



On Saturday we commemorate the holy Apostle and Evangelist Mark, the founder of the Church of Alexandria.

Saint Mark originally came from Cyrene of Pentapolis, near Libya. He came to faith in Christ through Saint Peter and followed him to Rome, where he wrote the gospel that bears his name. He later travelled to Alexandria where he preached the Gospel and established the Church. He encountered opposition and was martyred in the year 68 by being tied up and dragged around the city until he died.

Readings and saints for this week:

Monday: Acts 3:19-26; John 2:1-11
Theodore Trichinas; Apostle Zachaias

Tuesday: Acts Apostles 4:1-10; John 3:16-21
Hieromartyr Januarius; Maximian of Constantinople

Wednesday: Acts 4:13-22; John 5:17-24
Theodore of Sykeon; Holy Apostle Nathaniel

Thursday: Luke 21:12-19; Acts 12:1-11; John 15:17-27; 16:1-2
Great Martyr George

Friday: Acts 5:1-11; John 5:30-47; 6:1-2
Elizabeth the Wonderworker; Savvas the General of Rome

Saturday: 1 Peter 5:6-14; Luke 10:16-21
Apostle and Evangelist Mark; New Martyr Emmanuel and Companions



19 April 2015 is Thomas Sunday

Matins Gospel: Matthew 28:16-20

Epistle: Acts 5:12-20

Gospel: John 20:19-31

Resurrectional Apolytikion:

Whilst the tomb was sealed, Thou, O Life, didst shine forth from the grave, O Christ God; and whilst the doors were shut, Thou didst come unto Thy disciples, O Resurrection of all, renewing through them an upright Spirit in us according to Thy great mercy.

Seasonal Kontakion:

Though You went down into the tomb, You destroyed Hades' power, and You rose the victor, Christ God, saying to the myrrh-bearing women, "Hail!" and granting peace to Your disciples, You who raise up the fallen.



Evangelion

A Bulletin of Orthodox Christian Faith

19 April 2015

**Archbishopric of Good Hope
Patriarchate of Alexandria & All Africa**

My Lord and My God!

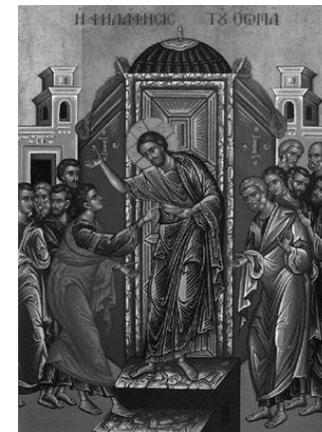
Today, the first Sunday after Pascha, is known as Thomas Sunday, for we hear how Jesus Christ appeared to the Apostle Thomas and strengthened his faith.

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.



O truly laudable, dread enterprise of Thomas! For boldly he handled the side which blazed with the divine fire. You showed us that Thomas' unbelief was mother of belief, for in your wisdom you arrange all things for good, O Christ, as Lover of mankind.

From Matins of Thomas Sunday

The Seal of the Gift of the Holy Spirit

A series on the meaning of Chrismation

Before Pascha, we saw that in the Mystery of Chrismation we are sealed “with the gift of the Holy Spirit.” This makes us Christ’s own people, consecrates us as members of His holy people, and gives us the gift of His Holy Spirit.

If we consider the purposes of Chrismation, we can say that:

- Chrismation fills us with the Holy Spirit so that we become His temple. Saint Ambrose writes:

In this sacrament you received the seal of the Holy Spirit to complete and perfect the work begun in you when you were born to new life in the font.

- Chrismation prepares us for the spiritual struggle that will follow our baptism. Saint Cyril of Jerusalem writes:

Indeed, as Christ, after His Baptism and the coming down upon Him of the Holy Spirit, went forth to triumph over the adversary, so you also, after Holy Baptism and the sacramental anointing, having been clothed with all the armour of the Holy Spirit, you resist the hostile powers.

- Chrismation awakens our spiritual senses. Saint Cyril of Jerusalem writes:

First you were anointed on the forehead, to be freed from the shame which the first man, after his sin, carried with him everywhere, to be freed so completely that you may be able to contemplate the glory of God with open face, as in a mirror...



When you hear that the Lord in the old days delivered souls from hell and prison and that He descended into hell and performed a glorious deed, do not think that all these events are far from your soul. ... So the Lord comes into the souls that seek Him, into the depth of the heart’s hell, and there commands death, saying: “Release the imprisoned souls which have sought Me and which you hold by force.” And He shatters the heavy stones weighing on the soul, opens graves, raises the true dead from death, brings the imprisoned soul from the dark prison. ... Is it difficult for God to enter death and, even more, into the depth of the heart and to call out dead Adam from there? ... If the sun, being created, passes everywhere through windows and doors, even to the caves of lions and the holes of creeping creatures, and comes out without any harm, the more so does God and the Lord of everything enter caves and abodes in which death has settled, and also souls, and, having released Adam from there, remains unfettered by death. Similarly, rain coming down from the sky reaches the nethermost parts of the earth, moistens and renews the roots there and gives birth to new shoots.

Saint Macarius of Egypt

New Birth through Christ’s Resurrection

Thomas Sunday is the eighth day after Pascha and marks the end of Bright Week. It is also known as *Antipascha*. This does not mean that it is opposed to Pascha, but rather means “instead of Pascha.” It marks the completion of Bright Week, but also the beginning of a new cycle, for beginning on this day the Church dedicates each Sunday of the year to the celebration of Christ’s Resurrection.

In the early Church this day was also called the day of renewal. Speaking about this day, Saint Gregory the Theologian writes:

... this day is purely of the new birth. It is the first day among those following it and eighth among those coming before it. The real renewal we now celebrate is the going from death to life. And so we put off ourselves the old man and renewed ourselves; that we too might walk in newness of life (Romans 6:8). ... The old has passed away, behold the new has come (2 Corinthians 5:17).



Let God's people then recognize that they are a new creation in Christ, and with all vigilance understand by Whom they have been adopted and Whom they have adopted. Let not the things, which have been made new, return to their ancient instability; and let not him who has “put his hand to the plough” forsake his work, but rather attend to that which he sows than look back to that which he has left behind. Let no one fall back into that from which he has risen, but, even though from bodily weakness he still languishes under certain maladies, let him urgently desire to be healed and raised up. For this is the path of health through imitation of the Resurrection begun in Christ, whereby, notwithstanding the many accidents and falls to which in this slippery life the traveler is liable, his feet may be guided from the quagmire on to solid ground, for, as it is written, “the steps of a man are directed by the Lord, and He will delight in His way. When the just man falls he shall not be overthrown, because the Lord will stretch out His hand.”

Saint Leo the Great