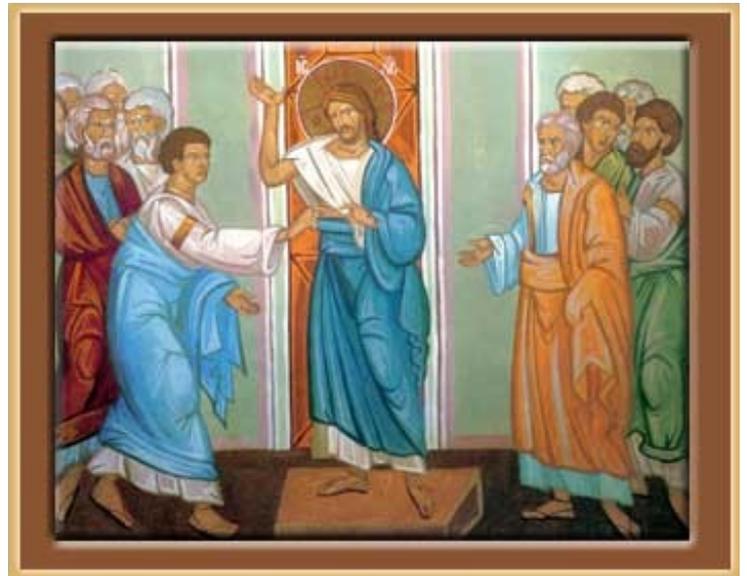


# Thomas Sunday

## Second Sunday of Pascha

29 April / 12 May



### St. Thomas Sunday, Troparion, Tone VII

— When the tomb was sealed, Thou, the Life, O Christ our God, didst rise up from the grave; and when the doors were closed, Thou, the Resurrection of all, didst stand among the disciples, and through them renew a right spirit in us, according to Thy mercy.

**Kontakion, Tone VIII** — With his inquisitive right hand, Thomas probed Thy life-giving side, O Christ our God. For when Thou didst enter, the doors being shut, with the rest of the Apostles he cried to Thee: Thou art my Lord and my God.

**Kontakion of the Martyrs, Tone II: "Seeking the highest..."** — The steadfast and most splendid choir of the nine martyrs,/ who confessed the three-Sunned Godhead,/ cried out to Him at the tribunal:/ "O Master, we offer our blood, souls and bodies to thee as an unblemished sacrifice!// Number us among Thy heavenly choir, in that Thou art our merciful 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 Misdaeus, 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.

## **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, 1 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

**29 April / 12 May — St Basil of Ostrog** - born in Popovo Selo in Herzegovina, of simple and devout parents. From his youth he was filled with love for the Church of God, and when he grew up he went to the monastery of the Dormition of the Mother of God at Trebinje, and became a monk. As such, he quickly became known for his serious and rare ascetic life, for he loaded himself with ascetic practices, each harder than the last. He was later chosen and consecrated as Bishop of Zahum and Skenderia, much against his will. As a bishop, he first lived in the monastery at Tvrđos, whence, as a good pastor, he confirmed his flock in the Orthodox faith, keeping it from the cruelty of the Turks and the guile of the Latins. But when he was too pressed-upon by his enemies, and when Tvrđos was destroyed by the Turks, Basil moved to Ostrog, where he lived in strict asceticism, protecting his flock by his unceasing and loving prayers. (A new church, on the ruins of the old Tvrđos, has been built in our day by Nikolai Runjevac, from the village of Poljica near Trebinje—a wonderful foundation in the sight of God and His people) He went peacefully to the Lord in the 16th century, leaving his whole and healing body, uncorrupt and wonderworking, to the present day. The miracles at the grave of St Basil are without number. Both Christians and Moslems hasten to his relics and find healing of the gravest sicknesses and sufferings. A great national gathering takes place there every year at Pentecost.

