

# Thomas Sunday

## Second Sunday of Pascha

14 / 27 April



**Troparion of Thomas Sunday, Tone 7:** While the tomb was sealed, Thou, O Life, didst shine forth from the grave, O Christ God. And while 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.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, both now and ever, and unto the ages of ages. Amen.

**Kontakion of Thomas Sunday, Tone 8:** With his searching right hand, Thomas did probe Thy life-bestowing side, O Christ God; for when Thou didst enter while the doors were shut, he cried out unto Thee with the rest of the disciples: Thou art my Lord and my God.

**The Holy and Glorious Apostle Thomas** - He was one of the twelve Great Apostles. Through his doubt of the Resurrection of the Lord Christ, a new confirmation was given of that wonderful and saving event, for the risen Lord appeared again to His disciples, to convince Thomas. The Lord said to Thomas: Reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into My side; and be not faithless, but believing', and Thomas cried: 'My Lord and my God! (John 20). After the descent of the Holy Spirit, when the apostles cast lots to see who would go where to preach the Gospel, it fell to Thomas to go to India. He was somewhat saddened at having to go so far away, but the Lord appeared to him and comforted him. In India, St Thomas converted many, both rich and poor, to the Christian faith, and founded a Church there, making priests and bishops. Among others, St Thomas converted two sisters, Tertiana and Mygdonia, wives of Indian princes. Both sisters were ill-treated for their faith by their husbands, who would not live with them after their baptism, and divorced them. Being freed from their marriages, they lived godly lives till their deaths. Dionysius and Pelagia, a couple at first betrothed to each other, heard the Apostle's teaching and did not live together, but devoted themselves to the ascetic life. Pelagia died a martyr for the Faith and Dionysius was made bishop by the Apostle. Prince Misdæus, the husband of Tertiana, whose wife and son Iuzanes Thomas baptised, condemned the Apostle to death, and sent five soldiers who ran him through with their lances, and thus the holy Apostle Thomas gave his soul into the hands of his Christ. Before his death, he, with the other apostles, was miraculously borne to Jerusalem for the funeral of the most holy Mother of God. Arriving late, he grieved bitterly and, at his request, the tomb of the Most Pure was opened, but the body was not there; the Lord had taken His Mother to His heavenly home. Thus St Thomas first, by his unbelief, confirmed the faith in the Resurrection of the Lord and then, by his late arrival, revealed to us the wondrous glorification of the Mother of God.

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**Vespers: Lord I have Cried, Tone 1, Pentecostarion on 10 (While the disciples were gathered); G/N: Pentecostarion (Thou didst come to Thy disciples, O Christ).  
Aposticha: Pentecostarion (O strange wonder), G/N: Pentecostarion (O Lover of mankind).**

### Matins Gospel I

**Epistle: Acts of the Apostles 5: 12 -20**

And through the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were done among the people. And they were all with one accord in Solomon's Porch. Yet none of the rest dared join them, but the people esteemed them highly. And believers were increasingly added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women, So that they brought the sick out into the streets and laid them on beds and couches, that at least the shadow of Peter passing by might fall on some of them. Also a multitude gathered from the surrounding cities to Jerusalem, bringing sick people and those who were tormented by unclean spirits, and they were all healed. Then the high priest rose up, and all those who were with him (which is the sect of the Sadducees), and they were filled with indignation, And laid their hands on the apostles and put them in the common prison. But at night an angel of the Lord opened the prison doors and brought them out, and said, "Go, stand in the temple and speak to the people all the words of this life."

## MANY SIGNS AND WONDERS WERE DONE AMONG THE PEOPLE

For though the Apostles themselves modestly ascribe it all to this cause, declaring that they did these things in the name of Christ, yet at the same time the life and noble conduct of the men helped to produce this effect ...Observe how he now no longer tells the number of those who believe: at such a rate was the faith making way even to an immense multitude, and also widely was the Resurrection proclaimed. So then 'the people magnified them': but they were now no longer lightly to be despised as once they were: for in a little moment, at a single turn of the scale, such have been the effects produced by the fisherman and the publican! Earth had become a heaven, for manner of life, for boldness of speech, for wonders, for all: like angels they were looked upon with wonder.

*St. John Chrysostom. Homily XII on Acts V B#55. p. 78.*

### **The Gospel According To St. John 20: 19-31**

Then, the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the midst, and said to them, "Peace be with you." When He had said this, He showed them His hands and His side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. So Jesus said to them again, "Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you." And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained." Now Thomas, called the Twin, one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. The other disciples therefore said to him, "We have seen the Lord." So he said to them, "Unless I see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe." And after eight days His disciples were again inside, and Thomas with them. Jesus came, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, "Peace to you!" Then He said to Thomas, "Reach your finger here, and look at My hands; and reach your hand here, and put it into My side. Do not be unbelieving, but believing." And Thomas answered and said to Him, "My Lord and my God!" Jesus said to him, "Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed." And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.

