

# Thomas Sunday

## Second Sunday of Pascha

26 April / 9 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.

### RECEIVE THE HOLY SPIRIT

For great is the dignity of the priests. 'Whosoever sins,' it says, 'you remit, they are remitted unto them' ...And hold them very exceedingly in honour ...The priest, even if he rightly orders his own life, if he does not have an anxious care for yours, yes and that of all those around him, will depart with the wicked into hell; and often when not betrayed by his own conduct, he perishes by yours, if he has not rightly performed his part... 'For they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account' (Heb.13:17)...For this is the Faith, to receive things not seen, since 'Faith is the substance of things hoped for; the evidence of things not seen' (Heb. 11:1).

*St. John Chrysostom. Homily LXXXVI, 4 and LXXXVII, 1 on John XX. B#58, pp. 326,327*

"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 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 (Jn. 20:24-25).

What does this mean, his "I will not believe"? Is it possible he could not believe the other eleven Apostles, his brothers? Is it possible they could lie to him? The whole evangelical life of Christ, all His miracles, Golgotha, the death on the Cross, they had experienced together. And now this joy which they all had experienced they wanted to share with him. No, this was not a lie. But He, Whom they had seen, was He really the same Christ? Was this not a vision or some other Christ? Was this not a mistake? And Thomas was afraid to lose what he had. And what did he have? This is what: during the years of fellowship with Christ, he had absorbed His teaching, the entire makeup of His life; and by now he was incapable of living any other way. It was painful for him not to have personal fellowship anymore with Christ; but by this time he understood that Christ came to earth in order to teach us the main commandment of God: love for God and neighbour, to perform it Himself, and to give us the strength to fulfill it.

In Paradise the first man fulfilled the commandment of God. The strength to fulfill this commandment of God he drew from eating the fruits of the Tree of Life. But then came the Fall. Paradise was lost, the Tree of Life was lost, and together with it, the strength for a godly life. And Christ came in order to give us the New Testament Tree of Life—His Body and Blood. "This do in remembrance of Me," He said at the Last Supper (Lk. 22:19).

Thomas knew the commandments of Christ, and he knew where to draw the strength to fulfill them. He lived this. Although he lived without the human presence of Christ, he lived in Christ. He was afraid to make a mistake. What if another Christ had appeared to the disciples, not the One in Whom he lived and continued to live? This is what his "I will not believe" meant. And on the eighth day after His Resurrection, the Lord again appeared to His disciples, while Thomas was also in the house, and allowed him to touch His wounds. And here resounded Thomas's triumphant cry, which even now stirs our hearts: "My Lord and my God!" (Jn. 20:28). And here are the words of Christ which relate to you and me, opening a new era of faith which will remain until the end of the world: "Because thou hast seen Me, thou hast believed. Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed... But these are written," adds the Apostle John the Divine, "that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through His name" (Jn. 20:29, 31).

*The One Thing Needful - Archbishop Andrei*

Today is the second Sunday of Pascha already. It is the Sunday of St. Thomas. Today we read about, as the church calls it, St. Thomas' "believing unbelief."<sup>1</sup> There is a theme here that the church is going to be talking about now in the light of the resurrection during the whole Pentecostarian period: the enlightenment of man. The resurrection is being applied now. We see it in the Acts that we're reading for quite some time now. In the light of the resurrection, we see what's happening. We see how many people were healed, how many people were converted, and how lives were changed. Even the shadow of the apostles healed people of their infirmities.<sup>2</sup> In the light of the resurrection, there was activity, there was motion, and there was enlightenment.

St Thomas, no different than you or I, had to be enlightened also. Everyone has different levels of understanding on various things, even among the apostles, even among the saints. It is fascinating to look and see how our Lord in the forty days that He spent on the earth enlightened so many using different ways to enlighten them, and also throughout the whole of the gospels how He reached people where they needed to be reached. The final destination is always the same: to follow the commandments and to become purified, so that we can know Christ in an intimate way. But sometimes Christ teaches certain people a little bit different. In fact, everyone is treated a little bit different.

