

Thomas Sunday

Second Sunday of Pascha

22 April / 5 May



Troparion of Thomas Sunday, Tone 7: While the tomb was sealed, Thou, O Life, didst shine forth from the grave, O Christ God. And while the doors were shut, Thou didst come unto Thy disciples, O Resurrection of all, renewing through them an upright Spirit in us according to Thy great mercy. Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, both now and ever, and unto the ages of ages. Amen.

Kontakion of Thomas Sunday, Tone 8: With his searching right hand, Thomas did probe Thy life-bestowing side, O Christ God; for when Thou didst enter while the doors were shut, he cried out unto Thee with the rest of the disciples: Thou art my Lord and my God.

The Holy and Glorious Apostle Thomas - He was one of the twelve Great Apostles. Through his doubt of the Resurrection of the Lord Christ, a new confirmation was given of that wonderful and saving event, for the risen Lord appeared again to His disciples, to convince Thomas. The Lord said to Thomas: Reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into My side; and be not faithless, but believing', and Thomas cried: 'My Lord and my God! (John 20). After the descent of the Holy Spirit, when the apostles cast lots to see who would go where to preach the Gospel, it fell to Thomas to go to India. He was somewhat saddened at having to go so far away, but the Lord appeared to him and comforted him. In India, St Thomas converted many, both rich and poor, to the Christian faith, and founded a Church there, making priests and bishops. Among others, St Thomas converted two sisters, Tertiana and Mygdonia, wives of Indian princes. Both sisters were ill-treated for their faith by their husbands, who would not live with them after their baptism, and divorced them. Being freed from their marriages, they lived godly lives till their deaths. Dionysius and Pelagia, a couple at first betrothed to each other, heard the Apostle's teaching and did not live together, but devoted themselves to the ascetic life. Pelagia died a martyr for the Faith and Dionysius was made bishop by the Apostle. Prince Misdaeus, the husband of Tertiana, whose wife and son Iuzanes Thomas baptised, condemned the Apostle to death, and sent five soldiers who ran him through with their lances, and thus the holy Apostle Thomas gave his soul into the hands of his Christ. Before his death, he, with the other apostles, was miraculously borne to Jerusalem for the funeral of the most holy Mother of God. Arriving late, he grieved bitterly and, at his request, the tomb of the Most Pure was opened, but the body was not there; the Lord had taken His Mother to His heavenly home. Thus St Thomas first, by his unbelief, confirmed the faith in the Resurrection of the Lord and then, by his late arrival, revealed to us the wondrous glorification of the Mother of God.

Matins Gospel I

Epistle: St. Acts of the Apostles 5: 12 -20

And through the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were done among the people. And they were all with one accord in Solomon's Porch. Yet none of the rest dared join them, but the people esteemed them highly. And believers were increasingly added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women, So that they brought the sick out into the streets and laid them on beds and couches, that at least the shadow of Peter passing by might fall on some of them. Also a multitude gathered from the surrounding cities to Jerusalem, bringing sick people and those who were tormented by unclean spirits, and they were all healed. Then the high priest rose up, and all those who were with him (which is the sect of the Sadducees), and they were filled with indignation, And laid their hands on the apostles and put them in the common prison. But at night an angel of the Lord opened the prison doors and brought them out, and said, "Go, stand in the temple and speak to the people all the words of this life."

MANY SIGNS AND WONDERS WERE DONE AMONG THE PEOPLE

For though the Apostles themselves modestly ascribe it all to this cause, declaring that they did these things in the name of Christ, yet at the same time the life and noble conduct of the men helped to produce this effect ...Observe how he now no longer tells the number of those who believe: at such a rate was the faith making way even to an immense multitude, and also widely was the Resurrection proclaimed. So then 'the people magnified them': but they were now no longer lightly to be despised as once they were: for in a little moment, at a single turn of the scale, such have been the effects produced by the fisherman and the publican! Earth had become a heaven, for manner of life, for boldness of speech, for wonders, for all: like angels they were looked upon with wonder.

