW PENESIS
MRS GEORGI PETREE
MR & MRS ANGELO PILAFAS
MS ANN PILAFAS
MS NANCY PILAFAS
MRS TOULA PITSIS
MR JOHN PLATIS
MRS HELEN PONTIKES
MRS ELAINE PONTIKIS
MR & MRS GUS PONTIKIS
MRS NIKI POULOS
MR & MRS THOMAS POULOS
MRS THERESA PRESVELOS
MR & MRS ALEXANDER PSARRAS
MS GEORGIA PSICHOGIOS
MRS HELEN PSICHOGIOS
MS KEKE RAFTELIAS
Stewardship List thru March 2011...

MS MARY RAFTELIAS
MS ANN RANTIS
MR & MRS WILLIAM RANTIS
MRS HELEN RAPITI
MR & MRS ANTHONY REBAPIS
MR & MRS JAMES REGAS
MR & MRS RAYMOND RIHA, JR
MR AND MRS RAYMOND RIHA, SR
MRS SOPHIE ROMAS
MRS IRENE ROMBAKIS
DR & MRS WILLIAM ROUMAN
MR & MRS EVANGELOS ROZOS
MR & MRS KEN RUBENSTEIN
MR & MRS DEAN SARANTOS
MR & MRS HARRY SAUNDERS
MS MARIA SCHMIDT
MR & MRS NICK SCOURLETOS
MR CHRIS SELIMOS
MS MELISSA SHUBALIS
MS ELENA SIAMPOS
MRS ELAINE SIMMS
MR & MRS DEMETRIOS SKOUFIS
MR & MRS KOSTA SKOULIKARIS
MR & MRS KOSTAS SKOULIKAS
MS IRENE SKUTERIS
MR & MRS SPIRO SKUTERIS
MS TASOULA SOULIDES
MR & MRS HARRY SOUMAKIS
DR BASIL SPYROPOULOS
MR & MRS PETER SPYROPOULOS
DR STAVROULA SPYROPOULOS
MR & MRS ERNEST STAVROPOULOS
MR & MRS PAUL STAVROPOULOS
MR & MRS JOHN STEC
MARGARET & BRIAN STEINHAGEN
MRS ROSE MARIE STEWART
MS JOANNE STRATTON
MR & MRS DIMITRIOS STRAVOLEMAS
MR & MRS MATHIEU SUSSMAN
MRS MARY T SZCZESNIAK

MRS SEVASTI TAGARIS
DR CHRISTOS TAKOUDIS & DR MARIA FOUSTALIERAKI
MS ANASTASIA TEROVOLAS
MISS CRISTELLA TEROVOLAS
MS ETHEFIE THEODOSOPOULOS
MR CHRISTOPHER THOMOPoulos
DR & DR NICK THOMOPoulos
MR & MRS GENTJAN (YANNI) TOLE
MR & MRS ANGELO TOLIOS
MR & MRS CHRISTOPHER TORCHIA
MRS HELEN TOULIOS
MR & MRS PETER TRAGOS
MR JOHN TRAHANAS
MRS BESSIE TRIHAS
MR & MRS JOHN G. TSIGOLIS
MR & MRS JAMES TSIOLIS
MR & MRS DIMITRIOS TSIRIBAS
MRS KATHERINE TZOUMIS
MR & MRS JOHN VASSILAIDES
PAULINE VAVASIS
MRS BEATRICE VELASQUEZ
MR & MRS THOMAS VELIS
MR & MRS DINO VERROS
MR & MRS ALEX VICKAS
MR & MRS PETER VLAGOS
MR & MRS GEORGE VLAHOS
MR AND MRS JOHN VLAHOS
MR & MRS PETER VLAHOS
DR & MRS PERRY VOORNAS
MRS MARIA VOULGARAKIS
MR & MRS PETER VOULGARAKIS
MR & MRS BILL VRANAS
MR STEVEN WEIGAND
MS ALKISTIS WONAIS
MR & MRS JACK WOODS
MS MARY ELLEN WOODS
MRS MARIKA XINOS
MR & MRS CONSTANTINE YANNIAS
MR & MRS STEVE YANNIAS
MS TRACY YANNIAS

Look for additional news in the upcoming Newsletters and at the Pangari for Information about St. Catherine’s Consecration Ceremony
**Parish Registry February-March 2011**

**40 DAY BLESSINGS**
- Daughter of Mike and Dena Boznos
  Daughter of Adam and Vickie Calderon

**BAPTISMS**
Daughter of, Nicholas and Amie Panagakos taking the name, *Rose*
  Godparent: Anthony Panagakos

**FALLEN ASLEEP IN THE LORD**
+ Barbara Alex
+ Catherine (Koclanes) Hughes

**MEMORIALS**

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<td>Anthony Fiori</td>
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<td>Mary Nichols</td>
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**Assumption Greek Festival**

Sunday, September 4th and
Monday, September 5th

Submit articles to the Church Office or to Tina Sarantos at t.sarantos@sbcglobal.net or (708) 660-0154.
Important Upcoming Dates

May 28th and 29th
Metropolis Junior Olympics

June 5th
Sunday Church School Picnic
Lombard

August 14th and 15th
Vespers to the Theotokos
Feast Day of the Theotokos

September 4th and 5th
Assumption Greek Festival

September 11th
First Day of Church Sunday School

November 20th
St. Catherine’s Consecration Service