



# PARISH INFORMATION BULLETIN

## PROGRAM FOR 5—11 MAY 2019

### CHRISTOS ANESTI! CHRIST IS ARISEN!

<b>SUNDAY</b> <b>5 MAY</b>	<b>5th Sunday of Thomas, John 4: 5-42</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>7.30– 11.00am</b> Orthros and Divine Liturgy</li></ul>
<b>• SUNDAY SCHOOL CLASSES FOR ALL AGES (A free voluntary program organised by the Church)</b> 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 His Love.	
<b>MONDAY</b> <b>6 MAY</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>9.00am</b> Service of Holy Unction</li><li>• <b>10.00am</b> Meeting of Elderly Citizens in Church Hall.</li></ul>
<b>TUESDAY</b> <b>7 MAY</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>7.00pm</b> Parishes of St Vasilios and the Presentation of our Lord Youth Group will meet in our Church Hall.</li></ul>
<b>WEDNESDAY</b> <b>8 MAY</b> <b>St John the Apostle and Theologian</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>7.00– 9.30am</b> Orthros and Divine Liturgy</li><li>• <b>5.00pm</b> Paraklesis to the Theotokos followed by Bible Study</li></ul>
<b>THURSDAY</b> <b>9 MAY</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>7.30—8.30pm</b> <b>TEENAGE YOUTH GROUP (Ages 13-19)</b> In Church Hall, upstairs behind the Church <i>*ALL TEENAGERS WELCOME</i></li></ul>
<b>SATURDAY</b> <b>11 MAY</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>3.45pm</b> Service of Vespers</li></ul>
<b>SUNDAY</b> <b>12 MAY</b>	<b>GOSPEL READING: Mark 15: 43-47, 16: 1-8</b> <b>EPISTLE READING: Acts 6: 1-7</b>



### Telephone Contact Numbers

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Fr Athanasios and  
Fr Ephraim  
are available at the Church  
every Monday to Friday  
**between 4.00 and 6.00pm**  
for Holy Confession and  
any spiritual need.

“Years are not  
needed for true  
repentance,  
and not days,  
but only an instant.”

St. Ambrose of  
Optina

## THE RESURRECTION

Fr. Dumitru Staniloae explains in his book, *Orthodoxy, Life in the Resurrection*, the importance of the Resurrection for the Orthodox Church, stating that:

“The deepest foundation of the hope and joy which characterise Orthodoxy and which penetrate all its worship is the Resurrection. Easter, the centre of Orthodox worship, is an explosion of joy, the same joy which the disciples felt when they saw the risen Saviour. It is the explosion of cosmic joy at the triumph of life, after the overwhelming sorrow over death – death which even the Lord of life had to suffer when he became man. ‘Let the heavens rejoice and the earth exult, and let all the world invisible and visible keep holiday, for Christ our eternal joy is risen’ All things are now filled with the certainty of life, whereas before all had been moving steadily towards death. Orthodoxy emphasises with special insistence the faith of Christianity in the triumph of life”.

## Sunday of Thomas, John 4: 5-42

### His Bodily Wounds and Ours: Homily for Thomas Sunday in the Orthodox Church Christ is Risen!

I was surprised a few years ago in one of my college classes when even the best students were surprised to learn that Christian hope for eternal life includes the resurrection of the body. They were comfortable thinking of human souls experiencing eternal life, but doubted that our actual physical bodies would have any part in the Kingdom of Heaven. Especially on this Sunday of St. Thomas, we celebrate how Christ's bodily resurrection is the basis of hope for our own. Today we proclaim that our Savior brings healing and transformation to whole, embodied persons, for that is how He conquered death on the third day.

As we continue to celebrate the glorious good news of this season of Pascha, we recall how Christ called doubting Thomas to faith in His great victory. "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!'" Still bearing His wounds even in His glorified body as the God-Man, the Risen Christ brought Thomas to faith through the witness of His own deified flesh.

We have probably heard the story so many times that we have become deaf to its importance. Nonetheless, it remains the case that the Savior's resurrection is not an escape from the body or the physical world, but instead their healing and sanctification. Likewise, St. John referred in his epistle to that "which we have seen with our own eyes, which we have looked upon and touched with our hands, concerning the word of life—the life was made manifest, and we saw it..." The Apostles saw the Lord after His resurrection with their eyes, touched Him with their hands, heard His voice with their ears, felt His breath on their skin, and even saw Him eat food. (Luke 24: 36-43) The good news that "God is light and in Him is no darkness at all" comes from a resurrection in glory of a complete Person with a human body marked by the wounds of torture and crucifixion. His resurrection is not an escape from the body, but its fulfillment. The Eternal Word Who created us by breathing into the dust of the earth now breathes physically on His Disciples as He empowers them to carry out His ministry of bringing salvation to the world, even to the point of forgiving sins in His name. Here are powerful signs of what it means for human beings to be in the likeness of God and partakers of the divine nature by grace.

