SERMON on the Sunday of the Myrrhbearing Women, May 12, 2019

Christ is Risen! Let’s rewind for a moment and go back to Holy Week, when our Savior was arrested, mocked, judged and crucified. All of the apostles fled. They tried to blend in the crowd and watch from a distance the end of their beloved Teacher. If they are approached or questioned, they vehemently deny having ever known the Lord. Remember at the Mystical Supper the Lord foretold these things to them, and at that time they vehemently denied that they would ever deny the Lord. And now the words of the Lord are coming true as they all scatter and the words of the Lord come back to haunt them. The Lord tells Peter that he will deny Jesus three times before the cock crows, and these words come true. It is said that for the rest of his life, the Apostle Peter wept bitterly whenever he heard the cock crow, remembering how he had denied the Lord when the Lord’s time had come. Even the Apostle Thomas, who I praised last week for his bravery, seems to be nowhere to be found. The Gospel makes no mention of Thomas remaining faithful and fearless at this time. If any of them remained faithful, it was the Apostle John who stood by the cross with the Mother of God. All of the women, however, are steadfast and not afraid to approach the Lord, nor to openly grieve out of their love for Him, openly exposing themselves as His devoted women disciples. I believe that they were afraid too, but love and faith overcame their fear. The Lord dies on Holy Friday. The sabbath begins at sundown. The Lord needed to be hastily buried before sundown, because burials were not permitted on the sabbath, especially on that sabbath, which was a great holy day. Joseph of Arimathea hastily wraps Jesus in a linen shroud and buries the Lord just as the sun is going down. There was no time to properly anoint the body of Jesus with myrrh, aloes and sweet smelling spices, which was the Jewish custom of the time. The first day of the week, which would be Sunday, the sabbath now past, the women go to the Lord at the first opportunity, just as the sun is coming up, to anoint the body of our Savior with tender loving care and in the proper and full manner. Their faith and their love and devotion to the Lord is great. The Lord has already been buried and they know that the tomb has been sealed with a huge stone, yet they go to the Lord, believing that somehow God will make it possible for them to fulfill their duty of love to their beloved Lord. They discover that the tomb is empty, and an angel greets them with the words “Rejoice! The Lord has risen!” They are astonished and filled with awe, described as “fear and trembling” by the evangelist. They are told by the angel to tell the apostles that Jesus has risen from the dead. One Russian bishop said that the women became “the apostles to the apostles.” Later the Lord appears to them before He appears to the apostles. This is because of their great faith and love and devotion and in order to censure the apostles for their lack of faith. All of us experience dark times in our lives. It could be lack of patience with our children, it could be difficulties at work, it could be illness that we have or that a loved one has, it could be lack of money, it could be many things. Perhaps we feel alone, despondent and lack hope. There could be no darker time than the dark days that we journeyed through with our Savior during Holy Week. Yet the women disciples of our Lord continued to be faithful and true to our Savior. Their consciences remain pure, their hearts remain clean. When we are unfaithful to the Lord our minds become clouded and our hearts are darkened, and it becomes difficult to see and understand the truth. The example of the myrrhbearing women is that no matter what difficulties and dark times we may go through, we must always trust in God and remain faithful to our Lord. The light of Christ, the light of the Resurrection, the light of God’s grace is always there, even if it is hard to see it. And concerning the darkness which envelopes us, there is always light at the end of the tunnel. Eventually the darkness is dispelled, and the bright light of Christ remains and fills our hearts with joy, love and peace. Amen. Christ is Risen!