

Saint Nicholas Serbian Orthodox Church

971 St. Clair Rd, Johnstown, PA 15905

Rev. Presbyter Dragan Vukovic

(814) 244-4063

Thomas Sunday (04.23.2023.)

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 continues to celebrate the Resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ with great joy. After having been put to death on the Cross and risen from the Tomb, the Lord Jesus Christ visited his disciples.

St. John's Gospel for today describes the disciples' experience with the Risen Jesus Christ. Christ's Resurrection is verified in the present Gospel. The disciples' witnessing of the Risen Christ is clearly documented.

Holy Apostle Thomas had his doubts removed when he had the opportunity to personally see the Risen Christ. To this very day, God's Holy Church continues to celebrate the Resurrection in the present.

The Church proclaims with conviction: "Christ is Risen!" Believers everywhere respond with certainty: "Indeed He is Risen!" Minds, hearts and souls of believers are filled with the joy of the Risen Christ.

Churches around the world and through the centuries have proclaimed and have celebrated the Resurrection with conviction and great certainty. Daily life changes with the celebration of the Resurrection.

The Resurrection causes hope to rise and guides Christian lives. Gloom is erased. Believers are empowered in the Risen Christ. The Risen Jesus brings peace and is the Source of peace for believers.

Church services are radiant in celebrating the Resurrection. The Risen Christ illuminates the future for believers. The door to eternal life is firmly open for seekers of God's Kingdom.

Death's barrier is removed by the Lord Jesus Christ. Believers have reason to greet each day with joy. Christians share the wonderful news of the Resurrection with each other.

Language barriers are transcended as the news of the Resurrection spreads through the centuries and around the world. God's Holy Church fills with overflowing joy in celebrating the Risen Christ.

The Gospel of the Holy Apostle and Evangelist John serves as an authoritative source for verifying the Resurrection. The Gospel message is proclaimed in parish churches and monasteries everywhere.

Believers have their belief in the Resurrection confirmed in the unfolding of each day of life. The Risen Christ is readily apparent for those with eyes to see and the faith to believe.

Holy Thomas exclaimed: "My Lord and my God!" when he met the Risen Christ. Believers of every century experiencing the Risen Christ make the same exclamation in the way they go about living.

Thomas Sunday holds great importance in the Church. Thomas Sunday testifies to the Resurrection celebrated on Pascha. The Church witnesses to and proclaims the Resurrection on Sundays throughout the year.

Believers verify and witness to the Resurrection in their personal relationships throughout earthly life. At Baptism believers die and rise with Christ. Resurrection joy is central to the hearts, minds and souls of believers.

The Church will continue to celebrate the Resurrection in the days ahead. Believers immersed in the joy are transformed by Christ. Parish churches, Christian homes and communities experience the great difference the Resurrection makes.

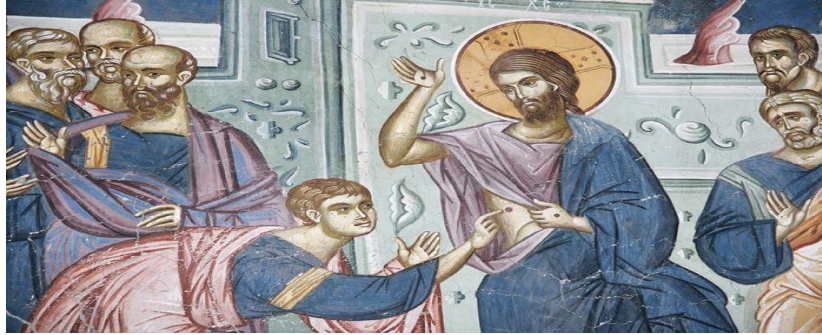
The Resurrection offers great Light. The Resurrection is the embodiment of Hope. Thomas Sunday adds to the proof for conviction and action. Peace rises to the fore on Thomas Sunday.

Jesus Christ's Resurrection is the foundation for the greatest awe! Offer unending gratitude to the Risen Christ. Join with the Holy Apostle Thomas and firmly proclaim: "My Lord and my God!"

Thomas Sunday. Holy Hieromartyr Terence. April 10/23, 2023. Hidden Valley, Pennsylvania.
Father Rodney Torbic

BELIEF AND UNBELIEF

Homily on Thomas Sunday



It was very, very, extremely hard for the apostles to believe that the Lord Jesus Christ had risen.

They considered the words of the [Myrrh-bearers](#) who brought them this news to be lies. When they went to Galilee, to the mountain as Jesus had commanded them, and saw Him, some fell down and worshipped Him while others stood petrified and did not believe their own eyes.

When Jesus appeared to all of them in the [upper room in Jerusalem](#), they thought that they were seeing a spirit.

Strongest of all was the unbelief of the [apostle Thomas](#), who had to place his fingers on the wounds from the nails on the Savior's hands and feet and his hand on His side before he would believe.

Why did the apostles believe even their own eyes with such difficulty? After all, they were witnesses to the Lord Jesus resurrecting the son of the widow of Nain, the daughter of Jairus, and even [Lazarus](#), the four days dead.

But after all, these were the acts of a very great Miracle Worker, and the dead did not resurrect of their own strength; but to believe in the possibility of a dead body coming back to life by itself, of its own power, was immeasurably more difficult.

Thus, it was extremely difficult for Christ's apostles to believe even what they saw with their own eyes.

But for us who have seen neither the living nor the resurrected Jesus—is it harder or easier to believe what we read in the Gospels and in the writings of the holy apostles? Oh, of course it's easier, much easier—for the great multitude of historical facts and events convince us beyond a doubt of the truth of Christ's resurrection.

