

Woe Betide the World if the Mob Rules († Dionysios, Metropolitan of Serbia and Kozani)

[Ξένες γλώσσες / In English](#)



Today the Church honours the memory of those people who took charge of the burial of Our Lord Jesus Christ, and those others who set out to pay Him the final burial honours in accordance with the Jewish customs of the time. Those people are: Joseph and, with him, Nicodemus, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome. The two men took care of burying Jesus Christ and the three women went on the morning of the third day thereafter to anoint Him with unguents. The Gospel tells us the following:

' 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 Joseph 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'.

So the first subject of today's Gospel is the burial of Our Lord Jesus Christ. We should pay careful attention to the action of Joseph. The man held office and was respected. But he was also devout. It was this piety which gave him the courage to appear before Pilate and ask to be allowed to bury the body of Jesus Christ. When all the leaders and the people had risen up and demanded the death of the Sinless One- and a painful and dishonourable death at that- it took real courage and boldness for someone to take care of the body of such a miscreant. What Joseph's action tells us is that, if we have to perform a sacred duty, we should not be concerned with what the world might say or do to us. And how much do people understand anyway, when demagogues demean them and reduce them to the state of a mob? They understand as much as those did who set Barabbas free and shouted: 'Away with him. Away with him. Crucify him', as regards Christ. And to people's great misfortune, it's often the case that there's only one witness to the truth in a mob that's blinded and fanatical. Thus it was that Christ faced the rabid mob all alone. Then when the others were sleeping, untroubled, there were only two men to bury the divine body of the Redeemer and save the honour of the human race. Woe betide the world, my friends, if the mob rules. And joy to those who didn't heed the outcry of the people who'd been corrupted by the demagogues and turned into a mob. Such people are truly courageous and heroic. The mob may knock them over and trample on them, but they won't give way to let it pass. And threefold joy to those who, when the mob curses them, bless it.

The Gospel goes on to tell us about the bold action of the three myrrh-bearing women. This was also an act that was inspired by love and devotion to the person of Jesus Christ. The three women had many difficulties to overcome: the leaders,

the people, the military guard and the stone at the mouth of the tomb. They took no notice of any of that and remembered the stone only at the last minute. Who would roll away the stone from the mouth of the tomb? But they found the stone already rolled away and an angel of the Lord sitting on the right, inside the tomb. It was he who announced the Resurrection to the myrrh-bearers. It's reckoned to be coincidental that it was women who first heard the message of the Resurrection and took it to the apostles. But there's no such thing as coincidence and luck, simply the behest of God and human will. Whatever happens in the world does so for a spiritual reason, which has its roots in God's behest and our own free will. Naturally, this spiritual reason isn't what we've learned to call 'natural law'. Natural law is servitude to cause and effect. The spiritual reason is beyond any concept of coercion, it's the realm of freedom and personal responsibility. Behind the so-called natural laws, we should always seek the spiritual reasons, the presence of God and the human person. It's not coincidence nor luck that, at God's behest and with human will, the world still stands and continues its march through history. How could the messengers of the Resurrection not be women? It was they who set out for the tomb as a result of their own choice and strength. And then again, it was woman who played the leading role in the fall, but also woman who has played the leading role in the mystery of divine dispensation, from the Nativity to the Resurrection.

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