These are not merely details of ancient history, but reminders that we participate in Christ's Passover from death to life by how we live as whole, embodied persons. We were baptized physically with water into Christ's death in order to put Him on like a garment, in order to rise with Him into a new life of holiness. To be blunt, the Christian life is not simply about our emotions, ideas, or opinions; it is not reduced to what we say we believe. For those who are truly in Christ will live in ways that manifest the brilliant life of the resurrection, that radiate the holy light of the Savior's great victory over sin and death. As St. John put it, "If we say we have fellowship with Him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not live according to the truth; but if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin."

We participate in the new life of our Risen Lord by walking into His light, by embracing as fully as we can the blessed healing of the human being that He has brought to the world. Christ's Passion was not a matter simply of His feelings, words, or ideas, but of His complete Self-offering through crucifixion, burial, descent to Hades, and resurrection from the dead. He rises in glory with His wounds, and we cannot begin to make sense of His salvation without speaking of the most bodily of realities, such as torture, execution, death, and burial in a tomb that was later found to be empty.

We are probably all tempted at times to think how much easier it would be to serve God if we did not have our particular set of bodily limitations and problems. Some are challenged by physical or mental illness, while others wrestle with passions for the pleasures of food, sex, alcohol, or other substances. Eating disorders and unrealistic expectations of what their bodies should look like ruin the health and well-being of some, while others struggle to accept that their male or female bodies are signs of who they are in God's image and likeness. Many today ignore the sacredness of the intimate bodily union of man and woman, which makes two into one flesh. The epidemic of pornography in our culture reflects a repudiation of the sacredness of the flesh and blood through which we encounter the living icons of Christ. Some refuse to honor the bodies of their neighbors by becoming blind to the humanity of children in the womb, of people with skin of a different color, or of terminally ill patients in chronic pain. And whether it is greed, sloth, anger, or refusal to help the needy with our time, attention, and resources, there is no sin that does not show itself physically in some way in the lives of those who struggle with it.

No matter what someone's particular struggles, weaknesses, or failings are, we must respond with compassion, for we too are among the sick who need the Physician. Nonetheless, no physical condition can ever make us sin or do evil. The problem is not that we have bodies, but that we choose to remain in the tomb, that we would rather walk in the darkness than in the light. For it is no sin to be ill or to be tempted in any way. The Lord Himself suffered terribly on the cross and was tempted. It is a sin, however, to let any of our wounds become excuses for not walking in the light as best we can. It is a sin to let anything fill our lives with such darkness that we refuse to open our eyes—and our lives—to the good news of the resurrection. It is a sin when we think that God must remove this or that problem in order to earn our faithfulness, in order to be worthy of our devotion. As we celebrate Christ's great victory over sin and death, we must not be afraid to expose our wounded selves to Him with humility as we say with St. Thomas "'My Lord and my God!'"

Remember that the Savior has taken upon Himself even the worst bodily wounds. It is through them that He has brought life out of death and brilliant light out of the darkest tomb. He has conquered even death itself. Do you see what that means? Even our darkest inclinations ultimately do not stand a chance against His glory, if we will only expose them to Him, if we will only offer them to Him for healing. And though it probably will not happen instantaneously, our wounds will find healing as we move step by step further into His light. Darkness is simply the absence of light and it disappears when it is illumined. The same Lord Who conquered Hades and the tomb for our salvation, and Who invited Thomas to touch His wounds, will bring us as whole, embodied persons into the new day of His Kingdom if we will only keep turning as best we can from the darkness as we struggle to live faithfully each day in the midst of the problems, pains, and weaknesses that beset us. We must all take that journey one day at a time.

The good news is that Christ does not ask us to conquer sin and death by our own power, for He has already done that. But He does ask us truly to have faith, which requires a faithful life, even as we constantly ask for His mercy and strength to participate as fully as possible in the joy of His resurrection. We will not do that with a fake spirituality that relies purely on emotions or ideas, but as whole persons of flesh and blood enlivened by the One Who made us in His image and likeness and even died and rose again for our salvation. So let us celebrate Pascha by walking in the light as best we can with all our wounds, for that is how we will open ourselves to the light that has made even the tomb radiant with the divine glory. If He can do that to a grave, just imagine what He can do with us.

- Fr. Philip LeMasters