

## ***Easter Sunday – Stones and Wax***

*Delivered by Rev. Fr. Ghevond Ajamian  
St. Sarkis Armenian Church. Carrollton, TX  
April 16, 2017  
Gospel Reading: Mark 16:2-8*

In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

I hope that we all know the story of the resurrection. On Friday, we remembered Christ's crucifixion and burial in a newly hewn tomb, and how the Pharisees were afraid that his disciples would come by night to steal His body, so they rolled a large stone in front of the entrance. Then very early on Sunday morning, the myrrh-bearing women came to the tomb to anoint Christ's body. On their way to the tomb, they asked each other, "Who will roll away the stone from the tomb?" Yet, when they arrived, they saw that the stone had already been rolled away.

Now, imagine if they had become hopeless and turned back, believing there was no way for them to enter the tomb. What would they have missed out on – the news of Christ's resurrection from the dead.

These women did not allow the huge stone to get in the way of them and their Lord. But how many of us allow stones to come between us and God? How many of us stumble over stones on our journey to the risen Lord? Perhaps those very stones are holding back a flood of tears. These stones can come in many forms. They can be sadness of a lost loved one, or anger at an ailment, or even a troubled marriage.

Maybe the stones are worries of how to pay the bills or mortgage, or pressure at work or school, or even being far from home and family. Perhaps people mock us or we are not happy with how we look. Maybe we are overweight or too skinny; too old or too young; or we just don't like our appearance. Those stones may be a desire for wealth or trying to outdo someone with buying the newest car or expensive clothing, or just shopping in general. Maybe even it is pride, anger, jealousy, gossip, or revenge.

Sometimes we hide behind these stones, thinking people will not see our true selves, and still sometimes we make them our foundation, building our entire lives upon them. But very often, we become so used to them that these stones make our hearts stone as well.

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The Gospel accounts are all very similar, but the Gospel of Matthew adds one important detail: at the burial of Christ, the Pharisees sealed the tomb of Christ (most likely with wax). This reminds us that our hearts should not be as hard as stones, but soft like wax.

A great tradition in the Eastern Churches is the lighting of candles when we enter the church. Some light them and then leave, others light them and stay for a little while, and still there are others who light them and stay for the entire Divine Liturgy. However, when we light our candles, perhaps we don't notice what takes place. When a candle is lit, the flame softens the hard wax, and it becomes malleable.

This is what happens to our hearts when we hear the good news of Christ's resurrection, and it enlightens our hearts. Our hearts become soft and they can be sealed with the Holy Spirit. Each of us who have been baptized in the Armenian Church have already been sealed with Holy Chrism (Myuron). When this happens, it testifies to other that not only do we carry the seal of the Holy Spirit within us, but we belong to Christ alone.

So, just as the myrrh-bearing women continued on their journey to the Lord, trusting that God would remove the stone from their path, because their hearts were soft and warmed by the love of Christ, let that same love and news of the resurrection light our way, warm our hearts, and remove the stones of our lives. And when we become discouraged and feel hopeless that the stones are too great, let us not sit down or give up on our journey, but persevere and have faith that God will remove those stones so that we may see and hear the glorious news of our Lord's resurrection.

Amen.