Thomas wasn't there the first night of Pascha.<sup>3</sup> He had just left probably on some errand, and that is when Christ came, the doors being shut. And Jesus spoke to the eleven, or actually, ten<sup>4</sup> at that point, and they were glad. I have always marveled how in the scriptures great, momentous occasions are stated so laconically. "Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord."<sup>5</sup> Indeed, they were glad, when they saw the God-man! But Thomas was not there, and the resurrection was such an incredible thing; he cannot really be faulted for not believing.

Peter didn't believe when he saw the grave clothes, only John did, when they went into the grave and saw the clothes lying folded up. <sup>6</sup> John saw and believed, but Peter didn't. He went away, wondering in himself what had come to pass. <sup>7</sup> Mary Magdalene, who saw the stone rolled away from the tomb together with the Theotokos, didn't immediately believe in the resurrection. She came back to the tomb with myrrh and aloes to anoint the Lord, He Who in her mind was dead. She was weeping because He wasn't in the tomb. <sup>8</sup> She was weeping for someone Who was dead. That's why we sing, "Do not weep for one who is dead," it says (in a paraphrase). "He is not dead, He is not here, He is alive and risen." In our exapostilarion we speak of this quite a bit, of how Mary misunderstood. And our Lord came to her and she thought He was the gardener, till He spoke to her and just in the hearing of His voice, when He said, "Mary," then she recognized Him. <sup>9</sup>

Other disciples spent an entire perhaps half a day with Christ, and didn't understand. They were Luke and Cleopas on the way to Emmaus. <sup>10</sup> The tomb had already been empty for some time, and they were walking a long distance. It says in the scriptures 60 furlongs, quite a long distance, a day's journey, in the hot sun, and our Lord drew alongside them, and He spoke to them, and they didn't understand Who He was. They thought that He was a misinformed stranger, because He made like He wondered what the events were in the past couple days. But their hearts burned within them. Something about this Man captivated them, when He spoke to them about the scriptures, and opened their understanding. That's why it says: "And then opened He their understanding of the scriptures" And when they sat down, and when He broke bread, (which was of course, the Body and Blood of Christ), then they saw Him, and He vanished. And as they were making their way back in the wee hours of the morning, another day's journey, (they took two days' journey in one day), Christ was appearing to the other apostles, save Thomas.

You see how He enlightened people where they needed to be enlightened. Luke and Cleopas must have needed this conversation with the Lord, and to see Him in the breaking of the bread, to really have the point brought home that yes, the Lord had risen. Mary had to be spoken with by Lord. She had to see Him. John believed just by seeing the empty tomb. Peter was met by the Lord, the church understands. <sup>11</sup> Peter was met individually by the Lord, because after all, he was a bit shaken, wasn't he? Peter was a man of great bravery. He can't be faulted for his denying Christ three times. We would have done it a thousand times. But he was very shaken because of this, and because of his emotional turmoil he was in, it was very difficult for him to believe in the resurrection, because he was all wrapped up with his feeling so completely unworthy of what the Lord had called him to do. So the Lord had to meet with Peter individually, apart from the other apostles. And in fact, Peter was the first of the apostles to see the risen Lord. And I suppose maybe the second to believe after John, who without seeing believed.

And now the last to find out, after eight long days of hearing from the apostles about the Lord being risen, Thomas, is in the room and the Lord comes, through the doors again, which were shut, passing through the doors, because after all, His body is a human body, but it is a transfigured human body. It's not subject to the same kind of laws that we are subject to. It doesn't get tired, it doesn't get sick. And that's the way we will be as well. The way Christ was in His transfigured body is a prophecy for us of how our bodies will be as well.

Jesus comes in and speaks very gently to Thomas. He says, "Alright, I know what you need. You need to touch Me. Feel the prints of the nails in my hands. Feel the slit in my side, and be not faithless, but believing." <sup>12</sup> And then Thomas has the privilege of being the first of the apostles to proclaim unambiguously, in clear terms, the dual nature of Christ's humanity and His divinity. It is the first confession of faith in the scriptures, where Christ is proclaimed God and man openly. He says, "My Lord and my God!" <sup>13</sup> Thomas had to wait awhile, but God gave him that great privilege of almost, shall we say, beginning the symbol of faith <sup>14</sup>. What a great privilege it was.

