



ith his searching right hand,
Thomas did probe Thy life-giving
side, O Christ God . . .



Saint Paul the Apostle Orthodox Church

24 BURKE ROAD

FREEHOLD, NJ 07728

St. Thomas Sunday

April 27, 2014

Father Robert E Lucas, Pastor;
Subdeacon Daniel J. Korba and Nikitas Tsokris,
Cantors

Rectory 215-862-9227; Parish Center 732-780-3158

We Are A Stewardship Parish Of Time, Talent and Treasure

The mission of our parish faith community is to teach the Gospel message in the rich tradition of the Orthodox Church; to enable people to reflect the image of Jesus Christ in every day activities of life; to offer spiritual formation through changing times; and to celebrate community among Orthodox believers in our Freehold area.

We of St. Paul the Apostle Parish dedicate ourselves to maintaining the sanctity of worship and spiritual enlightenment in a family environment that reaches and involves all ages and unifies all people.

We believe in the spirit of ecumenism in which we share our faith by word and example and extend our spiritual insights to all people.

We accept the responsibility of Christian Stewardship that through generous giving we may all experience a faith communion with Christ as the Center of our lives.

We dedicate ourselves to insuring the well-being of all people so that we may truly experience the message of Christ's salutary gospel.

We are a beacon on a hill with the eyes of many upon us; that beacon is the inspired Light of Christ which must shine brightly in our lives.

It is not ourselves we preach but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' has shone in our hearts, that we in turn might make known the glory of God shining on the face of Christ. This treasure we possess in earthen vessels to make it clear that its surpassing power comes from God and not from us. We are afflicted in every way possible, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in us 2 Corinthians 4: 5 – 8.

GLAD TIDINGS

+++ Festal Anointing concludes our celebration today in virtue of the Resurrection feasts celebrated this past week.

+++ This Saturday at 9:00 AM we will have a makeup of the All Souls' Day Liturgy cancelled during the Great Fast.

+++ The next Pirohi Sake will be on Saturday, May 10. Please secure orders to assure its success. Helping hands are needed.

+++ Every Monday, we have prayerful devotions before the Myrrh bearing icon at 6:00 PM. Everyone is invited to be present in praise. The Birthgiver invites us to manifest our faith in response to her first shown love, to unite our prayers with hers for the salvation of our souls. Invite your friends and neighbors to join us.

+++ Please keep the intentions of these members of our parish intercession community in your daily prayers: Anna, Barbara, Betty, James, Yevlogia, Maria, Pani Anna Marie and Father George.

+++ The sign-up sheet for both the Web Site and Bulletin sponsors is on the bulletin board in the kitchen. Please sign up as soon as possible. Do NOT make payment until your sign-up month has arrived. This will make it easier for Father to keep track of payments. Thanks in advance to all who support the parish in this way.

+++ We offer thanks to the Blessed Trinity for inspiring generosity in the souls of our faithful and the blessing of abundant grace in our midst with the offering received last Sunday: Tithe Offering, \$407.00; Candles, \$139.00; Great Fast Self-Denial, \$30.00; Holyday, \$231.00; Kitchen, \$729.00; Food Coupons, \$120.00; Resurrection, \$1445.00; Special Gift, \$1000.00, for a total of \$4101.00. We express our profound gratitude to the parishioner communicants who offer their God-given treasure and labored for the sake of the Lord and the good of our parish. God bless and reward you good and faithful souls! The attendance was 44 adults and 13 children last Sunday.

+++ As faithful believers, we intercede and associate ourselves in prayer with the following who have prayed and offered seven day lights for their intentions: Father Lucas, Anna Zacharyczuk, Eleanor Korba, Daniel & Marilyn Korba, Debra Szmaida, Maria Idromenos, Kyra & Joseph Choti, Sophia Choti, Pani Lucas, Betty Samaris, Robert Gorbich, Frank & Maria Pashos, Eleni, Pallas and Pani Buletza.

+++ We make a **PENNIES FROM HEAVEN** Canister available for our faithful to bring in pennies for our altar and its appointments. We are already in receipt of **\$1809.00** from this apostolate. Even your pennies can help and are a blessing to our parish.

+++ Please be certain to see a member of the Parish Council if you would like to help our parish by using **Shop Rite Food Coupons** available in \$20.00 denominations. We invite **ALL** to be caring and supportive and use Grocery Coupons for food shopping as we have gratefully realized \$5750 on this project to date!