### RECEIVE THE HOLY SPIRIT

For great is the dignity of the priests. 'Whosoever sins,' it says, 'you remit, they are remitted unto them' ...And hold them very exceedingly in honour ...The priest, even if he rightly orders his own life, if he does not have an anxious care for yours, yes and that of all those around him, will depart with the wicked into hell; and often when not betrayed by his own conduct, he perishes by yours, if he has not rightly performed his part... 'For they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account' (Heb.13:17)...For this is the Faith, to receive things not seen, since 'Faith is the substance of things hoped for; the evidence of things not seen' (Heb. 11:1).

*St. John Chrysostom. Homily LXXXVI, 4 and LXXXVII, I on John XX. B#58, pp. 326,327*

"But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came. The other disciples therefore said unto him, We have seen the Lord. But he said unto them, Except I see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into His side, I will not believe (Jn. 20:24-25).

What does this mean, his "I will not believe"? Is it possible he could not believe the other eleven Apostles, his brothers? Is it possible they could lie to him? The whole evangelical life of Christ, all His miracles, Golgotha, the death on the Cross, they had experienced together. And now this joy which they all had experienced they wanted to share with him. No, this was not a lie. But He, Whom they had seen, was He really the same Christ? Was this not a vision or some other Christ? Was this not a mistake? And Thomas was afraid to lose what he had. And what did he have? This is what: during the years of fellowship with Christ, he had absorbed His teaching, the entire makeup of His life; and by now he was incapable of living any other way. It was painful for him not to have personal fellowship anymore with Christ; but by this time he understood that Christ came to earth in order to teach us the main commandment of God: love for God and neighbour, to perform it Himself, and to give us the strength to fulfill it.

In Paradise the first man fulfilled the commandment of God. The strength to fulfill this commandment of God he drew from eating the fruits of the Tree of Life. But then came the Fall. Paradise was lost, the Tree of Life was lost, and together with it, the strength for a godly life. And Christ came in

order to give us the New Testament Tree of Life—His Body and Blood. “This do in remembrance of Me,” He said at the Last Supper (Lk. 22:19).

Thomas knew the commandments of Christ, and he knew where to draw the strength to fulfill them. He lived this. Although he lived without the human presence of Christ, he lived in Christ. He was afraid to make a mistake. What if another Christ had appeared to the disciples, not the One in Whom he lived and continued to live? This is what his “I will not believe” meant. And on the eighth day after His Resurrection, the Lord again appeared to His disciples, while Thomas was also in the house, and allowed him to touch His wounds. And here resounded Thomas’s triumphant cry, which even now stirs our hearts: “My Lord and my God!” (Jn. 20:28). And here are the words of Christ which relate to you and me, opening a new era of faith which will remain until the end of the world: “Because thou hast seen Me, thou hast believed. Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed... But these are written,” adds the Apostle John the Divine, “that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through His name” (Jn. 20:29, 31).

*The One Thing Needful - Archbishop Andrei*

## Saints of the Week

**14 / 27 April — St Martin the Confessor, Pope of Rome** - He became Pope on July 5th, 649, at the time of a furious quarrel between the Orthodox and the Monothelite heretics. Constantine the Second, Heraclius' grandson, was on the throne at the time, and Paul was Patriarch of Constantinople. To restore peace in the Church, the Emperor himself wrote a dogmatic decree, the Typos, which leaned heavily towards heresy. Pope Martin summoned a Council of 105 bishops, at which the Emperor's statement was condemned. At the same time, the Pope wrote a letter to Patriarch Paul, begging him to uphold the purity of the Orthodox faith and to counsel the Emperor to reject the theories of the heretics. This letter infuriated both the Patriarch and the Emperor. The Emperor sent one of his generals, Olympius, to take the Pope to Constantinople in bonds. The general did not dare to bind the Pope with his own hands, but instructed one of his soldiers to kill him with the sword in church. But, when the soldier entered the church with his sword concealed, he was instantly blinded. So, by the providence of God, Martin escaped death. At that time, the Saracens fell upon Sicily, and Olympius went off there, where he died. Then, by the intrigues of the heretic Patriarch Paul, the Emperor sent a second general, Theodore, to bind and take the Pope on the charge that he, the Pope, was in collusion with the Saracens and that he did not reverence the most holy Mother of God. When the general arrived in Rome and read the accusation against the Pope, he replied that it was libel; that he had no contact of any sort with the Saracens, the opponents of Christianity, 'and whoever does not confess the most holy Mother of God and do her reverence, let him be damned in this age and in that which is to come'. But this did not affect the general's decision. The Pope was bound and taken to Constantinople, where he lay long in prison in great sickness, tortured by both anxiety and hunger, until he was finally sentenced to exile in Cherson, where he lived for two years before his death. He gave his soul into the hands of the Lord, for whom he had suffered so greatly, in 655. The evil Patriarch, Paul, died two years before him and, when the Emperor visited him on his deathbed, he smote his head against the wall, confessing with tears that he had greatly sinned against Pope Martin and asking the Emperor to set Martin free.