In the coming week we will be speaking about the myrrh-bearing women <sup>15</sup>, and there is a theme throughout the story of the myrrh-bearing women of their continuing enlightenment, just like for Thomas or for Peter or for Luke and Cleopas or for the other apostles. And then we go onto the blind man and the lame man, the paralytic. We see how the resurrection is applied. Why does the church do this? Why do we speak of things that have to do with enlightenment and healing right after Pascha? Well, because the resurrection applies to us in our life now. It's very important to understand this. That's why I have been speaking of it so often. It's very important to understand, because you must know that God has given you the ability to be able to get rid of your sins, of your passions, of the problems in your life that are making you to be away from God. You have the ability, through the resurrection. And all these examples of people that partially believed, even the great apostles, who were at times disbelievers, at times were cowards, at times were at odds with each other and vied amongst themselves who would be greatest, and all the other things — even them — the Lord purified them, and brought them to a great wholeness.

If He can do it with them and do it with all the others examples in the scriptures, with the paralytic and the blind man and the woman at the well, named Photini <sup>16</sup>, and all the others, then He can do it with us. I tell you, the resurrection is not something that you believe in as an event that occurred in the past. Nor is it something that you believe, and say that it will happen in the future, like Mary and Martha did, saying, "Oh Lord, I believe in the resurrection. In the last day, all will be resurrected." <sup>17</sup> When their brother Lazarus lay dead, and Christ showed them, "I am the resurrection. If I live in you, then you are resurrected now, not later." It is very important to understand this.

A Christian who understands that Christ's becoming man makes him able to do holy things will not fall prey to despondency. Despondency is really the negation of belief in God, you know. Despondency is a type of atheism. You should fear despondency and confess it every time. It is a terrible sin, because in it, you are rejecting the resurrection. God can save you, and God will save you if you live the Christian life. Yes, indeed, you must consider yourself unworthy of salvation, but you must also know that Christ has promised it.

So live as a Christian, fast as a Christian, think as a Christian, and when you cannot do things properly, when you do things that are sinful, run to confession with the sure hope the sure knowledge, that God will receive your repentance, because of the resurrection. I tell you if you live in the light of the resurrection, you will not become despondent. As a pastor I believe that the number one sin I see is despondency. Sometimes it is cloaked, so that people can have a sin and may be despondent about it, but not so noticeably despondent, so that it is a sort of semi-excuse.

And sometimes it is because people really desire to change, and they just can't believe that they can really change. Mary and Martha couldn't believe that their brother would be resurrected after four days. The apostles, many of them, could not believe that our Lord, Who spoke of the resurrection over and over and over again, could be resurrected. It took many proofs for some of them, such as Thomas, and the other ones as well. You know, it says "Many things the Lord did, many signs He did, but not everything is written

in this book.”<sup>18</sup> By the way, as an aside, you realize that the Lord taught the apostles so much that is not written down, that is part of our holy tradition now. The apostles transmitted it to their disciples, and so on. It wasn't written down, but it was precious, and St. John only in a dark way refers to it.

So today we see an example of a man, Thomas, enlightened. Christ went out of His way to enlighten him. He sort of accorded him special treatment, as it were. And Thomas believed, and he confessed. Christ did and does the same thing for us, to bring us to enlightenment. And now we must believe and confess.

Now He said something else that's very important, important not to pass over. He said, before Thomas didn't see this, but our Lord said it many other times when Thomas heard. He said, “As the Father hath sent me, so send I you.”<sup>19</sup> And by extension, it is the same for us. No, we don't have the role of the apostles. We are not bishops, and we don't have the grace that has been bestowed upon the apostles, but we are sent along basically the same path: the path of obedience to the same gospel, the path of obedience to the commandments of our God, the life in the church, and everything that living as an Orthodox Christian entails. Later on, just after this reading in fact, the disciples, seven of them, are fishing, and the Lord tells them to let down their nets, and they had a catch, and then Peter is told to bring the catch to the shore, a hundred and fifty and three fishes, and yet the net did not break.<sup>20</sup> And later, after they ate, our Lord restored Peter by asking him three times, “Simon, son of Jonah, lovest thou me?” and then He showed him how he would die.<sup>21</sup> This is tied in with when He was saying, “As my Father hath sent Me, so send I you.”