St. John Chrysostom. Homily XII on Acts V B#55. p. 78.

The Gospel According To St. 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, Jesus came and stood in the midst, and said to them, "Peace be with you." When He had said this, He showed them His hands and His side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. So Jesus said to them again, "Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you." And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained." Now Thomas, called the Twin, one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. The other disciples therefore said to him, "We have seen the Lord." So he said to them, "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." And after eight days His disciples were again inside, and Thomas with them. Jesus came, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, "Peace to you!" Then He said to Thomas, "Reach your finger here, and look at My hands; and reach your hand here, and put it into My side. Do not be unbelieving, but believing." And Thomas answered and said to Him, "My Lord and my God!" Jesus said to him, "Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed." And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; 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.

Today, the first Sunday after Pascha, is often called "Thomas Sunday" because on this day we complete the reading of the Gospel of Thomas' unbelief and recount our Lord's second appearance to the disciples inviting Thomas to place his fingers in the print of the nails in His hands and his hand into the spear wound on His side to verify that indeed He has risen bodily from the grave. This selection of the Gospel, which was begun at the Paschal Vespers on Sunday and which was completed today reveals to us a very important truth – that the entire Bright Week is not simply a collection of seven days as it appears, but is in fact mystically a single day – the day of Resurrection, the day of Pascha. Today is the first day after this mystical week long day of Pascha.

Today also has another name in the tradition of the Church: today is called "Anti-Pascha". This might sound funny to our Western English attuned ears, because the Greek prefix "anti-" has taken on a rather refined and restricted meaning in modern English. To those of us who are accustomed to hearing English, the prefix "anti-" means "opposed to" or "against", however, in Greek the meaning is somewhat different. In Greek, this prefix "anti-" means "another" or "in place of" and does not carry the emotional implication of an enemy or opponent.

Therefore we have the term "anti-doron" for the bread which is distributed at the end of the Liturgy. In this case it means the bread ("doron") that is "in place of" Holy Communion and is given to those who for some reason are not able to receive the mysteries. Technically, antidoron only refers to the bread that remains from the loaf after the portion for the lamb is removed and this bread is to be taken and consumed only by Orthodox Christians who have kept the communion fast. In practice, this bread is usually reserved and used only in the Zapivka (Aftersupper) which is given to those who have just received or it is consumed by the celebrating clergy. In the Russian tradition of using 5 separate loaves for the preparation, that leaves the other 4 loaves which are then cut up and distributed at the kissing of the cross and which can be received by any pious person even though they have not fasted. Even so this bread is "blessed" and so should be eaten with reverence.

Another term which incorporates this prefix "anti-" is the reference to the great enemy of the Church, the servant of the evil one who in the last times will be revealed as the enemy of Christ, that is, the Antichrist. Again, to restrict the meaning of this title to mean only the "enemy" or "opponent" of Christ and to assume that his evil will be therefore be apparent is to strip some of the meaning from the term. If we take the full meaning of this term "anti-" then the "Antichrist" becomes "the one who is in place of Christ" or "another Christ". We know that the evil one is "a liar and the father of lies" and so when he presents to us "another Christ" his intent is not to enter into open war with us but to deceive us into accepting a counterfeit "in place of" our Lord Jesus Christ. Anyone (or for that matter, anything) that takes the place of Christ can therefore be called antichrist; but we must not forget that these small antichrists are only the foreshadowing of the final Antichrist who will deceive the whole world and, if possible, even the elect. For this reason, the Holy Apostle John in his pastoral epistles can speak of "many antichrists" which are even now in the world saying, "He is antichrist who denies the Father and the Son." and, "whoever does not confess that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is a deceiver and an antichrist." (1 John 2:18 & 22, 2 John 7) Whenever we place someone or something else in the place of Jesus Christ in our lives, we have turned our allegiance to an "antichrist", that is, to "another Christ, in place of the true Christ".