**Also commemorated on this day:** Sladkoe lobzanie" Icon of the Most Holy Theotokos (9th c.) (movable holiday on the Antipascha). Nine Martyrs at Cyzicus: Theognes, Rufus, Antipater, Theostichus, Artemas, Magnus, Theodotus, Thaumasius, and Philemon (3rd c.). Venerable Memnon the Wonderworker of Corfu (2nd c.). Venerable Nektarius of Optina (1928). Venerable Amphilochius of Pochaev (1970). Martyrs Diodorus and Rhodopianus, deacon, at Aphrodisia in Anatolia (284-305). Saint John of Romania. Holy Martyrs of Lazeti (Georgia) (17th-18th c.). Venerable Secundellas the Deacon, in Gaul (Gaul). Apostles Jason and Sosipater of the Seventy (Greek). St. John, metropolitan of Thebes, the new merciful one (12th c.) (Greek). St. John Tolaius, patriarch of Alexandria (482). St. Nicetas, abbot of Synnada (9th c.). St. Arsenius, archbishop of Suzdal (1627). New Martyr Stanko the Shepherd of Montenegro (1712). St. Nicephorus of Sebaste (9thc.). St. Endelienta (Endellion), nun-recluse of Cornwall.

**30 April / 13 May — The Holy Apostle James** - the son of Zebedee and brother of St. John the Theologian, he was one of the Twelve. At the call of the Lord Jesus, he left his fishing nets and his father and, together with John, immediately followed Christ. He was one of the three apostles to whom the Lord revealed the greatest mysteries: before whom He was transfigured on Tabor and before whom He was in agony in the Garden of Gethsemane before His Passion. After receiving the Holy Spirit, he preached the Gospel in various places, going as far as Spain. On his return from Spain, a violent quarrel broke out between the Jews and himself on the Holy Scriptures, and, being unable to withstand him, they hired a magician, Hermogenes. But Hermogenes and Philip his pupil were overcome by the power and truth that James preached, and were baptised. Then the Jews denounced him to Herod, and persuaded one Josias to slander the Apostle. This Josias, seeing James's manly bearing and hearing his clear preaching of the truth, repented and came to faith in Christ. When James was condemned to death, this Josias was also condemned. Mounting the scaffold, Josias begged James's forgiveness for the sin of slander, and James embraced him, kissing him and saying: 'Peace be to thee, and forgiveness.' And they both laid their heads under the sword and were beheaded for the sake of the Lord whom they had loved and served. St James suffered in Jerusalem in the year 45. His body was taken to Spain, where to this day miracles of healing are performed at his tomb.

**St Donatus** - bishop of Evira in Albania. He was endowed by God with the great blessing of miracle-working, by which he performed many miracles for the benefit of the people. Donatus changed bitter water into sweet water; brought down rain during a drought; healed the king's daughter of insanity; and resurrected a man from the dead. This deceased man had repaid his debt to a certain creditor. This unscrupulous creditor wanted the debt to be repaid a second time and, wanting to benefit from the death of his debtor, he came to his widow and demanded that the debt be repaid immediately. The widow wept and complained to the bishop. St. Donatus warned the creditor to wait, at least, until the man was buried and then the debt would be discussed. The creditor angrily insisted his own. Then Donatus approached the dead man, touched him and cried out: "Arise brother and see what you have with your creditor!" The dead

man rose and with a frightening glance looked at his lender and related to him the time, when and where he had repaid the debt. He also sought from the lender his written receipt. The frightened lender then placed a document into his hands and the enlivened deceased tore it up and again lay down and died. St. Donatus died peacefully in very old age and took up habitation with the Lord in the year 387 A.D. His relics repose in Evira, Albania and, even today, benefit the faithful.

**St Ignatius (Brianchaninov), Bishop of Stavropol and Kavkaz (1867)** - He was born in 1807 into Russian aristocracy — his father was a wealthy provincial gentleman. From a very early age he felt strongly called to monastic life, but at that time it was almost unheard of for a nobleman to take such a path, and Dimitri (as he was called in baptism) entered the Pioneer Military School in St Petersburg. There he distinguished himself, and even attracted the attention of Grand Duke Nicholas Pavlovich, an event which would profoundly affect his later life. Despite his excellent record at the academy, young Dimitri still longed only for the things of God. In 1827 he graduated from the school and was commissioned as an officer in the army, but soon fell critically ill, and was granted a discharge. This proved to be providential: when he recovered his health, he immediately became a novice, living at several different monasteries and coming under the spiritual care of Starets Leonid, one of the celebrated fathers of the Optina monastery. In 1821 he took his monastic vows and received the name Ignatius. Soon afterwards he was ordained to the priesthood. Soon after the newly-professed Fr Ignatius had entered the seclusion that he sought, Tsar Nicholas I — the former Grand Duke Nicholas — visited the Pioneer Military School and asked what had become of the promising cadet he had met a few years before. When the Tsar learned that the former Dimitri was now a monk, he sought him out, had him elevated to the rank of Archimandrite (at age 26!) and made him Superior of the St Sergius Monastery in St Petersburg. Tsar Nicholas instructed him to make the monastery a model for all Russian religious communities. Though he had desired only a life of solitude and prayer, the new Archimandrite devoted himself conscientiously to fulfilling the Tsar's charge. The monastery did in fact become a kind of standard for Russian monasticism, and its abbot acquired many spiritual children, not only among his monks but among the laity in the capital.

