

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



8 May is Thomas Sunday

Matins Gospel: Matthew 28:16-20

Epistle: 1 John 1:1-7

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.

Readings and saints for this week:

Monday, 9 May: Acts 3:19-26; John 2:1-11
Prophet Isaiah; Martyr Christopher

Tuesday, 10 May: 1 Corinthians 4:9-16; Luke 6:12-19
Apostle Simon; Laurence of Egypt

Wednesday, 11 May: Acts 4:13-22; John 5:17-24
Cyril and Methodius; Renewal of Constantinople

Thursday, 12 May: Acts 4:23-31; John 5:24-30
Epiphanius, Bp. Of Cyprus; Germanos, Abp. Of Constantinople

Friday, 13 May: Acts 5:1-11; John 5:30-47; 6:1-2
Martyr Glyceria; Sergios the Confessor

Saturday, 14 May: Acts 5:21-32; John 6:14-27
Martyr Isidore; Hieromartyr Therapontus



Evangelion

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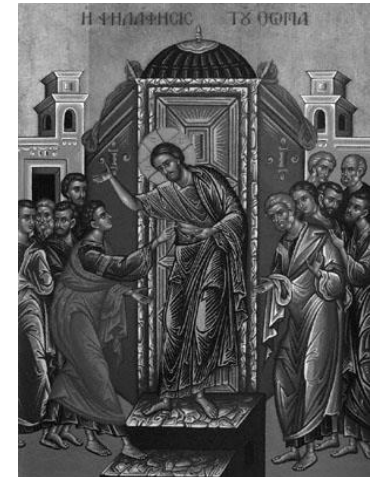
My Lord and My God!

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 St 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.

Built on the Foundations of the Prophets and Apostles

In today's Gospel, we hear how Jesus Christ appeared to the Apostles after His Resurrection. After greeting them with a greeting of peace, He gave them authority to preach the Gospel, saying: "As the Father sent me, so I am sending you." And He also breathed on them the Holy Spirit, assuring them of their authority to forgive sins.



The New Testament writers teach us that the Church is built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets (Ephesians 2:20), who were given their authority by Jesus Christ Himself. They see the Church as a "living temple" that is the "pillar and ground of truth" (1 Timothy 3:15). While Jesus Christ is the central cornerstone on which the Church is built, through the gift of the Holy Spirit the different members of the Church are formed into a spiritual temple and a living Body.

In this Body, the Apostles were given the authority to forgive sins, and the responsibility to guard the true faith of the Church. This authority has been passed on to their successors, the bishops of the Church. Each bishop is responsible for teaching the true faith in his own local Church. And when the bishops meet together, as they have done in Ecumenical Councils, we believe that they have the authority to truly and definitively state the faith of the Church, in order to defend and build up the faith of the Church and guard it against error.

It is pleasant to observe the disciples, lifted up to a height of glory equal to the burden of humility to which they were called. You see how they not only acquire peace of mind concerning themselves but even receive the power of releasing others from their bonds. They share in the right of divine judgment so that as God's vicars they may withhold forgiveness of sins from some and grant it to others. So it was fitting that only those who had consented to be humbled for the sake of God be raised up by Him. Those who feared God's strict judgment were made judges of hearts. Those who were themselves fearful of being condemned condemn some and set others free. Their place in the Church is now held by the bishops. Those who obtain the position of governing receive authority to loose and to bind. It is a great honour, but the burden is heavy. In truth it is difficult for one who does not know how to exercise control over his own life to become the judge of someone else's life.

Saint Gregory Dialogos

