



## Parish Information Bulletin

### Program for 27 April—3 May 2025

#### **CHRISTOS ANESTI ! CHRIST IS ARISEN!**

**SUNDAY 27 APRIL**

**SUNDAY OF THOMAS, John 20: 19-31**

- **7.30am**  
Orthros and Divine Liturgy

#### **2025 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 28 APRIL**

- **9.00am**  
Service of Holy Unction
- **10.00am**  
Meeting of Elderly Citizens in Church Hall

**WEDNESDAY 30 APRIL**

- **5.00pm**  
Paraklesis to the Theotokos

**THURSDAY 1 MAY**

- **8.00—9.00pm**



**TEENAGE YOUTH GROUP  
ALL TEENAGERS WELCOME**

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

**\* In downstairs classroom behind the Church building**

**FRIDAY 2 MAY  
Relics of St Athanasius  
the Great**

- **7.30am**  
Orthros and Divine Liturgy

**SUNDAY 4 MAY**

**GOSPEL READING: Mark 15: 43—16:8  
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.

### **Thomas Sunday “Peace be with you!”**

Christ is Risen!!!

We have just spent the last 2 weeks walking with Christ through His triumphal entry into Jerusalem. After ripping Lazarus from the clutches of death, as a little precursor of what was about to come! Straight from the cross, Christ Himself descends into, and completely blows apart Hades. At the service of the procession of the shroud, we sing the Lamentations or Praises between the verses of Psalm 119, describing just how thoroughly Christ shattered the gates, locks and chains with which the devil had bound the race of Adam. We see the broken bits and shattered remains of Hades in the resurrection icon, as Christ hauls Adam and Eve, and us, their offspring out of Hades.

Even if we neglected to take advantage of Great Lent preparations, even if we have come in with the 11<sup>th</sup> hour rush, we are flooded with Paschal joy! It is so precious, and we want to keep this joy, to guard and treasure it!

At Pascha we heard once again the glorious message from St. John Chrysostom that has echoed and been repeated through the centuries, as he addresses death and Hades saying, *“it was embittered for it was slain, it was embittered for it was overthrown, it was embittered for it received a body and encountered God!”*

Christ is Risen, and you are cast down

Christ is Risen and the demons are fallen

Christ is Risen and the angels rejoice

Christ is Risen, and life flourishes

Christ is Risen and there is none dead in the tombs.”

Christ is Risen! It is finished! But we have to choose to believe, to accept what Christ has done for us. The only power the devil has is the ability to lie and try to influence us, to confuse us to the point that we don't wish to choose to run to our ever-waiting Christ. The devil is defeated and wounded and walks around doing what he can to deceive us, to keep us from forgiving all and turning always to Christ, but he has no power over us unless we give it to him. Christ is Risen, and the tombs are emptied! But we can still choose darkness rather than light. Today we hear Christ say to his beloved disciple Thomas, *"be not unbelieving but believing."* Encountering Christ, Thomas's doubt is transformed into belief, and he proclaims that which we must all have resonating in our hearts, *"My Lord and my God."* Christ then speaks to Thomas, and through him to every generation that will follow, *"Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."* That is us my brothers and sisters!

We sometimes have a difficult time accepting that it is truly finished, that everything is accomplished by Christ and all that now remains is for us is to fully accept His great gift. To faithfully follow Him with gratefulness, joy and humility and realize that no matter what our circumstances, Christ is with us and "All is well!" We often judge our circumstances with our limited knowledge, rather than trusting that God is working in all things and is truly everywhere present and filling all things. Yet we know better, God will help us to come to love and serve Christ, and grant us His peace that passes understanding, even in the midst of bewildering pain and great confusion, even when nothing makes sense, when we turn to Him with whatever faith we have, crying out *"I believe Lord, help my unbelief."*