After twenty-four years as superior of the monastery, St Ignatius was elevated to the episcopate in 1857, first as Bishop of Stavropol, then as Bishop of Kavkaz. Only four years later (aged 54) he resigned and spent the rest of his life in reclusion at the Nicolo-Babaevsky Monastery in the diocese of Kostromo. There he continued the large body of spiritual writings for which he is well known. His printed Works fills five volumes; of these, at least two major works have been translated into English: *On the Prayer of Jesus* and *The Arena: an offering to contemporary monasticism*. Both are gems of spiritual writing, profitable to every serious Orthodox Christian. St Ignatius reposed in peace in 1867. He was glorified in 1988 by the Moscow Patriarchate, during the millennial celebrations in that year. Saints Andrei Rublev, Xenia of Petersburg, Theophan the Recluse and others were glorified in the same observances.

**St. Erconwald, bishop of London (c.693)** - Born in East Anglia; died at Barking, April 30, c. 686-693; second feast day on May 13. Erconwald is reputed to have been of royal blood, son of Annas or Offa. In 675, Saint Theodore of Canterbury appointed Erconwald bishop of the East Saxons with his see in London and extending over Essex and Middlesex. His episcopate was the most important in that diocese between that of Saint Mellitus and Saint Dunstan. His shrine in Saint Paul's Cathedral was a much visited pilgrimage site during the Middle Ages, where miracles were reported until the 16th century, but little is known of his life except that he founded a monastery at Chertsey in Surrey, which he governed, and a convent at Barking in Essex to which he appointed as abbess his sister, Ethelburga. Erconwald took some part in the reconciliation of Saint Theodore with Saint Wilfrid. In Saint Bede's time, miracles were recorded as a result of touching the couch used by Erconwald in his later years. At his death, Erconwald's relics were claimed by Barking, Chertsey, and London; he was finally buried in Saint Paul's Cathedral in London, which he had enlarged. The relics escaped the fire of 1087 and were placed in the crypt. November 14, 1148, they were translated to a new shrine behind the high altar, from where they were again moved on February 1, 1326 He is portrayed in art as a bishop in a small 'chariot' (the Saxon equivalent of a bath chair) in which he travelled because of his gout. Sometimes there is a woman touching it or he may be shown with Saint Ethelburga of Barking (Roeder). Erconwald is invoked against gout.

**Also commemorated on this day:** Uncovering of the relics (1558) of St. Nicetas, bishop of Novgorod (1108). Uncovering of the relics of Hieromartyr Basil, bishop of Amasea (322). Martyr Maximus of Ephesus. New Martyr Argyra of Prussa (1725). Venerable Clement the Hymnographer, abbot of the Studion (9th c.). Icon of the Most Holy Theotokos "Of the Passion". Translation of the relics of Venerable Sabbas, abbot of Zvenigorod Monastery. Martyrs Eutropius and Estelle of Saintes (3rd. c.) (Gaul). Sts. Quintian and Atticus (Greek).