**Also commemorated on this day:** Venerable Fronton of Nitria; Martyr Ardalion the Actor; The 1,000 Martyrs of Persia, and with them Azat the Eunuch; St. Tassach, bishop of Raholp, Ireland; Christopher of St. Sabbas Monastery; Martyrs Anthony, John, and Eustathius of Vilnius; Martyr Demetrius at Tripolis; Righteous confessor Alexander Orlov, priest; 'Hodigitria of Vilnius' and 'Vilnius-Ostrobramsk' Icons of the Mother of God.

**15 / 28 April —The Holy Apostles Aristarchus, Pudens and Trophimus** - These were all numbered among the Seventy. Aristarchus was Bishop of Apamea in Syria. The Apostle Paul mentions him several times (Acts 19:29; Col. 4:10; Philem. v.24). He was seized in Ephesus, together with Gaius, by a mob that had risen up against Paul. The Apostle wrote to the Colossians: 'Aristarchus my fellow-prisoner saluteth you', and, in the Epistle to Philemon, Paul calls Aristarchus 'my fellow-labourer', together with Mark, Demas and Lucas. Pudens was an eminent Roman citizen. The Apostle Paul mentions him once (II Tim. 4:21). Pudens' house was first the refuge of the chief apostles and was then turned into a church dedicated to the Good Shepherd. Trophimus was an Asian (Acts 20:4), and accompanied St Paul on his journeys. In one place, Paul writes: 'Trophimus have I left at Miletum sick (II Tim. 4:21). During Nero's persecution, when the Apostle Paul was beheaded, these glorious martyrs were also beheaded.

**The Holy Martyr Sabas the Goth** - In Gothland, there was a brutal persecution against Christians. A certain prince of the Goths [Atharidus] entered the village where this devout Sabas lived and asked the villagers: "Are there any Christians living in your village?" They convinced him by swearing that there are none. Then Sabas stood before the prince and the people and said: " Let no one swear for me; I am a Christian!" Upon seeing Sabas, wretched and poor, the prince let him go in peace saying: " This one can neither harm nor benefit anyone." The following year, around Easter, a certain priest Sansala came to this village and celebrated the glorious Feast of the Pascha [Resurrection] with Sabas. Upon learning of this, the heathens suddenly attacked the home of Sabas and began to beat this holy man of God unmercifully with canes and, besides this, they dragged the naked body of Sabas through thorns and then tied both Sabas and Sansala to a tree and offered them the meat of the idolatrous sacrifices to eat. These men of God called to mind the words of the apostles and refused to eat of the unclean sacrifices of the devil. Finally, Prince Atharidus condemned Sabas to death and handed him over to the soldiers. Full of joy, Sabas arrived at the scaffold praising God. Recognizing him as a good man, the soldiers wanted to release him along the way and, because of that, Sabas became very sorrowful and said to the soldiers that they are duty-bound to carry out the order of the prince. The soldiers then brought him to the Mussovo river [at Targoviste, Romania, near Bucharest] tied a stone around his neck and tossed him into the water. His body was washed up along the shore. Later on, during the reign of Emperor Valens when the Greek Commander Ioannis Soranos was warring with the Goths, he discovered the body of Sabas and translated it to Cappadocia. Sabas, the saint, suffered at the age of 31 in the year 372 A.D.

**Also commemorated on this day:** Martyrs Basilissa and Anastasia in Rome; Martyr Sukia and his companions: Andrew, Anastasius, Thalaleus, Theodoretus, Ivchirion, Jordan, Quadratus, Lucian, Mimnenus, Nerangius, Polyeuctus, James, Phocas, Domentianus, Victor, and Zosimus; St. Leonidas, bishop of Athens; Venerable Ruadhan, abbot of Lothra, Ireland; Right-believing Prince Mstislav (Theodore in baptism) of Kiev; Martyr Basil of Poiana Marului; Righteous Daniel of Achinsk, Siberia; New Hieromartyr Alexander Gnevushev, priest.