+++ The Clothing Drive is a permanent on-going project in our parish. Please bring any type of clothing and fabrics along with stuffed animals and shoes for the benefit of our parish. The bags can be left in the vestibule or on the front porch of the rectory. Please invite your friends and neighbors to assist us in disposing of unwanted clothing, shoes and fabrics.

+++ We invite all pray the Lord our God grants us an enrichment of our spiritual lives for his glory. May we all be so enriched that this Passion Week is particularly rewarding for each of us, to triumph in Resurrection joy!



But Some Doubted

Working Miracles Against Doubt

The living tradition of Orthodoxy teaches us that nothing is fortuitous, nothing occurs by chance. God is present and acting at every moment and through all things, in order to guide the human life and the whole of creation toward fulfillment of his will. This means that He takes upon himself all our struggles or pain, just as He bestows upon us our hope and our joy. In some mysterious way, He also shares in our doubt.

In the biblical accounts, profound meaning is often expressed by small, easily overlooked details. One of the most striking of those details appears at the close of the gospel of St. Matthew. In obedience to Christ's command, the disciples leave Jerusalem and come to an unnamed mountain in Galilee. The evangelist continues, "And when they saw him" – the risen Christ – "they worshipped him, but some doubted" Matthew 28: 17.

The other gospels also bear witness to the doubt experienced by some of those who encountered either the empty tomb or the risen Lord. St. Mark seems originally to have ended with 16: 14 and shows Jesus upbraiding the other disciples "for their unbelief and hardness of heart" Mark 16: 14. Because they refused to believe the women's testimony once it was delivered to them.

In his Resurrection narrative, St. Luke attempts to soften the disciples' reaction with a qualification, "And while they still disbelieved for joy...." Luke 24: 41. Their disbelief, nevertheless, was real.

Finally, the evangelist John focuses the disciples' doubt in the person of St. Thomas. It was his unbelief that prompted Jesus to show his hands and side as proof of his bodily Resurrection. In response, Thomas uttered the Scriptures' most sublime confession: "My Lord and my God." Yet, later on the disciples continued to doubt, as shown by their reaction to Jesus' appearance on the Sea of Tiberius.

In his homily on the end of St. Matthew's gospel, St. John Chrysostom makes a significant point regarding the evangelist's candid admission that some of the disciples doubted, even in the presence of the risen Lord. To Chrysostom, this demonstrates the truthfulness of the tradition, and the willingness on the part of each evangelist to speak frankly of the disciples' weaknesses and shortcomings.

The Holy Passover, the celebration of Christ's victory over death, most often elicits among Orthodox believers an unparalleled outpouring of thanksgiving and joy. This response comes to its fullest expression in Passion Week services, culminating with the midnight Passover office, followed by the Divine Liturgy. The Passover is, above all, a feast of light and joy, of mutual embracing in mutual forgiveness and reconciliation. It offers a glorious foretaste of the Great Feast, the everlasting banquet to come.

Yet, with all its illuminating brightness, and celebration of victory, some doubted then and some continue to do so even now.

When I look at the poverty of my own faith and the paucity of works of love that flow from it, I wonder just how I came to believe in the first place. All it takes is an unpleasant phone call, or too many demands on my time, or simply getting out of the wrong side of the bed in the morning, and I find myself in a mild depression. In that state I cannot pray – no, the truth is – I simply don't want to pray. I just want to be left alone: by family, by friends by people in the church and maybe above all, by our heavenly Father himself. Then doubt sets in, not as a rational rejection of the object of my belief, but as an escape from myself and my bad mood, my inability to deal adequately with myself or others in a sinful and fallen world. Doubt in those times is a real convenience.

There are other moments, though, when doubt takes on a more insidious form. As news reports of thousands killed in an earthquake, or of terrorist bombings that not only destroy and maim innocent people, or of priests arrested for child molestation; these things sometimes call up a frustrated and angry question: "Why, God, did you allow it?" – as if I could somehow fathom the mystery of God's workings and will, even if they were revealed to me.