**1 / 14 May — Radonitsa - The Holy Prophet Jeremiah** - born 650 years before Christ in the village of Anathoth, not far from Jerusalem, he began to prophesy at an early age, during the reign of King Josiah (Jer. 1:1-19). He preached repentance to the King and nobles and the false prophets and priests, and, in the time of that King Josiah, barely escaped death at the hands of the enraged nobles. He prophesied to King Jehoiakim that his burial would be like that of an ass; that is, he would be cast dead out of Jerusalem and his body would be for a long time dragged around the ground without burial (22:18). For this, Jeremiah was thrown into prison. Being unable to write there, he sent for Baruch, who stood outside the window of the prison while Jeremiah dictated to him. When the King read this prophecy, he took the paper in fury and threw it into the fire. By the providence of God, Jeremiah was saved from prison, and the words of the prophecy were fulfilled upon Jehoiakim. He prophesied to King Jeconiah that he would be carried off to Babylon with his whole family and that he would die there, all of which quickly came to pass (24:1; 27:20). Under King Zedekiah, he put a yoke on his neck and walked through Jerusalem prophesying the fall of the city and slavery under the yoke of Babylon (27:2). He wrote to the slaves in Babylon, telling them that they would not return to Jerusalem but would remain for seventy years in Babylon, which came to pass (25:11). In the valley of Topnet, near Jerusalem, where the Jews had brought children to the idols for sacrifice, Jeremiah took a whole pot in his hands and smashed it in front of the people, prophesying the imminent crushing of the Jewish Kingdom (19:10-11). The Babylonians soon over-ran Jerusalem, killed King Zedekiah, burned the city down and utterly destroyed it. They slaughtered an enormous number of Jews in the valley of Topnet, in the place where children had died as sacrifices to idols and where the prophet had broken the pot. Jeremiah, with the Levites, took the Ark out of the Temple and bore it off to the mountain of Nebo, where Moses had died, and hid it in a cave. He hid the fire from the altar in a deep well. He was forced by some Jews to go with them to Egypt, where he lived for four years and was then stoned to death by his countrymen. He prophesied to the Egyptians the destruction of their idols and the coming there of a Virgin with a Child. There is a tradition that Alexander the Great himself visited the grave of the Prophet Jeremiah,\* and ordered that his body be moved and buried in Alexandria. \*The Egyptians almost deified St Jeremiah, and they therefore buried him as a king. He was regarded as a wonder-worker after his death. The dust from his tomb was taken as a medicine against snake-bite, and today many Christians invoke his help against it.

**St. Asaph, bishop of Llanelwy, Wales c.550** - Related to Saint Deiniol and Saint Tysilo. Hermit near Tenegal, Wales. Servant to Saint Kentigern. Second bishop of the Welsh see now known as Saint Asaph. At Tengenel, near Holywell, Wales, there are an ash-tree, well, and valley that tradition says belonged to Asaph.

**Also commemorated on this day:** Venerable Paphnutius, abbot of Borovsk (1477). Virgin-martyr Nina (1938). Hieromartyr Macarius, metropolitan of Kiev (1497). Venerable Gerasimus, abbot of Boldino (1557). Martyr Batas of Nisibis (395). St. Tamara, queen of Georgia (1213). New Martyrs Euthymius, Ignatius (1814), and Acacius the Serbian of Mt. Athos (1815). The Tsarevokokshaisk, or "Myrrh-Bearing" (1647), Andronikos (14th c.), "Unexpected Joy" and Byzantine Icons of the Mother of God. St. Panaretus, archbishop of Paphos in Cyprus (1791) (Greek). Venerable Nicephorus of Chios, monk (1821) (Greek). Martyr Sabbas (1821) (Greek). St. Ultan, founder of Fosse (680) (Neth.). St. Zosimas, bishop of Kumurdo (15th c.) (Georgia). New Monk-martyr Romanus of Raqqa (780). New Martyr Maria of Merambelos on Crete (1826). St. Brioc, abbot of Sain Brieu. St. Corentin, bishop of Quimper. Translation of the relics of St. Walburga, Abbess of Heidenheim. St. Pholosophos.

**2 / 15 May — Fast Day - The Holy Martyrs Hesperus, Zoe, Cyriac and Theodulus** - in the time of the Emperor Hadrian (117-138), a pagan called Catallus bought Hesperus, his wife Zoe and their sons Cyriac and Theodulus as slaves. Being convinced Christians, they refused to eat

anything that had been sacrificed to idols, but threw all that had been thus offered to the dogs, and themselves went hungry. Catallus, discovering this, became very angry and began to torture his slaves cruelly. He first tortured the children, but they remained unfaltering in the Faith and sought yet harsher tortures. At last all four of them were cast into a burning furnace where, after prayers of thanksgiving, they gave their spirits into the Lord's hands. Their bodies remained whole and untouched by the fire; St Athanasius the Great, Archbishop of Alexandria - on this day are commemorated the translation of his relics and their miracles.

