

# Go ahead, surprise me!

Ain't Scripture a hoot? I mean the way God keeps refusing to be bound by our expectations, choosing rather to surprise us with something totally unexpected. A perfect example of this can be found when the pregnant Mother of God breaks into song while visiting her cousin Elizabeth.

He has shown might with His arm,  
dispersed the arrogant of mind and heart.  
He has thrown down the rulers from their thrones  
but lifted up the lowly.  
The hungry He has filled with good things;  
the rich He has sent away empty.

*(Luke 1:51-53)*

You can hear the whole song the next time you celebrate matins in our Church. And when you do, think how surprised and upset the arrogant, the rulers, and the rich must be when they realize what God has planned for them! Surprise!

The third Sunday of this Paschal season is dedicated to the Myrrh-bearing women. You remember that they were bringing ointments to anoint the Body of Jesus, thus providing Him with a “respectable” burial after His shameful death on the Cross. Of course, to get into the tomb, there was this huge stone that needed to be dealt with. They were worrying who would roll the stone away for them, because they would never be able to do it themselves. It's at this point that the surprise begins: the stone has already been rolled away. What's more, the Body of Jesus is not there to be found – just some strange, ethereal creatures telling a wild story about Resurrection. Surprise again!

Jesus continued to appear “in the Body” for forty days until His ascension into heaven – which is why we leave the *plachanytsia* on the altar between the feasts of *Pascha* and the Ascension. I suspect that the disciples were surprised to see Him ascend to heaven – and dismayed, too: this was just another turn in the emotional roller coaster which had taken them from the exhilaration of Palm Sunday through the radiance of the Last Supper to the shock of Gethsemane and Calvary, followed by the joy of Easter. Now He was once again taken from their sight! No more Body to assure them of His presence, no more voice to listen to for guidance. Not a nice surprise! Can you hear the groans?

Then comes yet another surprise: His Body, they would learn, is not really gone, only changed. It was no longer in the possession of Someone outside of themselves; rather, Christ's Body had taken possession of them, and they were all part of it. This Body is the Church. You don't believe it? Look at what St. Paul writes in his first letter to the Corinthians.

The body is one and has many members, but all the members, many though they are, are one body; and so it is with Christ. It was in one Spirit that all of us, whether Jew or Greek, slave or free, were baptized into one Body. All of us have been given to