**16 / 29 April — The Holy Martyrs Agapia, Chionia and Irene** - They were sisters from the region of Aquileia. When the Emperor Diocletian was staying in Aquileia, he ordered that the famous spiritual guide, Chrysogonus, be executed. An old priest named Zoilus received a vision in which he was shown where the body of Chrysogonus lay unburied. The old man hurried off, found the body of the martyr, placed it in a coffin and carried it to his home. On the thirtieth day after that, St Chrysogonus appeared to him and told him that the three maidens would be martyred in the next nine days, and that he, Zoilus, would himself enter into rest during that time. Anastasia the Seer also received the same tidings in a vision sent by Chrysogonus, who had been her teacher. The elder Zoilus did indeed find his rest after nine days, and the three sisters were brought to trial before the Emperor. The Emperor urged the holy maidens to worship idols, but they all refused, confessing their firm faith in Christ. Irene told the Emperor that it was ridiculous to bow down to things made of wood and stone, made to order at an agreed price by the hands of a mortal man. The furious Emperor flung them into prison. Now, when the Emperor travelled to Macedonia, he took all his slaves and servants with him, including the three sisters. He gave them to Dulcitus, a general, for torture. Inflamed with a dark passion, he desired to defile the maidens, but, when he tried to go into the prison, he lost his mind and fell upon the pots and cauldrons in front of the gate, embracing and kissing them, and was completely blackened with soot. When the Emperor heard of this happening, he ordered another general to undertake the trial of the sisters. After terrible torture, the judge condemned the first two sisters to death by fire, but kept Irene for a time, hoping to defile her. But, when he sent Irene to the brothel along with some soldiers, an angel of God turned the soldiers back and led her out onto a high hill. The next day the general went out to the hill with his soldiers and, being unable to climb it, ordered that Irene be shot at with arrows. St Anastasia gathered all three bodies together in one place and gave them burial. They suffered for Christ their King and Lord in about 304.

**Also commemorated on this day:** Martyr Leonidas and with him Chariessa, Nika, Galina, Callista (Calisa), Nunechia, Basilissa, and Theodora; Martyr Irene of Corinth; Hieromartyrs Felix, bishop of Spoleto, Januarius, priest, and Martyrs Fortunatus and Septeminus of Lycaonia; Venerable Theodora (Princess Bassa in the world) of Nizhni-Novgorod; Blessed John of Verkhoturys, fool-for-Christ; Martyr Michael Vurliot; Monk-martyr Christopher of Adrianople; New Hieromartyr Constantine (Zhdanov), priest; 'Tambov,' 'Ilyin-Chernigov,' and 'Shuya-Smolensk' Icons of the Mother of God.

**17 / 30 April — The Hieromartyr Simeon, Bishop in Persia** - In the time of the wicked King Savori, or Sapor, Simeon was tortured for Christ together with two of his priests, Audel and Ananias. The King's eunuch, Ustazan, who had first denied Christ but then, moved by the reprimand of St Simeon, again confessed the true Faith before the King, was executed before they were. A thousand other Christians were also led to execution with St Simeon, who purposely stood a little back so that he should be the last to die, and so be able to encourage the other Christians right to the end and keep them from wavering through fear of death. When the priest Ananias laid his head on the block, he was trembling all over. But the King's clerk, Fusik, who was himself secretly a Christian, began to encourage him, saying: 'Don't be frightened, old man. Shut your eyes and be a man, and you'll see the divine light.' As soon as he had said this, it was seen that he was a Christian and he was denounced to the King. The King wore him down with harsh tortures, and also his daughter, the maiden Askitria. St Simeon was eventually beheaded, after having seen his flock into the other world. The following year, on Great Friday, the King's beloved eunuch, Azat, was slain for Christ, along with another thousand of the faithful. Then the King grieved for his eunuch and gave up killing any more Christians. They all suffered with honour for Christ their King and Lord in about 341.

**St Acacius, Bishop of Melitene** - lived the ascetical life in the place where he was born, i.e., in Melitene, Armenia. Blessed Otreius, bishop of that city, who participated at the Second Ecumenical Council [Constantinople 381 A.D.], ordained him a presbyter. Following the death of Otreius, Acacius became a bishop. He participated at the Third Ecumenical Council [Ephesus 431 A.D.], which condemned the evil blasphemy of Nestorius against the Mother of God. Here, together with St. Cyril of Alexandria, Acacius zealously fought for the purity of the Orthodox Faith. St. Acacius possessed much Grace from God and worked many miracles. After long and zealous service to God, Acacius died peacefully in the year 435 A.D.

**Holy Martyr Donan, an Irish monk of Iona under Columba & 52 monks with him at his monastery on the Isle of Eigg** - Inner Hebrides, Scotland - while the monks were celebrating Liturgy on Easter night 618 a gang of robbers, possibly Vikings, arrived on the island and herded the monks into the refectory and set fire to it. Those who tried to escape were killed by the sword. At least eleven Scottish churches bear his name.