**The Holy Martyrs Boris and Gleb** - they were sons of the great Prince Vladimir, Baptiser of the Russian people. Until his baptism, Vladimir had many wives, and children by them. Boris and Gleb were brothers of one mother. Before his death in 1015, Vladimir divided the Kingdom among all his sons. But Svyatopolk, his eldest son and Prince of Kiev, desired to take the parts that were set aside for Boris and Gleb, so he sent men to kill Boris in one place and Gleb in another. Both brothers were deeply devout and pleasing to God in all things, and they met death with prayer and the lifting up of their hearts to Him. Their bodies remained uncorrupt and fragrant, and were buried in the town of Vishgorod, where to this day blessed strength flows forth from them to heal men of divers ills and sufferings.

**St Michael (Boris), King of Bulgaria** - born and educated as a pagan and was baptized under the influence of his uncle Bojan and his sister. At baptism, he was given the name Michael. Patriarch Photius sent him priests who gradually baptized all the Bulgarian people. Many Bulgarian noblemen opposed this new Faith but the new Faith conquered and the Cross glistened on many churches built by the devout Tsar Michael. The Faith among the Bulgarians, as among the Serbs, was especially established by the Five Followers, the disciples of St. Cyril and St. Methodius, who preached to the people the knowledge of Christ in the vernacular: the Slavonic language. In his old age Michael retreated to a monastery and was tonsured a monk. When his son Vladimir began to destroy his father's work and to exterminate Christianity, Michael again donned his military uniform, girded himself with a sword, ousted Vladimir from the throne and installed Simeon, his younger son, as Tsar. After that, he again clothed himself in the monastic habit and retreated in silence where, in mortification and prayer, he completed his earthly life "in the good faith; in the correct confession of our Lord Jesus Christ; great, honourable and devout," and took up habitation in the heavenly life on May 2, 906 A.D.

**Also commemorated on this day:** St. Athanasius the Great, archbishop of Alexandria (373). St. Athanasius III, patriarch of Constantinople and wonderworker of Lubny (1654). "Putivl'sk" (1635) and "Vutivansk" Icons of the Mother of God. St. Athanasius of Syandem and Valaam (1550). Blessed Basil of Kadom (1848). St. Jordan the Wonderworker (Greek).

**3 / 16 May — The Holy Martyrs Timothy the Reader and his wife Maura of Antioch in Egypt** - Strange was the destiny of these wonderful martyrs, husband and newly-wedded wife. Twenty days after their wedding, they were taken for trial for their Christian faith before Arrianus, governor of the Thebaid, in the time of the Emperor Diocletian. Timothy was a reader in the church where he lived. 'Who are you?', the governor asked him. Timothy replied: 'I am a Christian and a reader in the Church of God.' The governor said to him further: 'You see, don't you, the instruments prepared for torture?' Timothy replied: 'But you don't see the angels of God, which are strengthening me.' Then the governor commanded that he be pierced through the ears with iron rods, so that the pupils of his eyes leapt out with the pain. They then suddenly hanged him by the feet and stuffed his mouth with wood. Maura was at first afraid of torture but, when her husband gave her courage, she also confessed her steadfast faith before the governor. He commanded that, first, her hair be torn out, then all her fingers cut off. After many other tortures, to which they would quickly have succumbed had they not been strengthened by the grace of God, they were both crucified, one in sight of the other. And thus, hanging on their crosses, they remained alive for nine full days, counselling each other and encouraging each other in endurance. On the tenth day they gave their spirits into God's hands, the God for whom they had suffered crucifixion, and thus became worthy of His Kingdom. They suffered with honour for Christ in 286. 'Maura' means 'black', from which it comes that in Macedonia the day of these saints is known as 'Black Day'. On the island of Zakynthos there is a church of Saints Timothy and Maura, in which many miraculous healings have taken place; Our Holy Father Theodosius of the Kiev Caves.

