



Parish Information Bulletin

Program for 23—29 April, 2023

CHRISTOS ANESTI ! CHRIST IS ARISEN!

SUNDAY 23 APRIL	Sunday of Thomas, St George Great-Martyr, John 20: 19-31 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 7.30am Orthros and Divine Liturgy
2023 SUNDAY SCHOOL CLASSES FOR ALL AGES - 2023 (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 24 APRIL	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 10.00am Meeting of Elderly Citizens in Church Hall
THURSDAY 27 APRIL	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 8.00—9.00pm ➡ TEENAGE YOUTH GROUP 2023 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 30 APRIL	GOSPEL READING: Mark 15: 43-47, 16: 1-8 EPISTLE READING: Acts 6: 1-7

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.

"...Now since you are celebrating the holy Pascha, you should know, brethren, what the Pascha is. Pascha means the crossing-over, and so the Festival is called by this name.

For it was on this day that the Children of Israel crossed over out of Egypt,
and the Son of God crossed over from this world to His Father.

What gain is it to celebrate unless you imitate Him Whom you worship;
that is, unless you cross over from Egypt, that is, from the darkness of evil-doing
to the light of virtue, from the love of this world to the love of your heavenly home?"

St. Ambrose of Milan - "The Sunday of the Resurrection"

SAINT GEORGE THE GREAT MARTYR COMMEMORATED ON 23 APRIL

George was born to a Christian family during the late 3rd century. His father was from Cappadocia and served as an officer of the Roman army. His mother was from Lydda, (now Lod, Israel). She returned to her native city as a widow along with her young son, where she provided him with an education.

The youth followed his father's example by joining the army soon after coming of age. He proved to be a good soldier and consequently rose through the military ranks of the time. By his late twenties he had gained the title of Tribune and then Count, at which time George was stationed in Nicomedia as a member of the personal guard attached to Roman Emperor Diocletian.

According to the hagiography, in 303 Diocletian issued an edict authorizing the systematic persecution of Christians across the Empire. The emperor Galerius was supposedly responsible for this decision and would continue the persecution during his own reign (305–311). George was ordered to take part in the persecution but instead confessed to being a Christian himself and criticized the imperial decision. An enraged Diocletian ordered the torture of this apparent traitor, and his execution.

After various tortures, beginning with being lacerated on a wheel of swords, George was executed by decapitation before Nicomedia's defensive wall on April 23, 303. The witness of his suffering convinced Empress Alexandra and Athanasius, a pagan priest, to become Christians as well, and so they joined George in martyrdom. His body was returned to Lydda for burial, where Christians soon came to honour him as a martyr.

On the Test of Thomas
by St Nikolai (Velimirovich)

"My Lord and my God!" (St. John 20:28)

When the Apostle Thomas felt the wounds of the Lord Jesus, he cried out: "My Lord and my God!"
When Mary Magdalene heard the voice of the resurrected One in her soul, she cried out: "My Lord and my God!"
When Saul saw the light and heard the words of the resurrected One, he acknowledged: "My Lord and my God!"
When the pagans, in amazement, observed how the countless numbers of martyrs joyfully undergo pains and asked them: "Who is this Christ?" All of them replied: "My Lord and my God!"
When the scoffers ridiculed the army of ascetics and asked them: "Who is He, for Whom they took upon themselves the awesome burden of mortification? They all had one answer: "My Lord and my God!"
When the scornors derided the virgins who vowed their virginity and asked them: "Who is He for Whom they renounced marriage?" They all had one answer: "My Lord and my God!"
When the avaricious in astonishment asked the very wealthy: "Who is He for Whom they distribute their wealth and become beggarly?" All of them replied, one and the same: "My Lord and my God!"
Some have seen Him and have said: "My Lord and my God!" Some have only heard Him and said: "My Lord and my God!"
Some have only felt Him and said: "My Lord and my God!" Some have only observed Him in the fabric of events and in the destinies of peoples and said: "My Lord and my God!" Some have felt His presence in their lives and cried out: "My Lord and my God!" Some have recognized Him by some sign, on themselves or on others, and cried out: "My Lord and my God!" Still some have only heard about Him from others and believed and cried out: "My Lord and my God!" Truly, these last ones are the most blessed!