**Venerable Zosima of Solovetsk** - The Monk Zosima, Hegumen of Solovetsk, - a great luminary of the Russian North, was the founder of monastic common-life on Solovetsk Island. He was born in Novgorod diocese, in the village of Tolvui near Lake Onega. From his early years he was raised in piety, and after the death of his parents Gavriil and Varvara he gave away his possessions and accepted monastic tonsure.

In search of a solitary place the monk set off to the shores of the White Sea and at the mouth of the Suma he met the Monk German (Comm. 30 July), who told him about a desolate sea island, where formerly he had spent six years with the Monk Savvatii (Comm. 27 September). In about the year 1436 the hermits, felicitously having made the sea voyage, landed at the Solovetsk islands. God blessed the place of their settlement with a vision to the Monk Zosima of a beautiful church in the sky. The monks with their own hands built cells and an enclosure, and they began to cultivate and sow the land. One time in late Autumn the Monk German set off to the mainland for necessary provisions. Because of the Autumn weather he was not able to return. The Monk Zosima remained all Winter alone on the island. He suffered many a temptation in struggle with the devils. Death by starvation threatened him, but miraculously two strangers having appeared left him a supply of bread, flour and oil. In Spring the Monk German returned to Solovetsk together with the fisherman Mark, and he brought supplies of food and rigging-tackle for fish nets.

When several hermits had gathered on the island, the Monk Zosima constructed for them a small wooden church in honour of the Transfiguration (Preobrazhenie) of the Lord, together with a refectory. At the request of the Monk Zosima, an hegumen was sent from Novgorod to the newly formed monastery with antimins for the church. Thus occurred the start of the reknown Solovetsk monastery. In the severe conditions of the remote island the monks knew how to arrange their economy. But the hegumens, sent from Novgorod to Solovetsk, could not withstand life in the unwontedly harsh conditions, and so the brethren chose as hegumen the Monk Zosima.

The Monk Zosima concerned himself with the building up of the inner life of the monastery, and he introduced a strict life-in-common. In 1465 he transferred to Solovetsk from the River Vyg the relics of the Monk Savvatii. The monastery suffered vexation from the Novgorod boyars (nobles), who confiscated catches of fish from the monks. The monk was obliged to set off for Novgorod and seek the protection of the archbishop. On the advice of the archbishop, he made the rounds of homes of the boyars and requested them not to allow the ruin of the monastery. The influential and rich boyarina Martha Boretskaya impiously gave orders to throw out the Monk Zosima, but then repented her action and invited him to a meal, during the time of which he suddenly beheld, that six of the illustrious boyars sat without their heads. The Monk Zosima told about this vision to his disciple Daniel and predicted for the boyars an immanent death. The prediction was fulfilled in the year 1478, when during the taking of Novgorod by Ivan III (1462-1505) the boyars were executed.

Shortly before death the monk prepared himself a grave, in which he was buried beyond the altar of the Transfiguration church (+ 17 April 1478). Later on, over his relics was built a chapel. His relics together with the relics of the Monk Savvatii were transferred on 8 August 1566 into a chapel consecrated in their memory at the Transfiguration cathedral.

Many a miracle was witnessed to, when the Monk Zosima with the Monk Savvatii appeared to fishermen perishing in the depths of the sea. The Monk Zosima is likewise a patron of bee-keeping and preserver of bee-hives, and to him is even bestowed the title "Bee-keeper" ("Pchel'nik"). To the Monk Zosima often hasten those in sickness. The many hospital churches dedicated to him testify to the great curative power of his prayer before God.

**Also commemorated on this day:** Martyr Adrian of Corinth; Venerable Agapitus, bishop of Rome; Venerable Ephraim, bishop of Atsquri, Georgia; Finding of the relics of Venerable Alexander, abbot of Svir; Saint Macarios (Notaras) of Corinth; Venerable Paisius of Kiev, fool-for-Christ; Righteous confessor Michael Novitsky, priest; New Hieromartyr Theodore Nedosekin, priest .

**18 April / 1 May — Our Holy Father John** - He was a disciple of St Gregory of Decapolis. In the time of the iconoclast heresy, the Emperor Leo the Armenian put John to torture, together with his teacher, Gregory, and Joseph the Hymnographer. When Gregory finished his earthly course, John became abbot of the Decapolite monastery in Constantinople. Becoming abbot, he intensified his asceticism for the sake of the Kingdom of God. He died peacefully in about 820. After his death, St Joseph buried him near the grave of St Gregory.

