



## Parish Information Bulletin

Program for 9—15 May 2021

### CHRISTOS ANESTI ! CHRIST IS ARISEN!

SUNDAY 9 MAY

Sunday of Thomas, John 20: 19-31

- 7.30am  
Orthros and Divine Liturgy

#### 2021 SUNDAY SCHOOL CLASSES FOR ALL AGES

(A free voluntary program organised by the Church)

Lessons take place in the building behind the church and begin at 10.30am 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.

MONDAY 10 MAY

- 10.00am  
Meeting of Elderly Citizens in Church Hall.

WEDNESDAY 12 MAY

- 5.00pm  
Paraklesis to the Theotokos followed by Bible Study

THURSDAY 13 MAY

- 7.30—8.30pm

#### TEENAGE YOUTH GROUP

ALL TEENAGERS WELCOME

Join the group and learn about your faith, make friends, enjoy refreshments, in a friendly, relaxing environment.

: In Church Hall, upstairs behind the Church

SUNDAY 16 MAY

GOSPEL READING: Mark 15: 43-47, 16: 1-8  
EPISTLE READING: Acts 6: 1-7

### Telephone Contact Numbers

St Vasilios Church  
9387 7693

Fr Athanasios  
9383 4151

Fr Ephraim  
0490 378 215

Website:  
stvasiliosbrunswick.com

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.

### Sunday of Thomas

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. Christ is risen! [Indeed he is risen]  
I always like to share my pet peeves with you, little things that bother me, and one of the things that bother me especially when I'm at work: someone will send out a calendar, or maybe someone will publish a calendar, and they will arrange the calendar—if you can picture a calendar in your head—they'll arrange the calendar so that *Monday* comes first. And it will say: Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, and then at the end it will say Saturday/Sunday. Have you ever seen that? It drives me crazy, because you can't see where everything is. You're used to seeing what day of the week first? Sunday.

There's a reason why Sunday is listed on the calendar as the first day of the week, and we *forget* this. We forget that *today* is the first day of the week. We think of our lives in terms of: "Oh, that's the *weekend*, right? Saturday, Sunday, and then I start my week on Monday." But in fact, in very common practice, even in the way that the calendar is, in the way 2,000 years ago that the Scriptures were revealed to us, it very clearly says—in fact it says it in the Scriptures here twice. It says it in verse 19, and it says on verse 26: "The same day at evening," that is, the same day that Jesus rose from the dead, which was Sunday, and then on verse 26: "And after eight days," eight days meaning after seven plus one: eight—eight days being Sunday again: "Jesus appeared unto the disciples."

Now that's really important for us. It's important on several different levels. First of all, we know that in the ten commandments we have: "Keep the Sabbath day, because it's holy," right? The Sabbath day is the day of rest; it's Saturday. It has been the practice of the very, very, *very* earliest Church from the time of the Scriptures, from the time of the apostles, that this first day of the week, Sunday, is in fact what we call the *day of the Lord*. It even says that in the book of Revelation. St. John says that he was in exile "*on the Lord's day*," on Sunday.

Of course, in Russian, we call the Sunday "Voskresenye," because it's Resurrection. Every Sunday we celebrate the Resurrection, and the reason why I mention this is this gospel reading here is really amazing, and it's quite beautiful because there are so many things. Of course, when I say that, I think you brace yourself and I'm going to go on for half an hour; we're not going to talk about everything here, but notice in this gospel reading how many things are repeated. The phrase "first day of the week" is repeated again and again and again. The phrase "Peace be unto you" is repeated three times in this gospel reading today. Any time something is repeated again and again, it's very important.

So why is Sunday important? Number one, it's the day on which the Lord rose from the dead. He revealed himself to his disciples

and his followers and his apostles. And it is the day on which we look forward to and we experience when we come together the kingdom of God. That's why it's no accident in the Scripture reading today, it says: "On the *eighth* day, *eight* days after." That's very significant. God created the world in six days, right? And he rested on the seventh day, but we know the week always goes around and around, and there is a day after that rest. There is a day after. Essentially, it's the eighth day, so for us, "eight" talks about eternity, talks about the kingdom of God.

What is revealed to us today in this gospel reading is the most essential thing about our Christian life, and that is: We have been given, through the Resurrection, the kingdom of God. We not only receive it as something that is promised to us in the future; we receive it here and now, because on this *Sunday*, on this *Lord's day*, on this *eighth day*, Christ reveals himself in his resurrected, or what St. Paul calls, his spiritual body. Notice what happens in the Scripture reading. It says, both times, that Christ appears to them, the doors being—what?—shut. The doors were shut. Christ simply *appeared* to them. He didn't open the door and walk through it; he *appeared* to them. He was, you might say, living already in the kingdom of God in another dimension, in a spiritual body that was both spiritual, and yet it was physical, because Thomas touched his wounds, touched his hand, touched his side, and he said, "Be not faithless, but believing." So when we gather on Sunday, it's extremely important that we not neglect that. It's extremely important that we always set aside the Lord's day—and I did, yes, post my little rant this morning on Facebook about not having marathons and races and so forth on Sunday. I think it's shameful. I think it's a terrible development in this country especially, where Sunday used to be a day when, really, everything was closed, and you spent time with your family. You spent time resting. You spent time rejuvenating. Now Sunday is: Let's run here, let's run there, let's go to the store, let's go to the game, let's take the kids to soccer, let's do the marathon, instead of focusing on *this* day which is the day of the Lord and his Resurrection.

