

With good reason, then, we are accustomed to have sacred meetings in churches on the eighth day. And, to adopt the language of allegory, as the idea necessarily demands, we indeed close the doors, but Christ still visits us and appears to us all, both invisibly as God and visibly as the body. He allows us to touch His holy flesh and gives it to us. For through the grace of God we are admitted to partake of the blessed Eucharist, receiving Christ into our hands, to the intent that we may firmly believe that He did in truth raise up the temple of His Body. ... Participation in the Divine Mysteries, in addition to filling us with divine blessedness, is a true confession and memorial of Christ's dying and rising again for us and for our sake. Let us, therefore, after touching Christ's Body, avoid all unbelief in Him as utter ruin and rather be well grounded in the full assurance of faith.

Saint Cyril of Alexandria

**On Sunday 27 April 2014 is
Thomas Sunday**

Matins Gospel: Matthew 28:16-20

Epistle: Acts 5:12-20

Gospel: John 20:19-31

Apolytikion:

While the tomb was sealed, You, O Life, did shine forth from the grave, O Christ God; and while the doors were shut, You did come unto Your disciples, O Resurrection of all, renewing through them an upright Spirit in us according to Your great mercy.

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Readings and saints for this week:

Monday: Acts 3:19-26; John 2:1-11
9 Martyrs of Cyzicus; Theocharus and Apostolus

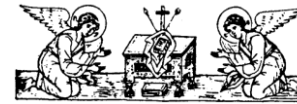
Tuesday: Acts 4:1-10; John 3:16-21
Jason & Sosipater of the 70; Martyr Cercyra

Wednesday: Acts 12:1-11; Luke 9:1-6
Apostle James; New Martyr Agyre

Thursday: Acts 4:23-31; John 5:24-30
Prophet Jeremias; New Martyr Maria of Mirabella

Friday: Hebrews 13:7-16; Matthew 5:14-19
Relics of Athanasius; Hesperos & Zoe the Righteous

Saturday: Acts 5:21-32; John 6:14-27
Martyrs Timothy & Maura; Peter the Wonderworker



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A Bulletin of Orthodox Christian Faith

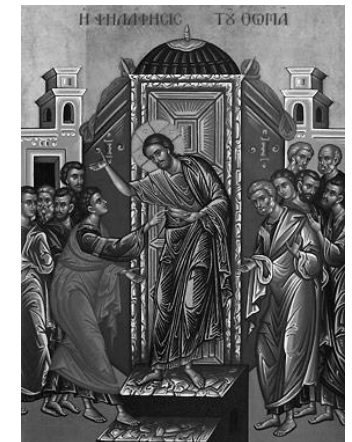
27 April 2014

My Lord and My God

Today, the first Sunday after Pascha, is known as Thomas Sunday, for we hear how Jesus Christ appeared to the Apostle Thomas and strengthened his faith.

Saint John tells us that Jesus Christ had appeared to the Apostles after the Resurrection, confirming their mission and breathing on them the Holy Spirit. However, Saint Thomas was not with them on this occasion, and insisted that he would not believe unless Christ appeared to him too. And eight days after the Resurrection Jesus Christ came to him. Overcome by faith, Thomas cried out: "My Lord and my God."

Saint Thomas is sometimes referred to as "Doubting Thomas," yet today's Gospel shows us his deep faith which would lead him to proclaiming the Gospel in distant lands. However, he was not content to simply accept things on hearsay, or to assent to things simply to please others. He knew that faith had to be real, and he therefore had to go through a process which culminated in his meeting with the Risen Lord.



Like Saint Thomas, we may also go through times when we find it difficult to believe, or we may have difficulty accepting something simply because others say so. However, today's Gospel shows us that we come to faith not simply through rational reasoning, nor through simply accepting the reports of others. Rather, we also need to encounter the Risen Christ in our lives, for it is in meeting Him that we too will be overcome by the reality of His presence. And we encounter Him in an ongoing life of prayer – in listening to the Gospel and participating in the sacramental life of the Church, in opening ourselves to Him so that He can become ever-more real to us.