**The Holy Martyr John the New of Ioannina** - born in Ioannina, once the capitol city of the Emperor Pyrrhus. When his impoverished parents died, the young John moved to Constantinople and there continued his occupation, for he was a craftsman. Not long before that, the Turks surrounded Constantinople and many Christians, out of fear, denied Christ and embraced the Islamic faith. St. John had his workshop in the midst of these converts to Islam. The more the young John burned with love for Christ the Lord, the more openly he exposed himself as a Christian before these traitors of Christ. He began to argue with them about faith and, finally, rebuked them for their betrayal of Christ. They dragged him before the judge and falsely accused John, alleging that he had earlier embraced Islam, and that he again reverted to Christianity. After he was tortured and beaten with rods and iron ramrods, they cast him into prison. The next day was the Feast of the Resurrection of Christ and, again, they brought him out for further torture and John emerged singing: "Christ is risen from the dead!" To his torturers, he bravely said: " Do what you want in order to send me as soon as possible from this transient life to eternal life. I am Christ's slave, I follow Christ, for Christ I die that I may live with Him!" After that, John was bound in chains and brought to the place of burning. Upon seeing a large fire prepared for him, John ran and leaped into the flames. His torturers seeing how he loved death in the fire removed him from the fire and sentenced him to be beheaded. After they beheaded him, they threw his head and body into the fire. Later on, Christians leafed through the ashes and gathered some of the remains of his honourable and wonder-working relics and interred them in the Great Church [Agia Sophia - Church of the Holy Wisdom] in Constantinople. Thus, St. John of Ioannina died a martyr's death and received the glorious martyr's wreath on April 18, 1526 A. D.

**Also commemorated on this day:** Martyrs Victor, Zoticus, Zeno, Acindynus, Severian, and Caesarius; Venerable Basil (Ratishvili); St. Cosmas, bishop of Chalcedon, and his companion St. Auxentius; Venerable Anthony , Euthymius, and Felix of Karelia; Martyr John Koulikas; New Hieromartyr Bessarion Selinin, priest; New Nun-martyr Tamara (Satsi); 'Maximov' Icon of the Mother of God.

**19 April / 2 May — Our Holy Father John of the Ancient Caves** - lived a life of asceticism in the so-called "old caves," the "old Lavra" of Chariton the Great in Palestine. Having loved Christ the Lord with all his heart, with all his soul and with all his mind, John, at an early age, began to travel to the holy places and to listen to the instructions and counsels of the holy men. Finally, he settled in the Caves of Chariton, where he gave himself to rigorous asceticism spending days and years in fasting, prayer, vigils, continuously meditating on death, and teaching himself humility. As a good ripened fruit, he was plucked by death and took up habitation in Paradise. He lived and died in the eighth century.

**The Holy Martyrs Christopher, Theonas and Antoninus** - young officers serving under Emperor Diocletian. When St. George the Great Martyr was being tortured, they witnessed his sufferings as well as the miracles which occurred at that time. Seeing all of this, they came before the emperor, laid down their arms, removed their military belts and bravely confessed the Name of the Lord Jesus. For that, they were subjected to great torture and finally were tossed into the fire, where their bodies were consumed while their souls went to God into eternal joy. They honourably suffered in Nicomedia in the year 303 A.D.

**St Tryphun, Patriarch of Constantinople** - The Emperor Romanus, who reigned over Byzantium at the beginning of the tenth century had a son, Theophylact, who was sixteen years old when Patriarch Stephen died. The emperor wanted his son to be elevated as patriarch for he had promised him [his son] this spiritual calling from his youth. Because his son was a minor, the emperor was ashamed to do this. The patriarchal throne was assumed by Tryphun a simple but chaste and pious old man. Tryphun remained on the throne for three years. When the son of the emperor reached his twentieth year, the emperor thought, to remove Tryphun at any price and to install his son as patriarch. The saint of God, Tryphun, did not want to relinquish his throne voluntarily, for no other reason, because he considered it to be a great scandal that such a young man be elevated to such a responsible and burdensome position as that of being patriarch. Through the intrigue of a nefarious bishop, the signature of the innocent Tryphun was extracted on a blank sheet of paper. Later on, in the imperial court, above that signature, the alleged resignation of the patriarch was written which the emperor decreed. As a result of this, there arose a great confusion in the Church, for the laity and the clergy stood by Tryphun, the godly man. The emperor then forcibly removed the aged patriarch and sent him to a monastery and, his son, Theophylact, was elevated as patriarch. St. Tryphun lived as an ascetic in this monastery for two years and five months and presented himself before the Lord in the year 933 A.D.