**Also commemorated on this day:** Venerable Theodosius, abbot of the Kiev Caves Monastery and founder of cenobitic monasticism in Russia (1074). Venerable Peter the Wonderworker, bishop of Argos (10th c.). New Hieromartyr Nicholas priest (1941). Venerables Juliana (1393) and Eupraxia (1394) of Moscow. St. Theophanes of Vatopedi, metropolitan of Peritheorion (14th c.). Translation of the Dormition Icon of the Mother of God from Constantinople to the Kiev-Pechersk Far Caves (1073). Pechersk Not-Wrought-by-Hand (1085), "Pechersk" (with Sts. Anthony and Theodosius) (1085), "Sven-Caves" (1288), "Yaskinsky" and Vlahernsky" Icons of the Mother of God. St. Ansfried, bishop of Utrecht (1010). Venerable Ecumenius the Wonderworker, bishop of Tricca (Greek). Translation of the relics of Venerable Luke of Mt. Stirion (Greek). New Martyr Ahmet the Calligrapher of Constantinople (Greek). New Martyr Mary of Crete. (Greek). St. Mamai, Catholicos of Georgia (744) (Georgia). Venerable Fathers Michael and Arsenius the Georgians (9th c.) (Georgia). Martyr Paul of Vilnius, Lithuania (17th c.). Great-martyr Xenia the Wonderworker of Peloponnesus. St. Glywys of Cornwall.

**4 / 17 May — Fast Day - The Holy Martyr Pelagia of Tarsus** - born in the town of Tarsus of pagan but noble and wealthy parents, she heard about Christ and the salvation of the soul from Christians, became inflamed with love for the Saviour and was a Christian in her soul. There was at that time a terrible persecution of Christians. It happened that the Emperor Diocletian himself stopped in Tarsus and that, during the time of his stay in the town, his son, the heir, fell deeply in love with Pelagia and wanted to make her his wife. Pelagia replied through her mother—a wicked woman—that she was already promised to her betrothed husband, Christ the Lord. Fleeing from the foul heir and her wicked mother, Pelagia sought and found Bishop Linus, a man renowned for his holiness. He instructed her in the Faith and baptised her. Then Pelagia gave away her luxurious clothing and great wealth, returned home and confessed to her mother that she was already baptised. Hearing of this, the Emperor's son, losing all hope of getting this holy maiden as his wife, ran himself through with a sword and died. Then the wicked mother denounced her daughter to the Emperor and she was taken for trial. The Emperor marvelled at the girl's beauty and, forgetting his son, burned with an impure passion for her. But when Pelagia remained unfaltering in her faith, the Emperor condemned her to be burned in a metal ox heated by fire. When they stripped the martyr, she signed herself with the sign of the Cross and, with prayers of thanksgiving to God on her lips, went into the ox, where, in the twinkling of an eye, she melted like wax. She suffered with honour in 287. Bishop Linus hunted for the remains of her bones and buried them on a hill under a stone. In the time of the Emperor Constantine Copronymos (741-775), a beautiful church was built on that site in honour of this holy virgin and martyr Pelagia, who was sacrificed for Christ to reign eternally with Him.

**St. Ethelred, king of Mercia and monk in England (716)** - abdicated to become a monk at Bardney, where he was later elected abbot (Benedictines). Saint Ethelred is depicted as a Benedictine abbot with royal regalia at his feet. He is venerated at Leominster.

**Also commemorated this day:** New Hieromartyr John priest (1942). New Hieromartyr Nicholas diacon (1943). The Albanov brothers: Venerables Nicetas, Cyril, Nicephorus, Clement, and Isaac of Novgorod, founders of the Sokolnitzki Monastery (1389). Hieromartyr Erasmus, bishop of Formia in Campania (303). Hieromartyr Albian (Olbian), bishop of Anaea in Asia Minor (304). Hieromartyr Silvanus of Gaza and with him 40 martyrs (311). Icon of the Mother of God "Staro Rus" Old Russian (1570). Venerables Aphrodisius, Leontius, Anthony, Valerian, Macrobius, and others, monks of Palestine. Translation of the relics of the Righteous Lazarus and Mary Magdalene, Equal-to-the-Apostles. St. Nicephorus, abbot of Medikion. Venerable Nicephorus the Solitary of Mt. Athos, the spiritual father of St. Gregory Palamas (1340) (Greek). St. Athanasius, bishop of Corinth (10th - 11th c.) (Greek). Venerable Hilary the Wonderworker of the desert (Greek). St. Monica of Tagaste (mother of Blessed Augustine) (387). Martyr Florian and 40 companions, at Lorsch, Austria (304).

