



GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF AUSTRALIA
PARISH OF ST. VASILIOS, BRUNSWICK, VICTORIA

SUNDAY
15 APRIL 2018
Volume 7—Issue 7
15/04–21/04/2018

PARISH INFORMATION BULLETIN

PROGRAM FOR 15—21 APRIL 2018

CHRISTOS ANESTI ! CHRIST IS ARISEN!

SUNDAY 15 APRIL	Sunday of Thomas—John 20: 19-31 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 7.30– 11.00am Orthros and Divine Liturgy
<p>***** SUNDAY SCHOOL CLASSES FOR ALL AGES *****</p> <p>(A free voluntary program organised by the Church)</p> <p>Lessons take place in the building behind the church and begin at the time of Holy Communion until Church dismissal. We have classes for ages ranging from 5yrs to teenage years. Lessons are taught in a relaxed, friendly environment. Please bring your children along to learn of their rich Orthodox faith and come close to God and the joy and peace of His Love.</p>	
MONDAY 16 APRIL	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 9.00am Service of Holy Unction• 10.00am Meeting of Elderly Citizens in Church Hall.
TUESDAY 17 APRIL	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 7.00pm Parishes of St Vasilios and the Presentation of our Lord, Coburg Youth Group will meet in our Church Hall. The meeting will begin with the Compline Service in English.• 7.30pm Young Adults and Married Couples Bible Study Group at St. Vasilios, in the Church.Coffee Room.
WEDNESDAY 18 APRIL	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 5.00pm Paraklesis to the Theotokos followed by Bible Study
SATURDAY 21 APRIL	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 3.45pm Service of Vespers
SUNDAY 22 APRIL	GOSPEL READING: Mark 15: 43-47—16:1-8 EPISTLE READING: Acts 6: 1-7



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Fr. Athanasios
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are available
at the Church

every Monday to Friday
between
4.00 and 6.00pm

for Holy Confession and
any spiritual need.

WORDS FROM THE CHURCH FATHERS

"But He who descended into the regions beneath the earth came up again; and Jesus, who was buried, truly rose again the third day. And if the Jews ever worry thee, meet them at once by asking thus:

Did Jonah come forth from the whale on the third day, and hath not Christ then risen from the earth on the third day? Is a dead man raised to life on touching the bones of Elisha, and is it not much easier for the Maker of mankind to be raised by the power of the Father? Well then, He truly rose, and after He had risen was seen again of the disciples; and twelve disciples were witnesses of His Resurrection, who bear witness not in pleasing words, but contended even unto torture and death for the truth of the Resurrection. What then, shall every word be established at the mouth of two of three witnesses, according to the Scripture, and, though twelve bear witness to the Resurrection of Christ, art thou still incredulous in regard to His Resurrection?"

St. Cyril of Jerusalem - *Excerpt on the Resurrection*

Sunday of Thomas John 20:19 – 31

Today's gospel is very complex and requires considerable reflection so that various significant theological implications can be grasped. There are three matters which I wish to touch on to give insights into this gospel reading.

The first relates to the resurrection of Christ. The laws of nature state that upon death the body begins to break down and decompose. In the third chapter of Genesis God says to Adam "in the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground, for out of that you were taken; you are dust, and to dust you shall return". In Christ's resurrection we now have proof that this law is now subject to the will of the risen Christ.

Did the resurrected Christ differ bodily from the pre-crucified Christ and if so in what way? We are offered some clues in John's gospel about this. We are told Christ appeared and disappeared on two occasions to the disciples who were locked in a room for fear of the Jews. We are also told that Christ breathed the Holy Spirit on the Apostles and permitted Thomas to insert his finger into the side. Yet there must have been some transformation in his appearance as a result of the resurrection for how else could Mary, a close confidant of Christ, have earlier on the same day mistaken the risen Lord for the gardener? It was only after Jesus called Mary by her name that she recognised him. Further, he said to her something strange: "do not hold me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father". In chapter 21 of John's gospel Jesus addresses some of the disciples who had gone fishing asking whether they had caught any fish. Even the disciple whom Jesus loved only recognised him after they followed his directive to throw their nets on the right side of the boat. Thereafter, Jesus then shared a meal of bread and fish with them. Thus, we can discern that Christ was able to move through solid matter, bodily carry the wounds of the crucifixion and having them probed without distress, was not recognisable by his closest companions, yet breathed and ate food. These observations give credence to Paul's understanding of the resurrection awaiting each one of us. In chapter 15 first Corinthians Paul says that what is sown as perishable is raised as imperishable. What is sown as a physical body is raised as a spiritual body. The perishable thus puts on the imperishable and the mortal puts on immortality. For "the trumpet will sound and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed." Thus humanity has victory over death through a transformative bodily resurrection.