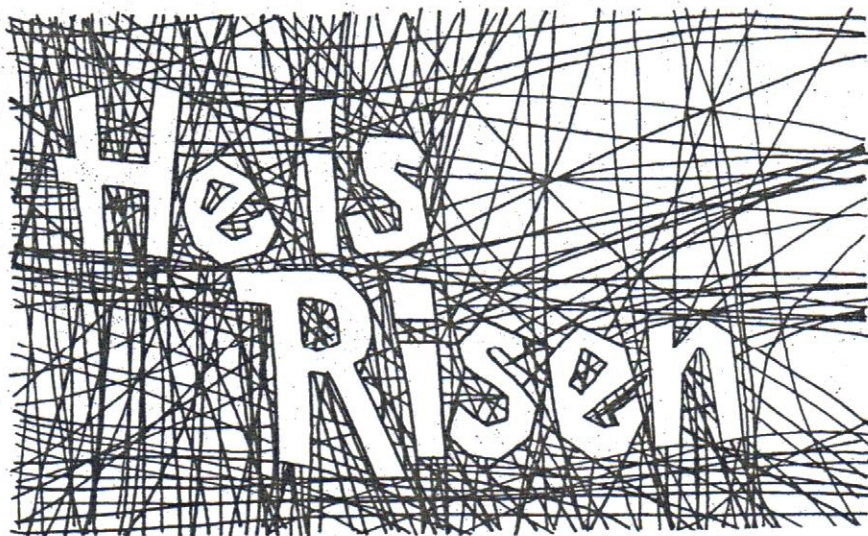
But of all these, the worst is when I allow the faith I have been gifted by God to be shaken by "thoughts," those demonic voices the Father knew so well, that whisper insidiously into my ear, "is it really true? Isn't it just a myth, neatly constructed, wrapped and delivered by those who want to believe, and therefore want us to believe, yet whose assertions are less fact than wishful thinking?" In those most awful moments, it feels as though the substance of my faith is slipping away, that my mind is betraying me by offering rationalizations I cannot logically

reject. Then life itself seems to be ebbing away, and with it peace, longing and any sense of hope. Those are the worst times, and they have the power to destroy.

The thread that up to now has somehow bound me to a modicum of faith, despite myself, is the memory of a few holy people and a few holy events I have been blessed to know and experience. The face, wrinkled and radiant, of an old peasant woman who suffered through the revolution in her native land, lost her family in their own holocaust, and spent decades in exile. An icon that wept tears of myrrh and filled the sacred space of the little parish church with the perfume of heaven. A Divine Liturgy sung with such inspired power became appealing and uplifting. A gesture of wholly disinterested, sacrificial love that exhausted the giver yet brought new life to the one who received. A little child who, many years ago, brought me to tears with the simple question, "Daddy, does God love me as much as He loves you?"

These are the things and experiences that work miracles against my doubt. Like the faith I claim, and so often take for granted, they are pure gift, wholly unmerited.

When I feel God and life and truth slipping away into a fog of doubt, there remains that perilously thin thread of memory: the memory of grace richly endowed, of goodness in the heart and soul of others, and of their love so freely shown to me. Then because God is infinitely faithful, and because countless souls before me have known and lived in the truth and joy of Christ's Resurrection, I find myself able to make the simple confessional prayer we are all invited to make our own: "Lord, I believe, help me in my unbelief!"



Sunday of Saint Thomas

*Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me,
even though he dies, will live*

John 11: 25.

It is no wonder that our Lord is named after many good things in the gospel narratives. If we look at the names by which the Son of God is called, we understand how many of these good things He is for us. One good thing is life and Jesus describes himself as LIFE. Another good thing is the light of the world when it is true light that enlightens seekers after salvation. And the Son of God is called to be all these things. Another good thing, in addition to life and light is truth. A fourth is the way that leads to truth. Our Saviour teaches us that He is all these things when He insists, "I am the Way and the Truth and the Life."

How exhilarating and wonderful it is that our Lord shook off the earth and mortality in his human nature, to rise again! And it is we who have obtained this benefit from the Lord that He is the resurrection at the time of the death of Lazarus. He says, "I am the resurrection." The door through which one enters into the greatest joy is also good, so our Lord insists for us, "I am the door." We must not neglect mentioning the Word who is God after the Father of all. Happy then are those who accept these truths from the Saviour and receive them from those who announce God's blessings.

So we see that in Christ there is no sunset; there are only sunrises. He is the "bright morning star" not the evening star. He heralds the dawn's brightness, not the dark. He does not conduct funerals, because He is resurrection, for himself and for all of us who are faithful to him. Because of him we rise as well. He is the source of our resurrection. He resurrects continually our mind, our body, our spirit, our hopes, our outlook, our every thing. In him we are victorious even now.