Now when we say that today is Anti-Pascha, we are saying that even though the mystical day that is Pascha has ended, today is "another Pascha". And today is not just any "Anti-Pascha" but it is the Anti-Pascha – the first of all the anti-Paschas. What we are to learn from this that every Sunday is considered an Anti-Pascha – that is "another Pascha". On every Sunday we celebrate again the Queen of Feasts, the Most Glorious Resurrection of Christ. We see this in many ways, for example, in our fasting rule, in our behaviour and in our services.

As a rule any important feast when it coincides with a fast day, will result in a relaxation of the fast. Therefore, whenever Sunday falls on a fast day, even during Great Lent, then the fast is always relaxed, even a little bit, so that we might know that

this is a great feast, the feast of the Resurrection – it is “another Pascha”. If it would otherwise be a strict fast (as during Great Lent) on Sundays we take a little wine and we cook with oil. If Sunday is already a “wine and oil” day, then fish is permitted (as we see in the Nativity fast). There is never a case where the day of the Resurrection does not result in some relaxation of the fast.

During the entire Paschal season we do not make prostrations in the Church. Every place that a prostration (poklon) is prescribed, we make instead a “deep bow” (a metania). This variation applies on Sundays throughout the year as well, because every Sunday is an Anti-Pascha. For example, there are a number of places during the Liturgy where a prostration is prescribed, particularly at the consecration of the Gifts, at the Our Father, and prior to approaching the Chalice (by the way, once we have received the Mysteries, we do not make prostrations for the remainder of the day as Christ is in us). There are also other times when prostrations are not required, but commonly done, such as at the Great Entrance. At weekday liturgies, even on great feasts, prostrations are done in these places, but on Sundays, no prostrations are made and only metanias are done at these times.

There are certain Paschal hymns that are included only for Resurrectional services. At the Paschal matins and hours we always sing “Having beheld the Resurrection of Christ...” and following the canon the Exapostilarion “Holy is the Lord...” At Vespers on Pascha we sing the “Great Prokeimenon” which has about 2 or 3 extra verses. All of these Paschal hymns are included in the Sunday Vigil as well, but are absent from the daily services. There are also special dismissals for every day of the week which reflect the saints remembered on those days. Monday it is for the Heavenly Host (the angels); Tuesday for the Forerunner and the Apostles; Wednesday and Friday for the Cross; Thursday the Apostles and St Nicholas; and Saturday for the Martyrs. On Sunday we always use the Resurrectional dismissal that is used throughout the Paschal season (May He Who rose from the dead, Christ our True God...) reminding us that Sunday is an anti-Pascha, the day of Resurrection.

So today is the “Anti-Pascha”, the first of many reminding us that the Resurrection never truly departs from us, but is with us always and is celebrated every Sunday. Every Sunday throughout the year is an “anti-Pascha” that is “another Pascha” and we never stop celebrating the Glorious Resurrection but it is always with us, erupting every Sunday – again and again – that we might never be without the joy and the grace that our Lord bestowed upon us when He defeated death and rose from the grave.