Come let us drink a new drink, not one marvellously brought forth from a barren rock, but the Source of incorruption, which springs up from the tomb of Christ, in whom we are established.

From the Paschal Canon by Saint John Damascene

Condemned to Immortality: A Meditation on the Resurrection

by Saint Justin Popovic

People condemned God to death; with His Resurrection He condemned them to immortality. For striking Him, God returned embraces; for insults, blessings; for death, immortality. Never did men show more hate towards God than when they crucified Him; and God never showed His love towards people more than when He was resurrected. Mankind wanted to make God dead, but God, with His Resurrection, made people alive, the crucified God resurrected on the third day and thereby killed death! There is no more death. Immortality is surrounding man and his entire world.



With the Resurrection of the God-Man, the nature of man is irreversibly led toward the road of immortality and man's nature becomes destructive to death itself. For until the Resurrection of Christ, death was destructive for man; from the Resurrection of Christ, man's nature becomes destructive in death. If man lives in the faith of the Resurrected God Man, he lives above death, he is unreachable for her; death is under man's feet. Death where is thy sting? Hell, where is thy victory? And when a man who believes in Christ dies, he only leaves his body as his clothes, in which he will be dressed again on the Day of Last Judgement.

Before the Resurrection of the God-Man, death was the second nature of man; life was first and death was second. Man became accustomed to death as something natural. But after His Resurrection the Lord changed everything: and it was only natural until Christ's Resurrection, that the people became mortal, so after Christ's Resurrection it was natural that the people became immortal.

Through sin, man becomes mortal and temporal; with the Resurrection of the God-Man, he becomes immortal and eternal. In this lies the strength, in this lies the power, in this lies the might of Christ's Resurrection. Without the Resurrection there is no Christianity. Among the miracles, this is the greatest one; all other miracles begin and end with it. From it sprouted the faith and the love and the hope and the prayer and the love toward God.

Saint Thomas as a Witness to the Reality of the Resurrection

Dearly beloved, what do you see in these events? Do you really believe that it was by chance that this chosen disciple was absent, then came and heard, heard and doubted, doubted and touched, touched and believed? It was not by chance but in God's providence. In a marvellous way God's mercy arranged that the disbelieving disciple, in touching the wounds of his Master's body, should heal our wounds of disbelief.

The disbelief of Thomas has done more for our faith than the faith of the other disciples. As he touches Christ and is won over to belief, every doubt is cast aside and our faith is strengthened. So the disciple who doubted, then felt Christ's wounds, becomes a witness to the reality of the resurrection.

Saint Gregory Dialogos



Question Box

If you have a question about the faith and teaching of the Orthodox Church, you can send it to evangelion@goarch.co.za

There have recently been reports in the media that an ancient manuscript says that Jesus had a wife is genuine. Is this true?

Unfortunately, the media like to publicise such news each year around Easter – and in a very misleading way. The truth in this case is much less dramatic.

The object in question is a scrap of papyrus that was found a couple of years ago and makes references to Jesus having a wife. The recent news was that scientists have determined that it is an ancient text and not a modern forgery – and the media are therefore portraying it as “genuine.”

However, this is all very misleading. Not only is there no clarity on where it comes from – the dates given range from the fourth to the eighth centuries – but the fact that something is ancient does not make it true. There were many manuscripts circulating in the ancient world that came out of heretical circles and promoted a false picture of Jesus Christ. The Fathers of the Church were well aware of such heresies and combatted them vigorously in their writings.

The reality is, however, that such texts are still later than the canonical Gospels of the Church which were all written during the first century A.D. Instead of vague speculation or an emphasis on secret, mystical knowledge for an elite group, the Gospels of the Church present clear historical events, undergirded by a firm faith in Christ's victory over death. These Gospels are both more historically trustworthy than other texts that circulated later and they transmit the authentic faith of the Church. And they make it clear that Jesus was not married.