**Hieromartyr Alphege, archbishop of Canterbury (1012)** - he became a monk at Deerhurst but after some years retired to be a hermit in Somerset. In 984 he became bishop of Winchester and he became known for his personal austerity and lavish almsgiving. In 994 King Ethelred sent him to parley with the Danes Anlaf and Swein, who had raided both London and Wessex. The Anglo-Saxons paid tribute but Anlaf became a Christian and promised he would never again come to England 'with warlike intent.' This promise was kept. In 1006 he succeeded Aelfric as archbishop of Canterbury. Meanwhile the Danes continued to overrun southern England. They besieged Canterbury and imprisoned Alphege and others

and demanded a ransom of 3000 pounds. Alphege refused to pay and forbade his people to do so. The Danes were so infuriated that, after a feast at which they got drunk, and killed him with the bones of oxen: an axeman delivered the final blow. His was originally buried in St. Paul's Cathedral, London however in 1023 his body was translated to Canterbury Cathedral. In 1105 his body was found to be incorrupt.

**St. Matrona the Blind of Moscow** - She was born in 1881 to a poor family in the village of Sebino-Epifaniskaya (now Kimovski). Though she was born blind — her eyes were without pupils — she showed a gift of spiritual insight from an early age, and by her prayers healed many who came to her. At about the age of fourteen she made a pilgrimage to several Russian holy sites. When she came to Kronstadt to receive the blessing of St John (20 Dec.), the holy priest, who had never met her, cried out "Matrona, come here!" and proclaimed "She will be my heir, the eighth pillar of Russia." At the age of seventeen she was stricken with paralysis and was never able to walk again. For the rest of her life she lived in a room filled with icons, where she would sit cross-legged on her bed and receive visitors. She never bemoaned her blindness or paralysis; once she said "A day came when God opened my eyes, and I saw the light of the sun, the stars and all that exists in the world: the rivers, the forests, the sea and the whole creation." In 1925 she settled in Moscow. After the death of her mother in 1945, she moved frequently, living secretly in the homes of the faithful. Despite this, throngs of believers found their way to her for counsel and healing. The Communist authorities, knowing her holy influence, sought many times to arrest her; but she always knew in advance when they were coming, and would be moved to a different secret location. She fasted much, slept rarely, and it is said that her forehead was dented by the countless signs of the Cross that she made. Of the persecution of the Church by the Communists, she simply said that this was due to the sins and lack of faith of the Christians, and added, "Difficult times are our lot, but we Christians must choose the Cross. Christ has placed us on His sleigh, and He will take us where He will." Having foreseen the day of her death, she said, "Come close, all of you, and tell me of your troubles as though I were alive! I'll see you; I'll hear you, and I'll come to your aid." She reposed in peace on April 19, 1952 (May 2 on the new calendar). Many miracles occurred at her tomb. In 1998 her relics were moved to the women's Monastery of the Protecting Veil of the Mother of God, where thousands of Orthodox Christians come to venerate her and, as she asked, to bring her their problems and concerns as though she were alive on earth. She was glorified by the Church of Russia in 1999, for local veneration in the Diocese of Moscow.

**Also commemorated on this day:** Hieromartyr Paphnutius of Jerusalem; St. George the Confessor, bishop of Antioch in Pisidia; Martyr Omir of Jerusalem; Venerable Symeon the Barefoot; Uncovering of the relics of St. Joachim, founder of Opochna Monastery in Pskov; Monk-martyr Agathangelus of Esphigmenou; New Hieromartyr Victor (Ostrovidov), bishop of Glazov; Venerable Nicephorus, abbot of Katabad.

**20 April / 3 May — Our Holy Father Theodore Trichinas** - A citizen of Constantinople, he was the son of wealthy parents. He left parents, home and riches while still a young man and settled in a remote monastery in Thrace, where he undertook the most rigorous ascetic life. He slept on a stone so that he might have less sleep; he was always bareheaded and dressed in a hair-shirt, from which he was called 'Trichinas' or 'hairy'. Because of his great and self-inflicted sufferings for the sake of his soul's salvation, God granted him the gift of working miracles, both in his lifetime and after his death, and he died peacefully in about 400. Healing myrrh flowed from his relics.

**The Holy Apostle Zacchaeus** - At first, Zacchaeus was a tax collector and a sinner. When our Lord saw him in Jericho in a tree and entered his home, Zacchaeus was brought to repentance. Later on, Zacchaeus followed the Apostle Peter who appointed him bishop of Caesarea in Palestine where he faithfully served the Gospel and died peacefully.

**St. Caedwalla, king of the West Saxons (689)** - he became king by conquest being notoriously violent but then abdicated and went to Rome to become a Christian. He was baptised on Holy Saturday 689 being given the name Peter by Pope Sergius. Soon afterwards he was taken ill and died, still wearing his white baptismal robes. He was aged 30.