We must use Christ as the example of how to live, whether as an apostle or whether as anyone else. The Christian life is one of difficulty and one of strife. We are in the light of the resurrection, but we can never get far away from knowing that our life is a difficult one. We make it so because of our sins, sometimes, and other times because of the evil of the world surrounding us. Follow the example of the saints. Follow the example of the apostles. Live as they lived, which means you live the life in the church.

And brothers and sisters, always believe that the resurrection applies to you, now. Fear disbelief in it. Every time you fall into despondency, berate yourself for being a fool and gazing into an empty tomb, and wondering where the Lord is. Don't be like this. Believe in the resurrection, and believe that you can be changed, and through struggle, arduous struggle, through many tears, through ups and downs, and even in the midst of your sins, God will perfect you, but you must believe.

*Fr Seraphim Holland*

### Saints of the Week

**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 — Radonitsa - 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 Achaea. 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: Saturninus, 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.)

**29 April / 12 May — Fast Day - St Basil of Ostrog** - born in Popovo Selo in Herzegovina, of simple and devout parents. From his youth he was filled with love for the Church of God, and when he grew up he went to the monastery of the Dormition of the Mother of God at Trebinje, and became a monk. As such, he quickly became known for his serious and rare ascetic life, for he loaded himself with ascetic practices, each harder than the last. He was later chosen and consecrated as Bishop of Zahum and Skenderia, much against his will. As a bishop, he first lived in the monastery at Tvrđos, whence, as a good pastor, he confirmed his flock in the Orthodox faith, keeping it from the cruelty of the Turks and the guile of the Latins. But when he was too pressed-upon by his enemies, and when Tvrđos was destroyed by the Turks, Basil moved to Ostrog, where he lived in strict asceticism, protecting his flock by his unceasing and loving prayers. (A new church, on the ruins of the old Tvrđos, has been built in our day by Nikolai Runjevac, from the village of Poljica near Trebinje—a wonderful foundation in the sight of God and His people) He went peacefully to the Lord in the 16th century, leaving his whole and healing body, uncorrupt and wonderworking, to the present day. The miracles at the grave of St Basil are without number. Both Christians and Moslems hasten to his relics and find healing of the gravest sicknesses and sufferings. A great national gathering takes place there every year at Pentecost. The Nine Holy Martyrs of Cyzicus; Our Holy Father Memnon the Wonderworker.

**30 April / 13 May — The Holy Apostle James** - the son of Zebedee and brother of St. John the Theologian, he was one of the Twelve. At the call of the Lord Jesus, he left his fishing nets and his father and, together with John, immediately followed Christ. He was one of the three apostles to whom the Lord revealed the greatest mysteries: before whom He was transfigured on Tabor and before whom He was in agony in the Garden of Gethsemane before His Passion. After receiving the Holy Spirit, he preached the Gospel in various places, going as far as Spain. On his return from Spain, a violent quarrel broke out between the Jews and himself on the Holy Scriptures, and, being unable to withstand him, they hired a magician, Hermogenes. But Hermogenes and Philip his pupil were overcome by the power and truth that James preached, and were baptised. Then the Jews denounced him to Herod, and persuaded one Josias to slander the Apostle. This Josias, seeing James's manly bearing and hearing his clear preaching of the truth, repented and came to faith in Christ. When James was condemned to death, this Josias was also condemned. Mounting the scaffold, Josias begged James's forgiveness for the sin of slander, and James embraced him, kissing him and saying: 'Peace be to thee, and forgiveness.' And they both laid their heads under the sword and were beheaded for the sake of the Lord whom they had loved and served. St James suffered in Jerusalem in the year 45. His body was taken to Spain, where to this day miracles of healing are performed at his tomb;