Christ also gave the disciples the Holy Spirit and charged them that if they forgave sins of any they are forgiven and if they retained the sins of any they are retained. Here the disciples, according to John's gospel, received power through the Spirit to bind and loose. Further, the Apostles were appointed by Christ under stewardship and, as steward, any person binding or loosing will be judged according to their judgements. This is surely an awesome responsibility. Through apostolic succession this authority to determine what is lawful and unlawful, forbidden or allowed, is given to the church.

You will recall that for the Jews the law had been passed down totally and completely through the Old Testament. By Christ allowing his disciples to bind and loose he, in effect, is directing them to no longer be bound by the laws of the Old Testament and establish a new covenant. Hence our church is able to administer and minister to the faithful in ways which differ from Jewish practice. Our church has, in her wisdom, developed the mystery of confession in order to allow the binding and loosing of each one of us. By so availing ourselves we become transformed and new again in this life. Surely this is something also worthy to reflect upon and earnestly seek.

This gospel reading also gives rise to the expression of "doubting Thomas". We use this to refer a person who will not accept the word of others but needs to see for himself before he will accept something as true. Some people may say that Thomas did not have enough faith and that is why he needed to say "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". I do not share this view. Remember, Paul reminds us to "test all things". Total acceptance of anything, without questioning, is wrong. It is only by questioning that understanding comes. Faith readily assumed is faith quickly lost as it has no roots. Further, total uncritical acceptance or uncritical rejection, for that matter, means that you have not exercised your free will and that is something you are required to do as a Christian. You can only exercise your free will if you truly reflect upon what you are asked to accept as true. No reflection equals no personal choice. That said, some people may also say that if indeed free will is important then why did Christ direct Thomas to place his fingers in his side so that he would not be faithless and believe? I think that this reinforces the faith of Thomas.

There is no doubt that Thomas had agreed to follow the master. He gave up everything to follow him. He was a true believer. He was a committed believer. Indeed, in Chapter 11 of John's gospel Thomas, upon being told that Christ was going to Jerusalem and to his crucifixion after the raising of Lazarus from the dead said to his fellow disciples "let us also go, that we may die with him". Thomas was prepared to lay down his life for his belief in the master. He had seen the master die by crucifixion. What he had not seen was the risen Lord and he wanted to verify it for himself. Hence: "my Lord and my god". Thomas touched a man and proclaimed God. In telling Thomas to assure himself in his faith, Christ also says to us all that "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe". Having just undergone the storm of the crucifixion and now having entered the calm waters of the resurrection, can anyone of us today have any doubt as to the risen Lord – even if we have not been able to put our fingers in the nail holes or the wound in his side? May the good Lord call each of us by name so that we have eternal life. Amen.

***Christ is risen from the dead, by death, trampling down upon death,
and to those in the tombs, bestowing life!
Truly the Lord is risen!***



PARISH INFORMATION BULLETIN

PROGRAM FOR THE 4TH SUNDAY AFTER PASCHA

SUNDAY
11 MAY

Sunday of the Myrrh-bearers

- 7.00—11.00am

Orthros and Divine Liturgy

- *Immediately after Holy Communion, Religious Instruction lessons take place for our children. The understanding of our faith through the religious instruction lessons bring our children closer to God.*



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VOICE OF THE CHURCH FATHERS

PATIENCE

What is patience? That we should endure even as Christ endured, or that we should do those things, or that, with patience. Also, we should wait for Him, that is that we should be prepared.

For since He has promised many things, and He himself is coming to judge the living and the dead, let us wait for Him, and let us be patient.

Whenever St Paul speaks of patience, he of course implies affliction. For this is to love God, to endure, and not be troubled.

St John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Thessalonians*

Source: *Through the Year With the Church Fathers* compiled by Presbytera Emily Harakas