Archpriest David Moser
<https://groups.yahoo.com/neo/groups/propoved/info>

Saints of the Week

April 22 / May 5 — Our Holy Father Theodore the Sykeote - His birthplace was the village of Sykeon in Galatia, because of which he was named 'the Sykeote'. While still a ten-year-old boy, Theodore gave himself to strict fasting and night-long vigils under the eye of an elder, Stephen, who lived in his house. His mother, Maria, was a rich widow and intended her son to devote himself to a soldier's calling. But St George appeared to her in her sleep and told her that Theodore was destined for the service, not of an earthly king, but of the King of heaven. St George also appeared to Theodore many times, either to instruct him or to save him from some danger in which the evil demons had placed him. He also had several visions of the most holy Mother of God. Theodore's asceticism exceeded in its severity the asceticism of all the other ascetics of his time. He tormented his body in hunger and thirst and iron girdles and standing all night in prayer. All this—only to link his soul in love to God and to achieve total mastery over his body. The merciful Lord's love responded to Theodore's love. He gave him great power over evil spirits and over all the ills and pains of men. He became known on all sides as a miraculous healer. For his great purity and devotion, he was chosen against his wishes as Bishop of Anastasioupolis. He spent eleven years in episcopal service, and then begged God to release him from this service in order to devote himself again to his beloved asceticism. After that, he returned to his monastery, where, in old age, he gave his soul to the Lord for whose sake he had undergone so much voluntary suffering. He died at the beginning of the reign of the Emperor Heraclius, in about 613. The Holy Martyr Leonidas;

Our Holy Father, the Monk Vitalis - During the time of the Alexandrian Patriarch John the Merciful, a young monk appeared who, as soon as he arrived, compiled a list of all the prostitutes in Alexandria. The mortification (asceticism) of this young monk was exceptional and unique. During the day he would offer himself for hire to do the most difficult jobs and at night, he would enter the houses of ill repute, gave the earned amount of money to some prostitute and close himself in the room with her the entire night. As soon as they were locked up, Vitalis would beg the woman to lie down and sleep and he would spend the entire night in a corner of the room in prayer to God for that sinner. Thus, he would save the woman from sinning at least one night. The second night, he would go to a second, the third night to a third and so on until he had visited them all, and then, he again returned to the one with whom he started. By his counselling, many of the sinners abandoned their sullied trade. Some of them married, others entered convents and still others turned to a respectable work and income. Vitalis forbid all of these women to reveal the reason why he was visiting them. Because of this, Vitalis became a scandal for all of Alexandria. The men began to scold him, spit upon him and to openly beat him on the streets. He bore all patiently, making known his good works to God and concealing them from men. When he died, everything about him became known. Many miracles of healing occurred over his grave. People from different places began to bring their sick to his grave. Spat upon by men, he was and remained glorified by the Omniscient God.

April 23 / May 6 — The Holy and Great Martyr George - This renowned and glorious martyr was born in Cappadocia, the son of rich and God-fearing parents. His father suffered for Christ, after which his mother moved to Palestine. When George grew up, he went into the army, in which he rose, by the age of twenty, to the rank of tribune, and as such was in service under the Emperor Diocletian. When this Emperor began a terrible persecution of Christians, George came before him and boldly confessed that he was a Christian. The Emperor threw him into prison, and commanded that his feet be put in the stocks and a heavy weight placed on his chest. After that, he commanded that he be bound on a wheel, under which was a board with great nails protruding, and thus be turned. He then had him buried in a pit with only his head above the ground, and left there for three days and nights. Then, through some magician, he gave him deadly poison, but in the face of all these tortures, George prayed unceasingly to God, and God healed him instantly and saved him from death, to the great amazement of the people. When he also raised a dead man to life by his prayers, many embraced the Christian faith. Among these was the Emperor's wife, Alexandra, and the chief pagan priest, Athanasius, the governor Glycerius and Valerius, Donatus and Therinus. Finally, the Emperor commanded that George and the Empress Alexandra be beheaded. Blessed Alexandra died on the scaffold before being killed, and St George was beheaded. This happened in the year 303. The miracles that have been performed at his grave are without number. Also are his appearances in dreams to those who, thinking on him, have sought his help, from that time up to the present day. Consumed by love for Christ, it was not difficult for holy George to leave all for this love—his status, wealth and imperial favour, his friends and the whole world. For this love, the Lord rewarded him with a wreath of unfading glory in heaven and on earth, and with eternal life in His Kingdom. The Lord further endowed him with the power to help in need and distress all who honour him and call on his name; The Holy Martyr Lazarus the New.