What is there to say about the fact that the preaching of unlearned Galilean fishermen and their successors over the course of just a few centuries won over the entire inhabited world of the time—not only cultured Greeks and Romans, but even half-wild Germans, Galls, and Celts, and dealt a fatal blow to paganism?

Could this have been possible if Christ had not risen? Wouldn't have any preaching about the Crucified One as the Son of God been met everywhere only with mockery?

Would it have been thinkable that tens of thousands of holy martyrs would have gone to horrifying tortures and terrible deaths if they did not believe in the Resurrection of Christ and were not on fire with love for the Conqueror of death?

Would the hard ascetic labors of fasting and prayer of numberless anchorites and monks for the sake of knowing the Lord Jesus Christ and for the acquisition of the mind of Christ have been possible?

Millions upon millions of people of all ages and sexes were true Christians, especially during the first fourteen centuries since the Birth of Christ.

However, no matter how enormous was the power of preaching and the works of Christ, no matter how the Son of God's death on the Cross and His Resurrection from the dead shook the world, not all believed in Him.

Already among the Lord Jesus's and His apostles' contemporaries even the majority of God's chosen Jewish race did not believe in Him.

Unbelief, which has crashed like a huge wave over our modern nations of Europe and America, all formerly Christian, is ever growing and spreading. It began of course not during the Renaissance era of science and arts, not from Voltaire and the other Encyclopedists, but incomparably earlier, already during the first century after the Birth of Christ.

What does this mean? It means that our Lord and God Jesus Christ does not forcibly draw people's hearts to Himself, something He of course could do with His divine power, but looks for voluntary love and faith.

Not every heart joyfully accepts His great commandments. Proud and domineering people laugh at the commandments of poverty of spirit, meekness, and mercy; they do not even think about God's higher and eternal truth, they only want to hear about the rightness of social relationships, and they consider only proper relationships between nations to be the highest ideal.

Do many want to be persecuted for righteousness sake, to be reviled and slandered for Christ's sake?

Do many enter through the straight gates by the narrow path, so that at the end of their difficult road they might hear the blessed call: *Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world* (Matt. 24:34)?

What will the scientist say to you if you try to preach Christ to him? Of course he will reply with annoyance, “Don’t bother me, I am busy with my science, because for me all truth is in it.”

The apostle Paul speaks in his epistle to the Corinthians about the wise and prudent who have rejected faith in God for the sake of science: *For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God. For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men. For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are* (1 Cor. 18–28).

Even during His earthly life, our Lord Jesus Christ called those who believe in Him His “little flock”.

Do not be disturbed by this, but rejoice. And know that belonging to this flock throughout the ages and until the present day are very many quite important scientists, scholars, and philosophers, who were able to combine their belief in science with their higher faith in God and His Christ. And of those who reject religion based upon scientific data, the vast majority in fact have nothing to do with science and talk about it only on hearsay.

And for you, simple, unlearned people, let the words of Christ be a strong support: *Except ye be converted,^[1] and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven* (Matt. 18:3).

St. Luke (Voino-Yasenetsky), Archbishop of Simferopol

Services this Week

❖ **Friday – 11.18.'22 – PARACLESIS - THE OFFICE OF SUPPLICATION TO SAINT NECTARIOS -05:00 PM – Confession**

Donations April 15-17, 2023

Offering - \$ 5,500.00 Candles - \$139.00

Donations

St. Nicholas Men's Club- \$250

Miller's Funeral Home - \$500

Building Fund

Eli Cvijanovich - \$100

In Memory Of Millie Moncilovich - Milena Rudman - \$50
and Scott & Leah Olivolo - \$25

Large Candles

In Memory of Mike & Mildred Tumbas from Kathleen McDowell
In Memory of Bosiljka & Lazo Vuckovich from Dan & Dyne Tomak
In Memory of Julia & Demetrias Lambrinos from Dan & Dyne Tomak
In Memory of Andrew Grisin from Richard Kondas
In Memory of Damenja & Lazo Gjurich from Diane and Dan Tomak
In Memory of Connie Bartis from Bartis & Pavich Family

Thank you to the following who purchased flowers to decorate the tomb and the church for Pascha: Joe Golden, Goyko, Rose & Kristina Marinkovich, Carly Zahurak, Joe Bartis, Linda & Tony Freidhoff, Joanne Uzelac, Mike Stipanovich, Michele Goas, Eli Cvijanovich, John & Patricia Pavich, Richard Kondas, Helene Gleason, Danica B. Wess, Diane Thomas, Carole McAllister, Dan & Diane Tomak, Michelle Nesdaore, Evelyn Walet, Laura Malich, Suzette & Richard Gardenhour, George Kohan, Peter & Joanne Todorich, Peti Gjurich, Lazo & Deb Gjurich, Natalie Ofsanko, Jencine Campagna, & Donna Zimmerman.

PLEASE TAKE YOUR FLOWERS AFTER DIVINE LITURGY TODAY AND/OR HELP WATER THE REMAINING FLOWERS TO KEEP THEM BEAUTIFUL!!!

There will be a Kolo meeting on Sunday, April 23rd following Divine Liturgy

UPCOMING EVENTS

Sunday, May 21st – Anniversary Celebration

Polka-Fest June 2-4, 2023

Band of Brothers – July 13-15 & 19-22, 2023



Taste of Serbia – August 12, 2023



Slavic Festival – September 15-16, 2023