Today we see the resurrected Christ first comes to His followers saying, *"Peace be with you."* Then His next words are *"Peace to you."* They had abandoned Him, denied Him, and were hiding out, living in fear of the Jews who killed their leader. Christ brings no rebuke or condemnation. *"Peace to you"* is what Christ brings as a restorative healing balm. Eight days later when Thomas is now with the rest of the disciples, Christ appears again in the locked room greeting them with *"Peace to you."* Peace in the midst of trouble and persecution, in sorrow and suffering, in hunger and want, even in prosperity and success. Peace in all circumstances. Christ tells them before He goes to His crucifixion. (John 14:27) *"Peace I leave you not as the world gives do I give."* and (John 16:33) *"These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace, in the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."* Every Liturgy we start with *"Glory to God in the highest and on earth, Peace, goodwill to men."* (2X). The same announcement that was made by the multitude of the heavenly host to the shepherds, and through them to all of us at Christ's birth. (Luke 2:14). We start every Liturgy with *"In peace, let us pray to the Lord."* *"For the peace from above and the salvation of our souls, let us pray to the Lord."* *"For the peace of the whole world..."* and we then continue at the next little litanies, *"Again and again in peace, let us pray to the Lord."* One of the most precious anointings that comes with the grace of priestly ordination is the transmitting of Christ's peace to the people of God. Open your hearts wide to receive the peace of Christ, whenever a priest comes out of the Altar to bless you with this gift!

Today is "Antipascha" which means "instead of Pascha," and we refer to our future Sunday Resurrection services as the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>..., Sunday after Pascha. This reminds us that every Sunday Liturgy we again have the opportunity for this joyous renewal, as every Sunday is a mini-Pascha, a celebration of Christ's resurrection. We receive the very body and blood of Christ for *"sanctification, enlightenment, strengthening of our lowly souls and bodies, relief from the burden of our many transgressions, protection against every action of the devil, repulsion and victory over our wicked and evil habits, mortification of our passions, accomplishment of Christ's commandments, increase of His divine grace, and inheritance of the Kingdom of Heaven;"* to quote St. John Chrysostom. And we sing *"Having Beheld the Resurrection of Christ."* We sing this 3 x every day during our Paschal Hours prayers.

Today we are given the same gospel from John 20 as we were given for Paschal Vespers, except instead of only going from Verses 19 – 25 it continues on to verse 31 where we are told *"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."* This is the lesson, this is the point, this is the end game and the most important reason that we read the scriptures. That we may believe that Jesus Christ is who He says He is – the Son of God – and that because we believe and know that He is truly the Son of God, we have salvation and can live in peace, light, love, joy and wonder; and ourselves become the children of God, fulfilling our destiny and becoming that which we were created to be. In Luke (20: 36) Christ says of us who are children of God *"nor can they die anymore, for they are equal to the angels and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection."*

St. Thomas's refusal in his pain and sorrow to accept his fellow apostle's words, really speaks to the great depth of love that he has for his Lord. He didn't want a second-hand experience; he wasn't content to just hear from others that Christ had returned, he wanted a real and living relationship with Christ. Once Saint Thomas knew that Christ was with Him always, unto the end of the ages and once after Pentecost, the Holy Spirit had been sent to lead him into all truth, he did truly remarkable things. He was the apostle to India bringing thousands to faith in Christ and to this day the Christians of Kerala in South India consider themselves "Thomas Christians."

Like Saint Thomas, we also need to have a real connection with Christ. We cannot make it very far in our walk of faith if we base it on simply trusting our parents or culture, or on anyone or anything else other than Christ and His Church. We need to base our trust, our faith on a real and living relationship with Christ Himself. Only Christ is the rock that will never let us down and only He is worthy of receiving our faith. All other humans or systems will let us down at some point and then our faith will be crushed. God has no grandchildren, only sons and daughters. We too like Saint Thomas need to be able to say directly to Christ, with genuine faith and love *"My Lord and my God."*

So, the great lesson of Pascha is that we must believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, that we may open our hearts and cling to Him with all of our being. That we may die with Him and follow Him in His glorious resurrection! May the peace of Christ which He gave to His disciples when He came amongst them with His resurrected body be with you all. Peace be unto all! Christ is Risen!!!

- by Fr Andrew Applegate  
<https://saintaidan.ca>