St. Ethelbert, king of East Angles - he was venerated as a martyr because of his violent death for political reasons at the hand of Offa, king of Mercia, whose daughter Aelfthryth he visited with a view to marriage. The body was buried by the river Lugg at Marden and later translated to Hereford where it remained until the Danes burnt it in 1050. Fragments of the original shrine at Hereford still remain - it was the second most popular pilgrimage centre of the times.

April 24 / May 7 The Holy Martyr Sabbas Stratelates - This famous Sabbas lived in Rome in the time of the Emperor Aurelian, and held a general's rank. He was of a noble Gothic family. He often visited Christians in prison, helping them from his abundance. Through his great purity and fasting, God gave him power over unclean spirits. When he was charged with being a Christian, he stood courageously before the Emperor, cast his officer's belt before him and publicly confessed Christ the Lord. He was tortured in various ways: flogged, flailed with iron rods, burned with torches. But he did not succumb to these deadly tortures, and was seen to be alive and well. His comrades, the soldiers, seeing clearly that God was helping Sabbas, accepted the Christian faith, and seventy of them were immediately beheaded at the Emperor's command. Christ the Lord Himself appeared to Sabbas in the prison in great light, and strengthened His martyr. Then Sabbas was condemned to death by drowning. He was thrown into a deep river, where he gave his soul to God in the year 272. And his soul went to the Lord to whom he had remained faithful under many tortures; Our Holy Mother Elisabeth; The Holy Martyrs Eusebius, Neon, Leontius and Longinus; The Holy Martyrs Pasocrates and Valentine; Our Holy Father Thomas the Fool for Christ; The Holy New Martyrs Luke and Nicolas;

St. Egbert of Lindisfarne (729) - a Northumbrian monk, born of noble parentage c. 639; d. 729. In his youth he went for the sake of study to Ireland, to a monastery, says the Venerable Bede, "called Rathmelsigi", identified by some with Mellifont in what is now County Louth. There, when in danger of death from pestilence, he prayed for time to do penance, vowing amongst other things to live always in exile from his own country. In consequence he never returned to England, though he lived to the age of ninety, and always fasted rigorously. Having become a priest, he was filled with zeal for the conversion of the still pagan German tribes related to the angles, and would himself have become their apostle, if God had not shown him that his real calling was to other work. It was he, however, who dispatched to Friesland St. Wigbert, St. Willibrord, and other saintly missionaries. St. Egbert's own mission was made known to him by a monk, who, at Melrose, had been a disciple of St. Boisil. Appearing to this monk, St. Boisil sent him to tell Egbert that the Lord willed him instead of preaching to the heathen to go to the monasteries of St. Columba, "because their ploughs were not going straight", in consequence of their schismatic practice in the celebration of Easter. Leaving Ireland therefore in 716, Egbert crossed over to Iona, where the last thirteen years of his life were spent. By his sweetness and humility he induced the Iona monks to relinquish their erroneous mode of computation; in 729 they celebrated Easter with the rest of the Church upon 24 April, although their old rule placed it that year upon an earlier day.

