

Thomas Sunday

John 20:19-31

Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you. And when He had so said, He shewed unto them His hands and His side. Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the LORD. Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as My Father hath sent Me, even so send I you. And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost: Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained. But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came. The other disciples therefore said unto him, We have seen the LORD. But he said unto them, Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe. And after eight days again His disciples were within, and Thomas with them: then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you. Then saith He to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold My hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into My side: and be not faithless, but believing. And Thomas answered and said unto Him, My LORD and my God. Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen Me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed. And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book: But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name. (KJV)

Hristos Voskrese! Vaistinu Voskrese!

Christ is Risen! Indeed He is Risen!

God's Holy Church is continuing to celebrate the Resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. Resurrection joy continues to permeate the Divine services and believers' hearts, minds and souls.

Today's Gospel describes the Resurrected Jesus appearing to the Holy Apostles at a time Thomas was absent. The Apostles blessed to be present when Jesus appeared were convinced of His Resurrection.

When Thomas learned from the other Apostles of their experience, he remained doubtful. Thomas wanted proof for himself that Jesus had risen from the dead.

Jesus appeared to the Apostles again when Thomas was present. Thomas had the opportunity to reach forth and touch the Risen Jesus. He was convinced and proclaimed "My Lord and my God!"

Since Jesus' ascension into heaven, believers have not had the opportunity to view the Risen Jesus in person. Beginning with the Holy Apostles and continuing through the centuries, the Church has proclaimed the truth about Jesus' Resurrection.

The Church offers teachings and experiences with Jesus Christ through the Divine services and Holy Mysteries. Jesus told Thomas in the present Gospel "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed."

At Holy Baptism, believers confess belief in Jesus Christ as King and as God. Believers reaffirm belief in Jesus Christ's Virgin Birth, Death on the Cross and Resurrection each time The Creed is recited during the Divine Liturgy.

Believers experience Jesus in Baptism, Chrismation, and when partaking of His Precious Body and Blood during the Divine Liturgy. Christ is experienced in the marriage service, during ordination and anointing at Holy Unction.

Believers feel Jesus' presence in prayer and in daily life occurrences. Jesus is alive in believers' hearts, minds and souls and has always been. Proof of Jesus' presence is verified by believers of every age from their personal experience.

Skeptics and naysayers about Jesus are always present. Opponents and enemies of Jesus always exist. Evil seeks to triumph over Jesus and Jesus' followers. Serious believers draw strength and conviction from their personal experiences.

Serious believers know from personal experience that Jesus Christ is very much alive in their hearts, minds and souls. On Holy Saturday believers hear the enduring and reassuring words from the Risen Christ.

On Holy Saturday, St. Matthew's Gospel is read. The Risen Jesus tells His disciples: "I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." (Mt.28:20) The Church celebrates Jesus' Resurrection until the Feast of Ascension.

Every Divine Liturgy is a celebration of Jesus' Resurrection. Believers have opportunities to share the joy of Jesus' Resurrection with others in daily life. Jesus' defeat of death is the message to share with others and not to be kept hidden.

Jesus' defeat of death is the antidote to the depression and gloom prevalent in today's world. Jesus Christ risen from the dead is the triumphant joy filling hearts of believers in all of life's circumstances.

Pascha is called the Feast of Feasts because death is defeated and the possibility of eternal life is verified. The joy of Pascha is a joy to share with others unaware of the true meaning of the Resurrection.

The Risen Jesus is triumphant over evil and death! The Risen Jesus brings joy that cannot be stifled. The Risen Jesus shines the Light capable of eradicating the world's darkness. The Risen Jesus is the peace that passes all understanding. (Phil.4:7)

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Thomas Sunday. St. Basil of Ostrog, Wonderworker. Holy Martyr Basil, Baker from Pech. April 29/May 12, 2024. Hidden Valley, Pennsylvania.

Father Rodney Torbic