

THE SUNDAY OF THE HOLY MYRRHBEARING WOMEN, ST. JOSEPH OF ARIMATHEA, AND ST. NICODEMUS

Today we take our last longing look back at Pascha in the persons of the Holy Myrrhbearing Women, St. Joseph of Arimathea and St. Nicodemus.

Why are these people important to us? Why should we care about them? What do they have to teach us?

They are important to us, and we should care about them, because they are, perhaps of all the saints in heaven, our most likely and accessible role models. Think about the different ranks of saints: “Patriarchs, Prophets, Apostles, Preachers, Evangelists, Martyrs, Confessors, Ascetics, and every righteous spirit made perfect in the faith”. While these categories are not totally inaccessible to us, you wouldn’t call most of us likely candidates for most of them:

- Patriarchs, Prophets, Apostles, Evangelists? Their ranks are, for the most part, full.
- Preachers? More than most others, this calling is in God’s Hands and not something we can strive for.
- Martyrs and Confessors? We should thank God every day that our faith does not come at the cost of our lives.
- Ascetics? We are all called to deny ourselves, to take up our crosses and follow Christ, but few to the extent of the sainted monks and nuns of the Church.

But this last category — “Every righteous spirit made perfect in faith” — this perhaps has possibilities. And it is in this light that we should look at the Holy Myrrhbearing Women, St. Joseph of Arimathea, and St. Nicodemus.

Who were they? According to the Gospels, St. Joseph and St. Nicodemus were members of the Sanhedrin, the ruling council of the Jews, and the myrrhbearers were the “women who followed Jesus from Galilee” (*Mt 27:55*), most of whom, it seems, were named “Mary”. But think about it: Who were they? What sorts of people were they? St. Joseph and St. Nicodemus were men with careers, wives, and children; men with responsibilities both professional to their communities and to their families. And the myrrhbearers were, literally, the mothers “of James and Joses, and of Zebedee’s sons” (*Mt 27:56*).

It is these ordinary people—people very much like you and me—whom we remember today; these “righteous spirits made perfect in faith,” whom the whole Church holds up as examples and role models—holds up as heroes, as notable in the company of heaven as the most determined apostles, the most inspired prophets, the most courageous martyrs and confessors, the most fervent ascetics. That’s why they should be important to us. That’s why we should care about them.