We salute the resurrection in which He triumphs. We believe in the resurrection because He obtained it for us. We already know resurrection joy because each time we sin, each time we fall and receive forgiveness in the sacramental Mystery of Reconciliation, we rise from spiritual death to life-imparting resurrection.

Thus, our experience as followers of Christ is different from that of Thomas. As believers we already know resurrection from the captivity of sin. History is replete with

those who have delusions of grandeur about themselves. Some have even been willing to die for their cause. But like all men, they were defeated by death. As we dig up their graves, we find the remains of their bodies. But that is precisely what makes Christ so unique. He predicted his death, his burial and that after three days would come out of the grave victorious over death.

Orthodox believers do not need what Thomas wanted. Through his death we are redeemed and through his blood our sin is washed away. Christ's resurrection validates what He did on the cross. Resurrection for the believer is the sweetest word human ears can hear.

Four hundred years before Christ, the Greek philosopher Socrates lay dying from poison. He was considered the wisest teacher in the world, but when his friends asked, "Shall we live again?" he could only answer, "I hope so, but no man knows for sure."

In the Book of Job, another man asks the same question "If a man dies, shall he live again" Job 14: 14? It is an age old question and haunts many people and tests every religious persuasion – the most crucial question of the ages. St. Paul reminds us that some live all their lives in bondage to the fear of death. "...Jesus likewise had a full share in ours, that by his death he might rob the devil, the prince of death, of his power and free those who through fear of death had been slaves their whole life long" Hebrews 2: 14, 15.

Thomas was apparently one of those who thought that way. He was looking for contrary proof. Without some assurance of life after death, death becomes a terrifying proposition. So today is proof of why we can celebrate the resurrection because it answers that age-old question once and for all. The resurrection takes us out of the realm of mere speculative thinking into actual experience. Today we are shown there is life beyond this life!





DOUBTING THOMAS



S K S R S Q C C K N F S K C M I B N
D C R S T N I R P L I A N L M Z G C
N I O I P G O X R Z N X G T V Q O H
G D O Q Y O J N H F G N I B O R P F
H T D J M N I K G T E N N O N Q O R
I F D I T H Z I H I R D I E Y E O P
G E E Q S E A E W Y S R I T B A O C
J N K I S C L N F L A D G S B M W A
I R C F L O I V H B L P D Y S U E P
X M O O R E I P S Y E S X S T I O Y
U X L D L Z B E L P C L U S D V H D
X O D P L S N N N E Q H I S B N P X
P N J R Q T A Y U I S D U E E R A I
L K P H S N T M Y G M T M P V J Q H
L Z P E X W E O O B B A W K T E O A
B F L P I Q W E I H H X X B K D R Q
J B N P E R S I S T T I V E H Q S X
Y A J Z I U Z Q T D N Q K A U D I K

ABSENT

DOUBTING

HIS SIDE

PERSIST

JESUS

PROBING

BELIEVER

UNBELIEF

DISCIPLES

NAIL PRINTS

EXAMINE

BLEST

SEEN

HANDS

LOCKED DOORS

SIGN

THE LORD

FINGERS

THOMAS

ROOM



WISDOM! BE ATTENTIVE

Though the grave had been sealed, from the grave You arose, O Christ our God, our Life, and though the door had been locked, You appeared among the disciples, O Resurrection of all, thus You restored for us an upright spirit according to Your great mercy Troparion, Sunday of St. Thomas.

Thomas placed his own restless hand into Your life-giving side, O Christ God, and since You entered although the doors were locked, he cried out to You with the other apostles: "You are my Lord and my God!" Kontakion, Sunday of St. Thomas.

Great is the Lord and mighty in power: to His wisdom there is no end Prokimenon, Sunday of St. Thomas.

When the doors were closed and the disciples were gathered together, You suddenly appeared in their midst, O Jesus our Almighty God. You granted them peace and filled them with the Holy Spirit; You commanded them to wait and not depart from Jerusalem until they were clothed with power from on high. Therefore, we cry out to You, O Lord: Glory to You, our Light, our Resurrection, and our Peace Vesper Hymn, Sunday of St. Thomas.

Even though the doors were closed, You came to Your disciples, O Christ, and Thomas called the Twin, was not with them. Therefore, he did not believe what they told him. You did not deem him unworthy for his lack of faith, but in Your goodness, You confirmed his faith by showing him Your pure side and the wounds in Your hands and feet. He touched them, and when he saw You, he confessed You to be neither an abstract God nor merely human; and he cried out: My Lord and My God, glory to You! Vesper Hymn, Sunday of St. Thomas.