April 25 / May 8 — The Holy Apostle and Evangelist Mark - Mark was a companion and helper of the Apostle Peter in his journeys. Peter, in his first Epistle, calls him his son, not after the flesh but after the spirit (I Pet. 5:13). When Mark was with Peter in Rome, the faithful begged him to write down for them the saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus, His miracles and His life. So Mark wrote his Gospel, which the Apostle Peter himself saw and testified to as true. Mark was chosen by the Apostle Peter to be bishop, and sent to Egypt to preach. And so Mark was the first preacher of the Gospel and the first bishop in Egypt. Egypt was oppressed by a thick darkness of paganism, idolatry, divination and malice. But, with the help of God, St Mark succeeded in sowing the seed of the knowledge of God in Libya, Ammonia and Pentapolis. From Pentapolis, he went to Alexandria, whither the Spirit of God led him. In Alexandria, he succeeded in establishing the Church of God, in giving her bishops, priests and deacons and in rooting everything firmly in faithfulness and devotion. Mark confirmed his preaching with many great miracles. When the pagans brought accusations against Mark as a destroyer of their idolatrous faith, and when the governor of the city began to search for Mark, he fled again to Pentapolis, where he continued his earlier work. After two years, Mark again returned to Alexandria, to the great joy of his faithful, whose number had already increased very greatly. The pagans took the opportunity to seize Mark, and they bound him firmly and began to drag him over the cobblestones, crying: 'We're taking the ox to the stall!' They threw him into prison all injured and bloodstained, where there appeared to him first an angel from heaven, who encouraged and strengthened him, and then the Lord Himself. Jesus said to him: 'Peace to thee, Mark My Evangelist!', to which Mark replied: 'And peace to Thee, my Lord Jesus Christ!' On the next day, the wicked

people hauled Mark from prison and again dragged him through the streets with the same cry: 'We're taking the ox to the stall!' Utterly spent and enfeebled, Mark said: 'Into Thy hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit', and thus breathed his last and went to the better world. His holy relics were given burial by Christians, and through the ages they give healing to people from every pain and ill;

St Anianus, Second Bishop of Alexandria - When Mark stepped out of the boat on dry land in Alexandria, the sandal on one foot became torn. Then, he saw a cobbler to whom he gave his sandal for repairs. In mending the sandal, the cobbler pierced himself with the needle in his left hand and blood began to flow and the cobbler screamed in pain. Then the apostle of God mixed some dust with his spittle and anointed the wounded hand and suddenly the hand became whole again. Astonished at this miracle, the cobbler invited Mark to his home. Hearing Mark's homily, Anianus [for that was the cobbler's name] was baptized; he and his entire household. Anianus displayed so much virtue and so much zeal for the work of God that St. Mark consecrated him bishop. This holy man was the second bishop of the Church in Alexandria.

April 26 / May 9 — The Hieromartyr Basil, Bishop of Amasea - Licinius, the brother-in-law of the Emperor Constantine, whose sister he had married, dissembled before the great Emperor, saying that he was a Christian. When he received authority over the whole of the East, he began, at first secretly but then publicly, to persecute the Christians and to uphold idolatry. His wife grieved greatly over this, but could not turn her husband back from this dishonour. Giving himself over to idolatry, Licinius gave himself over to all the passions, and especially to brutality towards women. Through this fall into such an impure passion, he desired to deflower the maiden Glaphyra, who was in waiting at the imperial court. She complained to the Empress, who sent her away from the court at Nicomedia secretly to the coast of Pontus. The maiden got as far as the town of Amasea, and was there warmly received by the bishop, Basil, and the other Christians. Glaphyra was very joyful that God had preserved her virginity, and wrote of this to the Empress. And the Empress rejoiced and sent her money for the Church in Amasea. But one letter of Glaphyra's, on its way to the Empress, fell into the hands of an imperial eunuch, who showed it to Emperor Licinius. Discovering where Glaphyra was to be found, he immediately sent orders that she and the bishop be brought to Nicomedia. In the meantime, Glaphyra died, and the soldiers brought only Basil, in bonds. After torture and imprisonment, this blessed man was beheaded and thrown into the sea, in the year 322. His priests, with the help of an angel of God, found his body near the town of Synope, took it out of the water with the aid of fishing nets and carried it to Amasea, where they gave it burial in the church which he had built by his labours. The Emperor Constantine raised an army against Licinius, overcame him, arrested him and sent him into exile in Gaul, where he ended his God-hating days; **St Janik of Devic;** **St Stephen, Bishop of Perm** - a Russian by birth. From an early age he was devoted to prayer and pious thoughts. As a young man, Stephen went to Rostov where he was tonsured a monk in the monastery of St. Gregory the Theologian. Learning about the Land of Perm, completely overrun with the weeds of heathenism, Stephen desired to become a missionary in this land. He immediately dedicated himself to the studying of the language of the Perms and when he mastered the language, he composed an alphabet and translated the ecclesiastical books into that language. With the blessing of the Metropolitan of Moscow, Stephen, as a presbyter, started out on his apostolic mission and with apostolic zeal began to preach the Gospel in this dense darkness of the heathenism of Perm. Having baptized a few souls, he endeavoured to build a church in Perm dedicated to the Holy Annunciation. When the Church of God flourished in Perm, he was consecrated as its bishop. Undergoing every hardship, affliction, maliciousness and humiliation, he succeeded to dispel the darkness among the heathens of Perm and to illuminate them with the Light of Christ. In his old age he returned to Moscow once more but, there ended his earthly life and took up habitation with the Lord in the year 1396 AD.