Christ appears to his disciples, and he says, three times, "Peace be with you" or "Peace to you." Why does he do that? If we think about, in a very practical sense, what the disciples had been going through, it was probably a very difficult time for them. They had just seen their master crucified on a cross. He had *told* them that he would suffer and die and be buried, but he also told them that he would be *raised from the dead*, and this is the part that is difficult, maybe even for us to understand, let alone his apostles who were with him all the time.

The resurrection from the dead is so *essential* for us. It is essential because *it is eternal life*. Christ did not simply resuscitate. This is extremely important. Christ did not just become resuscitated, like we have somebody today who has a heart attack, and then they come and they put the paddles on them and they give them an electric shock and they come back to life, they get their heart started again. That's not what this is. Christ is demonstrating his *power* over sin, his *power* over death, and that he extends this new life. It is in fact a *new* life; it is not the old life. It is not just resuscitation, we do things the same way.

This is the most important thing. This is *new life*, a new way of existing. We exist in the body in which we have always had, because it is us. This body is not just a shell. This body is us. When we're created, for better or for worse, this is who we are, and this is who we'll always be, but we will be in a more perfect state, a more spiritual state. You might even say that we will be in the state that we were always created and meant to be in, because it is the state that is filled with God himself.

When Christ says to them, "Peace be with you," he's calming their fears. He's, first of all, reminding them: "Do you see? I *promised* you that I would [be raised] from the dead." Now essentially he's saying, "Let's get to be about the mission that I told you you would be on, that you would go and teach, you would go and teach, you would go and heal, you would go and even suffer, and you might even die for my name's sake."

So when he appeared to them, they realized that everything he said to them was true! *Everything* that he said to them was true, not only about himself. Listen: not only about himself and about *his* suffering and dying and [being raised] from the dead, but he was proving to them that what he said about *them* and *their* mission and *their* future and *their* work and the Church *was true*.

We have to think about this in terms of ourselves. Everything that happens in this gospel today—everything—this is not just somehow some event that is distant from us 2,000 years ago. This is something that we *anticipate* and we celebrate and we *foretaste every Sunday* that we come together to receive the Eucharist, the Lord's Body and Blood, because Christ is the one that says to Thomas, "*Touch me. Touch my wounds. See where the nails were. See where they thrust the spear in my side.*"

What came out of his side? Blood and water. What do we receive in the Eucharist? We receive his Body that was touched by Thomas; we receive his Blood that poured out of his blessed side, so that we can even now receive the blessings of the eternal kingdom of God, and with *Thomas* be not faithless but believing, that when we come forward to receive this Eucharist, we're not receiving mere bread and wine. We're receiving that resurrected body of Christ; we are receiving himself. He is allowing us to *touch* him. He is allowing us to experience him, *and*, when he grants this to us, he is fulfilling the promise that he will never leave us, that he will never forsake us, that he will always be with us, *even to the end of the age*, when he comes again in glory.

And then there will be no more Eucharist, because everything will be Eucharist! It will be Christ himself who will be with us. It will not just be Liturgy with the choir and we're standing here and we have candles and icons. We will be together with the saints, with the Mother of God, with Christ himself, and we'll be singing the real praises of him in his presence. We do it now, you might say, to foretaste, to see how beautiful that's going to be, and it will only be a thousand, million, billion times better than what it is now, and it is so wonderful now.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, do you see how this gospel reading really kind of ties everything together? Yes, we are Thomas, all of us. We have our doubts. There are times when we don't want to understand because our finite minds can't comprehend that the God of the universe took on human flesh and died on a cross and rose from the dead. We can't wrap our head around that. We doubt because of the weakness of our faith. All of us have those doubts, but Christ is, like to Thomas, offering himself to us today. He's saying, "Come forward; receive me in faith. Don't be faithless; be believing. Touch me. Taste me. Receive me into yourself," because he fulfills the promise that he gave to all of those who believe in him, and he says to Thomas, as a message to all of us, "Blessed are those who have *not* seen, and yet have believed."

Let us be counted among those who believe. Let us be counted among those who eagerly await that great and eternal eighth day, the day of the Lord, the eternal day that never ends. To him who is our life, with the Father and the Spirit, be glory, honor, and majesty, always, now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen. Christ is risen! [Indeed he is risen!]

Fr. Thomas Soroka