**Also commemorated on this day:** St. Betran, bishop of Scythia Minor; St. Theotimus, bishop of Tomis in Moesia (Lesser Scythia); Sts. Gregory and Anastasius, patriarchs of Antioch; Hieromartyr Anastasius II, patriarch of Antioch; Venerable Anastasius of Sinai; Venerable Athanasius and Ioasaph abbots of Meteora; Venerable Alexander of Oshevensk; Child-martyr Gabriel of Slutsk; St. Theodosius (Ganitsky), confessor, bishop of Kolomensk; Translation of the Relics of St. Nikolai (Velimirović) of Žiča; 'Kipiazhszkaya' and 'Cyprus' Icons of the Mother of God.



## ‡ Daily Scripture Readings ‡

**Monday** - Acts 3:19-26; John 2:1-11

**Tuesday** - Acts 4:1-10; John 3:16-21; 1 Corinthians 15:39-57 Departed; John 5:24-30 Departed

**Wednesday** - Acts 4:13-22; John 5:17-24

**Thursday** - Acts 4:23-31; John 5:24-30

**Friday** - Epistle: Acts 5:1-11; Gospel: John 5:30-6:2

**Saturday** - Acts 5:21-33; John 6:14-27

## What is a Radonitsa?

"On this day, the Tuesday of St. Thomas week, according to the order instituted by our Holy Fathers, we call to remembrance, in Paschal joy, all those who have died from the beginning of the ages in faith and in the hope of resurrection and life eternal.

"Having previously celebrated the radiant feast of Christ's glorious Resurrection, the faithful commemorate the dead today with the pious intent to share the great joy of this Pascha feast with those who have departed this life in the hope of their own resurrection. This is the same blessed joy with which the dead heard our Lord announce His victory over death when He descended into Hades, thus leading forth by the hand the righteous souls of the Old Covenant into Paradise. This is the same un hoped-for joy the Holy Myrrhbearing Women experienced when discovering the empty tomb and the undisturbed grave clothes. In addition, this is the same bright joy the Holy Apostles encountered in the Upper Room where Christ appeared though the doors were closed. In short, this feast is a kindred joy, to celebrate the luminous Resurrection with our Orthodox forefathers who have fallen asleep.

"There is evidence of the commemoration of the dead today in the writings of the Church Fathers. St. John Chrysostom mentions the commemoration of the dead performed on Tuesday of St. Thomas week in his "Homily on the Cemetery and the Cross."

"Today, the faithful departed are remembered in Divine Liturgies, 'koliva' is prepared and blessed in the churches in memory of those who have fallen asleep, and the Orthodox graves in cemeteries are blessed by the priests and visited by the faithful. On this day alms are given to the poor. Furthermore, it should be noted that due to the great spiritual joy this jubilant commemoration bears, it is called in the Slavonic tongue, 'Radonitsa,' or Day of Rejoicing."

*From the "Synaxarion of the Lenten Triodion and Penecostarion" (published in 1999 by HDM Press, Rives Junction, Michigan) on "Radonitsa"*

## HOMILY

### -About the test by Thomas-

**"My Lord and my God" (St. John 20:28).**

When the Apostle Thomas felt the wounds of the Lord Jesus, he cried out: **"My Lord and my God!"**

When Mary Magdalene heard the voice of the resurrected One in her soul, she cried out: **"My Lord and my God!"**

When Saul saw the light and heard the words of the resurrected One, he acknowledged: **" My Lord and my God!"**

When the pagans, in amazement, observed how the countless numbers of martyrs joyfully undergo pains and asked them: "Who is this Christ?" All of them replied: **"My Lord and my God!"**

When the scoffers ridiculed the army of ascetics and asked them: "Who is He, for Whom they took upon themselves the awesome burden of mortification? They all had one answer: **"My Lord and my God!"**

When the scorners derided the virgins who vowed their virginity and asked them: "Who is He for Whom they renounced marriage?" They all had one answer: **"My Lord and my God!"**

When the avaricious in astonishment asked the very wealthy: "Who is He for Whom they distribute their wealth and become beggarly?" All of them replied, one and the same: **"My Lord and my God!"**

Some have seen Him and have said: **"My Lord and my God!"** Some have only heard Him and said: **"My Lord and my God!"** Some have only felt Him and said: **"My Lord and my God!"** Some have only observed Him in the fabric of events and in the destinies of peoples and said: **"My Lord and my God!"** Some have felt His presence in their lives and cried out: **"My Lord and my God!"** Some have recognized Him by some sign, on themselves or on others, and cried out: **"My Lord and my God!"** Still some have only heard about Him from others and believed and cried out: **"My Lord and my God!"** Truly, these last ones are the most blessed!

Let us also exclaim, with all our hearts, regardless of how we have come to recognize Him or how we have come to learn about Him: **"My Lord and my God!"**

**To You be glory and thanks always. Amen.**