April 27 / May 10 — The Holy Apostle Simeon - One of the Seventy, he was the son of Cleopas, and Cleopas was the brother of Joseph, the betrothed of the most holy Mother of God. Seeing the miracles of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, Simeon was converted and included among the Seventy apostles. With great zeal and courage, he preached the Gospel everywhere in Judea. And when the wicked Jews killed James, the Lord's brother and first bishop of the Church in Jerusalem, throwing him down from the top of the Temple and belabouring him round the head with a stick, then this Simeon, Joseph's nephew, was installed as bishop in Jerusalem. He, as the second Bishop of the Holy City, governed the Church of God with wisdom and strength to a great age. He was more than a hundred years old when he suffered, and his sufferings came about as follows: in the time of the Emperor Trajan there was a double persecution begun in Palestine, against the descendants of David and against the Christians. The wicked people condemned Simeon on both counts. St Simeon endured harsh torture and was finally crucified, as had been the Lord whom he had faithfully served on earth; **Our Holy Father Stephen, Bishop of Vladimir;** **The Burning of the Relics of St. Sava by the Turks** - Sava was the Archbishop of the Serbs. The body of St. Sava was buried in Milieshevo Monastery. During the time of the Turkish tyranny, the Serbian people gathered around the relics of their saint to seek comfort and healing. Fearing that an insurrection might arise from that place against the Turks, Sinan Pasha of Belgrade ordered that the relics of St. Sava be translated to Belgrade and there to be burned on Vracar, April 27, 1594 A.D. With the burning of the relics of this saint, the rabid Pasha did not burn the saint who remained alive before the Throne of God in the heavens and in the hearts of his people on earth; **Our Holy Father John the Confessor.**

28 April / 11 May — The Holy Apostles Jason and Sosipater, and the Virgin, Cercyra - The first two were among the Seventy Apostles, and the last was the daughter of the king of the island of Corfu. The Apostle Paul mentions Jason and Sosipater (Rom. 16:21), and calls them his kinsmen. Jason was born in Tarsus, as was the Apostle Paul himself, and Sosipater in Achaia. The first was nominated by the apostles as Bishop of Tarsus and the second as Bishop of Iconium. Travelling and preaching the Gospel, these two apostles came to the island of Corfu, where they succeeded in building a church dedicated to St Stephen the Protomartyr and in bringing some unbelievers to the Church. The king of the island threw them into prison, where there were seven robbers already imprisoned: Satorninus, Jakischolus, Faustian, Januarius, Marsalus, Euphrasius and Mamminus. The apostles brought all seven of them to the Christian faith, making wolves into lambs. The king commanded that these seven be put to death in boiling pitch, and they thus received the wreath of martyrdom. When, after this, the king was in

