

Taking the Good News to New Places

This weekly bulletin insert complements the curriculum published by the Department of Christian Education of the Orthodox Church in America. This and many other Christian Education resources are available at <http://dce.oca.org>.



The Church celebrates the memory of two men who not only heard the good news of Christ's Resurrection, but traveled a long way to share it with others. They are the apostles Jason and Sospater from among the seventy.

As we rejoice in the Good News of the Resurrection, the story of these two saints gives us a chance to reflect on what it was like to hear that same Good News close to the time when it actually happened. Jason and Sospater were disciples of Saint Paul. He mentions them, with the illustrious Timothy, among those who send greetings to the Christians in Rome: "Timothy, my fellow worker, greets you; so do Lucius and Jason and Sospater, my kinsmen" (Romans 16:21).

Jason came from Tarsus, Paul's hometown. He was clearly a devout Christian and well-respected, eventually becoming Bishop of Tarsus. Sospater was from Achaia (Greece) and he too was a prominent leader of the Church. He was installed as Bishop of Iconium, an area where Paul and Barnabas preached and converted large numbers of Jews and pagans.

So both these men had been led to years of service in the Church by the Good News of the Gospel. As bishops of the areas in which they grew up, they had lovingly guided their flocks. But in the year 70 they set out together on a new venture, and took the Gospel to a place whose people had never heard it before. The historical proof of their journey is a beautiful church on Corfu, an island in the Ionian Sea. Small and partially hidden by newer and larger buildings, the church is named for Saints Jason and Sospater.

Being the very first to preach Christianity on Corfu made their early years on the island difficult. The local governor didn't welcome their efforts, and after tolerating them for a short time he threw them into prison. But their confidence in the truth of Jesus Christ was so strong that they converted their fellow prisoners, cynical and hardened criminals who had lost all hope.

When a new governor was appointed, the two were released. The governor gave them permission to continue preaching, and later was baptized after having been taught by both saints. Jason and Sospater went on with their work and died in peaceful old age.

In the Book of Acts, the apostle Peter tells the crowd on the day of Pentecost that the promise of salvation is for "all that are far off" (2: 39). Jason and Sospater, already having served admirably as bishops near their homes, understood the importance of these words and felt the urge to act on them. The churches of Corfu remind us of them and those like them who wanted to tell the whole world: Christ is Risen!



Kontakion - Tone 2

O Jason, source of healing,
And Sospater, glory of the martyrs of Christ:
You were enlightened by the preaching of Paul,
Both becoming a great consolation
to the world through your miracles.
Thrice-holy and God-bearing Apostles
and defenders of those who suffer,
Intercede with Christ God
that He may save our souls.