**5 / 18 May — The Holy and Great Martyr Irene** - She lived in the Balkans in apostolic times, in the town of Magedon where her father Licinius was governor of a small region. Some think that she was a Slav. She was born a pagan of pagan parents. Penelope—for that was her pagan name—learned the Christian faith from her teacher, Appelianus. St Timothy, the disciple of the Apostle Paul, baptised her and her lady-in-waiting, and brought her a letter from the Apostle Paul to read. She infuriated her father by her refusal to marry, and he intended to torture her, but she brought him to Christianity in a miraculous way. She was tortured in

different ways by four kings, other than her father, but God saved her through His angels. King Sedechias buried her up to the neck in a pit full of snakes and scorpions, but an angel of God neutralised the poison of the reptiles and preserved the holy maiden untouched. Then the same king attempted to saw her in two, but the sword broke against her body as against stone. This same king once again bound her to the wheel of a water-mill, then let the water in to drown her, but the water would not flow, but stood still, and the maiden remained whole and alive. King Sapor, Sedechias's son, shod her with nails, loaded a sack of sand onto her, put a bridle on her and commanded that she be led like an animal far outside the city. 'Truly I am as a beast before Thee, O Lord!', said the holy martyr as she ran bridled behind her torturers. But an angel of God caused an earthquake, and the earth opened and swallowed up her tormentors. Surviving all these tortures, by which an enormous number of pagans were brought to Christianity, Irene went to the city of Kallinikos, where she preached the Christian faith. The local king, Numerian, tried to kill her, throwing her into three burning metal oxen one after the other. But the maiden was preserved and remained alive, and many saw and believed. The Eparch, Vaudon, took her to the city of Constantina, where he thought to kill her by putting her onto a burning grid. But this did not harm St Irene, and many were brought to the true Faith. Finally, Irene came to the city of Mesemhria, where the king killed her but God restored her to life. And the king, seeing this, together with many of the people, believed in Christ and was baptised. And thus St Irene, by her sufferings and miracles, brought over 100,000 pagans to faith in Christ. At last she laid herself in a grave and commanded Appelianus to close it. After four days, when the grave was opened, her body was not in it. Thus God glorified forever the maiden and martyr Irene, who had sacrificed all and endured all, that God should be the more greatly glorified among men.

**Also commemorated on this day:** New Hieromartyr Nicholas priest (1919). Uncovering of the relics of Venerable James, abbot of Zhelezny Bor (1613). Icon of the Most Holy Theotokos, "Inexhaustible Cup" (1878). Venerable Barlaam of Serpukhov (1377). New Monk-martyr Ephraim of Nea Makri (1426) (Greek). Martyrs Neophytus, Gaius, and Gaianus. Venerable Adrian, abbot of Monza Monastery (1619). Sts. Martin and Heraclius, of Illyria (4th c.). Venerable Euthymius, the Wonderworker, bishop of Maditos in Thrace (11th c.) (Greek). St. Eulogius the Confessor, bishop of Edessa (386). St. Hilary of Arles (449). St. Hydrock of Cornwall. Translation of the relics of St. Aldhelm, bishop of Sherborne.

### ‡ Daily Scripture Readings ‡

**Monday** - John 21:15-25 (Matins Gospel); Acts 3:19-26; John 2:1-11  
Acts 12:1-11 (Apostle); Luke 5:1-11 (Apostle); Hebrews 7:26-8:2 (St. Ignatius); John 10:9-16 (St. Ignatius)

**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** - Luke 6:17-23 (Matins Gospel); Acts 4:23-31; John 5:24-30; Hebrews 13:7-16 (Venerable); Matthew 11:27-30 (Venerable)

**Friday** - Acts 5:1-11; 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 unhopd-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"*

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