



PARISH BULLETIN

HOLY ARCHANGHEL MICHAEL'S ROMANIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH

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Thomas Sunday

Apolytikion of Thomas Sunday. Grave Mode.

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 them through an upright Spirit in us according to Thy great mercy.

Kontakion of Pascha. Mode Pl. 4.

Though Thou didst descend into the grave, O Immortal One, yet didst Thou destroy the power of Hades, and didst arise as victor, O Christ God, calling to the myrrh-bearing women, Rejoice, and giving peace unto Thine Apostles, O Thou Who dost grant resurrection to the fallen.

Prokeimenon. Mode 3.

*Great is our Lord and great is His strength.
Verse: Praise the Lord, for the Lord is good.*

The reading is from the
Acts of the Apostles 5:12-20

In those days, many signs and wonders were done among the people by the hands of the apostles. And they were all together in Solomon's Portico. None of the rest dared join them, but the people held them in high honor. And more than ever believers were added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women, so that they even carried out the sick into the streets, and laid them on beds and pallets, that as Peter came by at least his shadow might fall

on some of them. The people also gathered from the towns around Jerusalem, bringing the sick and those afflicted with unclean spirits, and they were all healed. But the high priest rose up and all who were with him, that is, the party of the Sadducees, and filled with jealousy they arrested 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 and stand in the temple and speak to the people all the words of this Life."



The Gospel According to John 20:19-31

On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being shut where the disciples were for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them 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. Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I 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; if

you retain the sins of any, they are retained."

Now Thomas, one of the twelve, called the Twin, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him: "We have seen the Lord." But he said to them: "Unless I see in his hands the print of the nails, and place my finger in the mark of the nails, and place my hand in his side, I will not believe."

Eight days later, his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. The doors were shut, but Jesus came and stood among them, and said: "Peace be with you." Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side; do not be faithless, but believing." Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!" Jesus said to him, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe."

Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the 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.

Word of the week – Reflection On Thomas Sunday

In one of its hymns, our Church calls the unbelief of Thomas "good".

Understandably one would wonder - is there good and bad unbelief? There seems to be, because humans are not purely good or evil. In one who has a clean conscience, good heart and humble thought, everything is clear. In one infected with the virus of unbelief, all is dark and troubled. If only we had the good unbelief of the Apostle Thomas!

We would say that doubt, hesitation and little faith, it is normal to a man who seeks God with the mind.

The Apostles of Christ begged Him to add faith to their existing faith. Unbelief, however, is a serious spiritual illness. Faith is beyond reason and unbelief is unreasonable. Unbelief is often dense, comes from frivolity and shallowness of thought, and from a volatile life and confused consciousness.

The case of Thomas, who was absent at the onset of the appearance of the Risen Christ to His disciples, is typical. It is a fact that Thomas doubted, and did not disbelieve, but asked for evidence to confirm his faith.

Well known for his enthusiasm in other moments, Thomas is not a skeptic who is isolated and disadvantaged. He dares, he searches, he investigates, he inquires. He asks for the truth, to have direct contact with it. Christ did not have problem offering it to him. He came back to meet him. He comes back to everyone of us.

The faith of many Christians sometimes is lukewarm, colder than unbelief. We have faith as an armor and good outfit to beat others with, but not to take the beating; to be appreciated, admired and be watched. We do not dare to look ever deeper into the beliefs of our faith, we do not in any way want to challenge it, and perhaps expose it. Strong faith gives spiritual health,

balance, sturdiness, empowerment, hope and trust in God. Sometimes, let's not be afraid to admit it, our faith has much evidence of secret ego-pathologies and morbid sentimentality. It reaches even to the point of a mistaken belief in an antisocial skepticism, which offers a pretty bad example to others. Seeking God while being this way, is to backtrack.

Thomas surely was not of bad faith, nor did he believe easily. He was careful, outspoken, genuine, solid, honest and true. It was who he was. His good unbelief made Christ come to him. Christ offered Himself to him for his sincerity. He did not rebuke him, who asked to see Him, to touch Him. But eventually He blessed those who will not see and yet believe.

Unbelief is of course a free choice of each of us. Unbelief says that they base themselves only on what they see and grasp and understand with logic. This is coercion and tiresome easiness. Faith, we would say, comes with difficulty, hazard, risk and daring. This is why He blessed those who believe without tangible evidence. The strongest evidence is the confirmation of our hearts. The hard-to-believe Thomas is our brother, he is weak, but definitely sympathetic.

On Mount Athos this day we all have an all-night vigil, because on such a day we were liberated from the Turkish yoke. As we have learned, the world during the Paschal holidays was more than ever in the churches. This means that faith is not extinguished. But it can become deeper and warmer. Thomas is not for the unbelievers, but for the skeptical, for those with little faith, and finally for the faithful. May his good unbelief trouble us to fertilize us.

- *Monk Moses the Athonite*

Liturgical Schedule for this week

Wednesday <i>May 8</i>	6:00 pm	Paraklesis
Friday <i>May 10</i>	5:30 pm	Akathist
Saturday <i>May 11</i>	9:00 am 5:00 pm	Divine Liturgy Vespers
Sunday <i>May 12</i>	9:00 am 10:00 am	Matins Divine Liturgy – Sunday of the Myrrh-bearers

Announcements:

- **Happy name day** to Tom Dowling, Tom Andrea, and Thomas Richard Burren (St. Thomas – May 5th) and Fr. John, Yannis Mironidis, John DeAngeli, and Yannis Penna (St. John the Theologian – May 8th).
- **Spring Chicken BBQ** – Saturday, May 18th, 5pm to 7pm. Please see Spiro for tickets.
- **Morris Street Yard Sale** – Saturday, June 22, 9am. Please see Sandra Nasto.
- **Icon donations** – Please consider donating to an icon of the church. A list of icons is available in the narthex.
- **Thank you** to everyone for contributing their time, money, and prayer for the Paschal preparations.