On the eighth day the Saviour came to the doubting disciples. He granted them peace and said to Thomas: O Apostle, come and touch My hands which were pierced by nails. How wonderful is this doubt of Thomas! It brought the hearts of believers to the knowledge of God. Therefore, he cried out with fear: My Lord and my God, glory to You! Vesper Hymn, Sunday of St. Thomas.

Keep On Going

**One step won't take you very far;
You've got to keep on walking.
One word won't tell people who you are;
You've got to keep on talking.
One inch won't make you very tall;
You've got to keep on growing.
One little call won't do it all,
You've got to keep on going.**

How to be a witness for Christ

If you really want to prove to the world you belong to Christ, that you will provide his example to the people you encounter. If you wish to witness with Christ's example, here are some things you can do:

Pray for personal victory in remaining faithful yourself. If you are defeated personally, you can never become a dynamic witness for the cause of Christ.

Pray for lost people in particular. There may be some among your loved ones. There most surely are some among your friends and acquaintances. Pray for them by name. Place them on a prayer list and keep them on your mind and in your heart.

Pray for divine direction and guidance. Pray that God will lead you to someone who needs Christ and that He will help you say just the right word. The Holy Spirit can guide you in both areas.

Pray for your parish priest and all the services your parish provides every time you are at worship. When your pastor is preaching, pray for him, when he prays, join your prayer to his. Each time there is a worship service, whether it be the Divine Liturgy, devotions or other services, make sure you are there to be a silent witness of your own devotion to Christ.

Let Us Pray

on this Holy Resurrection Day

Let our prayer continue
through a joyous waking spring
in thanking God for everything
a newborn spring can bring.

And in the Resurrection
that takes place in nature's sod,
let us understand more fully
the risen Saviour, Son of God.

And let us see the beauty
and the glory and the grace
that surrounds us in the springtime
as the smiling of God's face.

And through a happy springtime
and summer filled with love,
may we walk into the autumn
with our thoughts on God above.

The God who sends the winter
and wraps the earth in death
will always send the springtime
with an awakening breath
to every flower and leaflet
and to every shrub and tree
and that same God will also send
new life to you and me.



Wisdom Of
The



Byzantine
Fathers

The root of all good works is the hope of the resurrection; for the expectation of recompense prompts the soul to good works. For every laborer is ready to endure the toils if they see their reward in prospect; but when men weary themselves for nothing, their hearts soon sink, as well as their bodies St. Cyril of Jerusalem.

The women, with mingled joy and fear, joy and sorrow, turned away from the tomb, as Scripture teaches, to meet the apostles; and they said, 'Why are you disheartened? Why do you hide your faces? Lift up your hearts! Christ is risen! Form choruses and sing along with us, "The Lord is risen!" He has come forth, He who appeared before the dawn of time is risen before the dawn of day. Do not be downcast, but take courage! Spring has appeared; come to bloom, you branches, producing fruit and not misery. He offers resurrection to the fallen!' St. Romanos the Melodist.

❖ OBSERVATIONS ON ST. THOMAS SUNDAY ❖

On this Sunday after Pascha, our Church observes the memory of that event involving doubting Thomas. Jesus took this occasion to teach us several profound truths that transcend the ages. Here are three observations we can glean from it:

1) First we learn that absenting ourselves from church and from the fellowship of Christians can lead to trouble. Thomas missed out on the joy of the first Pascha because he was absent from the gathering of those who loved the Lord. His absence led to further difficulties. All this could have been avoided if he had come to church that day.

2) Secondly, we learn something about "doubt." It is not a sin to have an honest doubt about a tenet in our Faith. But this does impose an obligation on our part to find out and resolve the doubt. That is what Thomas did. He doubted the Resurrection of our Lord. So he came to the place where the apostles gathered to find out for himself. He received a gracious reception from Christ. The Lord knew of the aching in his heart and replaced it with an ardent belief in Christ.

This has been the experience of many who have sought for the answers to their doubts. Thomas is merely the first in a long line of people who have searched for the answers to life's greatest questions, and have found them at the foot of Christ.

3) Thirdly, we realize that ours is a living faith. Surely the person who has such a belief in Christ as God is blessed. He does not limit his belief to the testimony of his senses -- for he has not seen the resurrected Lord. Yet, he holds in his heart the truth of God's Word.