process of questioning the apostles, his daughter Cercyra, looking through a window, saw the torture of these men of God and, discovering the reason for it, proclaimed herself a Christian and gave all her jewels away to the poor. The king was filled with wrath against his daughter and shut her up in a separate prison, then, failing to turn her from Christ, ordered that the prison be burned down. The prison burned to the ground, but the maiden remained alive. Seeing this wonder, many of the people were baptised. The furious king ordered that his daughter be bound to a tree and killed with arrows. Those who had come to believe in Christ fled from the terrible king to a nearby island and hid themselves. The king set off in a boat to arrest them, but his boat overturned in the sea and thus the unrighteous perished, as Pharaoh aforetime. The new king accepted the Christian faith and was baptised, receiving the name Sebastian. Jason and Sosipater freely preached the Gospel and strengthened the Church of God in Corfu to great old age, and there finished their earthly course and went to the courts of the Lord. The Holy Martyrs Maximus, Dada and Quintilian ; The Holy Martyr Tibald; St. Cronan, abbot of Roscrea, Ireland (7th c.)

REFLECTION

At the time of the First Ecumenical Council [Nicaea, 325 A.D.], the quarreling clerics wrote accusations one against the other and presented them to the emperor. Emperor Constantine received all of these accusations and not opening them, burned them over a flaming candle. To the amazement of those around him, the emperor said: "If I would see with my own eyes a bishop, a priest or a monk in a sinful act, I would cover him with my cloak, so that no one would ever see his sin." Thus, this great Christian emperor embarrassed the scandalmongers and sealed their mouths. Our Faith prohibits us to be spies of the sins of others and stresses that we be merciless judges of our own sins. The sick person in the hospital is concerned with his own particular malady so that he has neither the will nor the time to question others who are ill or to mock their illness. Are we not all in this world as patients in a hospital? Does not our own common sense underline that we look at our own illness and not at another's illness? Let no one think that they will be cured of their illness in the other world. This world is merely a hospital and a place for healing and, in that world, there is no hospital; there is only a mansion or only a prison.

CONTEMPLATION

To contemplate the resurrected Lord Jesus: 1. How by His resurrection, He justified the faith and hope of mankind in immortality; 2. How by His resurrection, He destroyed the fear of death in the faithful.

HOMILY

About the power of God in the weakness of men

"For when I am weak, then I am strong" (2 Corinthians 12:10).

There are no contradictions in Holy Scripture and even in these words there are no contradictions even though they sound like it. The physical is governed by sound and the spiritual by thought. For physical man, there are contradictions everywhere for he is afraid of obstacles and flees from a shadow if this shadow seems to be an obstacle for him. The spiritual man is like a knight who likes to overcome obstacles. For the spiritual man, hidden in these words of Scripture, is the entire teaching about salvation.

"For when I am weak, then I am strong." That is, when I am cognizant of my nothingness and the omnipotence of God, then I am strong. When I know that I, of myself alone, cannot do any good neither for myself nor for others and when I totally entrust myself in the power and mercy of God, then I am strong. When I sense that I am as a drowning person in this world and that I am not in the position to grab on to the extended hand of God, to hold on to it by my own strength, rather cry out to God that He with His hand grab hold of my hand and pull me out of the depths of sinful abyss, then I am strong. When I see that I am weak and that I am a hollow reed amidst the tempest of winds and floods; a reed which God is able to fill with His Almighty Grace and when I pray with faith for God's Grace, then I am strong.

O, my weak brethren, let us entrust ourselves to the power of God that we, in our nothingness, may be strong. Relying on man you are weak but relying on God you are strong. Adhere to God and all the power of God will be with you. Confess your weaknesses before God and God will send you His All-powerful Grace. This is confirmed for you by the apostle through his example and through his experience: "For when I am weak, then I am strong." In truth there is no contradiction in the Holy Scripture. Physical man speaks about contradiction in terms of the sound of the word, but spiritual man enters into the meaning and shatters the illusion of contradiction through experience.

O resurrected Lord, have mercy on our weakness and fill us with Your Omnipotent Grace.

To You be glory and thanks always. Amen.