Let us also exclaim, with all our hearts, regardless of how we have come to recognize Him or how we have come to learn about Him: "My Lord and my God!" To You be glory and thanks always. Amen.



Doubting Thomas

Poor Saint Thomas. He sure has a bad rap. Though he was one of the most zealous – and youngest – disciples of our Lord, though he eagerly wished to die with Jesus, though he spread the Gospel through many countries and continents, though he died a martyr's death in India: despite all this, most people know him for the moniker "Doubting Thomas."

A Doubting Thomas is someone who doesn't believe without proof. This title comes from the 20th Chapter of St. John's Gospel, when, after His resurrection, Jesus appears to all of the apostles but Thomas. When the other disciples tell Thomas of the resurrection, he says, "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." (John 20:25) Eight days later our Lord comes to the apostles again, this time with Thomas present, and He offers His body as proof, saying "Do not be unbelieving, but believing." (John 20:27) Thomas then believes and confesses that Jesus is Lord and God.

Because of this story, St. Thomas is called Doubting Thomas. He is shown as an example of what not to do in matters of faith; a person should simply believe without needing proof. (In fact some people call the icon of this event, which is remembered on the Sunday after Pascha, "The Doubting of Thomas." The actual title of the icon is "The Touching of Thomas.")

In truth, matters of faith are not as simple as this. And Thomas is not the lone sceptic that we make him out to be. Which of the disciples believed that Jesus had risen from the dead without seeing first-hand? None of them. The myrrh-bearers found the empty tomb and encountered an angel. When the apostles heard the news from them, they called it "idle tales." (Luke 24:11)

Then Jesus appeared to two of the disciples on the road to Emmaus. They told the others, yet still they did not believe. (Mark 16:13) In fact, the apostles remained unbelieving until Jesus himself appeared to them. And He said, "Why do doubts arise in your hearts?" (Luke 24:38)

You see, doubt is not unique to Thomas. It is something that all of our Lord's followers suffer from. (Including us!) Furthermore the desire for first-hand experience is not inherently a bad thing. The first thing St. Peter did when he heard of the resurrection from the myrrh-bearers was to run to the tomb to see for himself.

Part of the problem is in the unnecessary contrasting of proof versus faith. This is a false dichotomy. While we as Christians must be comfortable with the unknown – the things which are beyond understanding, accepted only by faith – we are also a people who know God, who experience Him first-hand and "touch" Him as Thomas did.

Our Christian life is really a combination of experience (proof) and trust (faith). It can be expressed by these simple words: "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!" (Mark 9:24)

Now let us return to St. Thomas. He was one of the most zealous of the twelve apostles, after St. Peter. It was St. Thomas who, before our Lord's death and resurrection, said to his fellow disciples, "Let us also go, that we may die with Him!" (John 11:16). In his youth and his faith he did not fear death.

After our Lord's ascension into Heaven and the day of Pentecost, St. Thomas travelled the most of any apostle. St. John Chrysostom said that he "toiled through the grace of God more bravely, more zealously and tirelessly than them all, so that he went preaching over nearly all the earth, not fearing to proclaim the Word of God to savage nations." According to Church tradition, St. Thomas founded churches in Ethiopia, Palestine, Mesopotamia, Parthia (Iran) – where he baptized the Magi – and India.

In the city of Meliapur, India, he converted the wife of a local ruler, for which he was thrown in prison, tortured, and finally pierced with spears. Thus perfecting his life by the martyrdom for which he longed, St. Thomas entered the Heavenly Kingdom.

On October 6, we commemorate this zealous follower of Christ, the Apostle Thomas. May we learn from his zeal, his faith, and his desire to experience God first-hand, so that we may likewise come closer to the mystery and the reality of our Lord and God.

Fr. Matthew Swehla