**St Donatus** - bishop of Evira in Albania. He was endowed by God with the great blessing of miracle-working, by which he performed many miracles for the benefit of the people. Donatus changed bitter water into sweet water; brought down rain during a drought; healed the king's daughter of insanity; and resurrected a man from the dead. This deceased man had repaid his debt to a certain creditor. This unscrupulous creditor wanted the debt to be repaid a second time and, wanting to benefit from the death of his debtor, he came to his widow and demanded that the debt be repaid immediately. The widow wept and complained to the bishop. St. Donatus warned the creditor to wait, at least, until the man was buried and then the debt would be discussed. The creditor angrily insisted his own. Then Donatus approached the dead man, touched him and cried out: "Arise brother and see what you have with your creditor!" The dead man rose and with a frightening glance looked at his lender and related to him the time, when and where he had repaid the debt. He also sought from the lender his written receipt. The frightened lender then placed a document into his hands and the enlivened deceased tore it up and again lay down and died. St. Donatus died peacefully in very old age and took up habitation with the Lord in the year 387 A.D. His relics repose in Evira, Albania and, even today, benefit the faithful; The Holy Martyr Argyra;

**St. Erconwald, bishop of London (c.693)** - Born in East Anglia; died at Barking, April 30, c. 686-693; second feast day on May 13. Erconwald is reputed to have been of royal blood, son of Annas or Offa. In 675, Saint Theodore of Canterbury appointed Erconwald bishop of the East Saxons with his see in London and extending over Essex and Middlesex. His episcopate was the most important in that diocese between that of Saint Mellitus and Saint Dunstan. His shrine in Saint Paul's Cathedral was a much visited pilgrimage site during the Middle Ages, where miracles were reported until the 16th century, but little is known of his life except that he founded a monastery at Chertsey in Surrey, which he governed, and a convent at Barking in Essex to which he appointed as abbess his sister, Ethelburga. Erconwald took some part in the reconciliation of Saint Theodore with Saint Wilfrid. In Saint Bede's time, miracles were recorded as a result of touching the couch used by Erconwald in his later years. At his death, Erconwald's relics were claimed by Barking, Chertsey, and London; he was finally buried in Saint Paul's Cathedral in London, which he had enlarged. The relics escaped the fire of 1087 and were placed in the crypt. November 14, 1148, they were translated to a new shrine behind the high altar, from where they were again moved on February 1, 1326. He is portrayed in art as a bishop in a small 'chariot' (the Saxon equivalent of a bath chair) in which he travelled because of his gout. Sometimes there is a woman touching it or he may be shown with Saint Ethelburga of Barking (Roeder). Erconwald is invoked against gout.

**1 / 14 May — Fast Day - The Holy Prophet Jeremiah** - born 650 years before Christ in the village of Anathoth, not far from Jerusalem, he began to prophesy at an early age, during the reign of King Josiah (Jer. 1:1-19). He preached repentance to the King and nobles and the false prophets and priests, and, in the time of that King Josiah, barely escaped death at the hands of the enraged nobles. He prophesied to King Jehoiakim that his burial would be like that of an ass; that is, he would be cast dead out of Jerusalem and his body would be for a long time dragged around the ground without burial (22:18). For this, Jeremiah was thrown into prison. Being unable to write there, he sent for Baruch, who stood outside the window of the prison while Jeremiah dictated to him. When the King read this prophecy, he took the paper in fury and threw it into the fire. By the providence of God, Jeremiah was saved from prison, and the words of the prophecy were fulfilled upon Jehoiakim. He prophesied to King Jeconiah that he would be carried off to Babylon with his whole family and that he would die there, all of which quickly came to pass (24:1; 27:20). Under King Zedekiah, he put a yoke on his neck and walked through Jerusalem prophesying the fall of the city and slavery under the yoke of Babylon (27:2). He wrote to the slaves in Babylon, telling them that they would not return to Jerusalem but would remain for seventy years in Babylon, which came to pass (25:11). In the valley of Topnet, near Jerusalem, where the Jews had brought children to the idols for sacrifice, Jeremiah took a whole pot in his hands and smashed it in front of the people, prophesying the imminent crushing of the Jewish Kingdom (19:10-11). The Babylonians soon over-ran Jerusalem, killed King Zedekiah, burned the city down and utterly destroyed it. They slaughtered an enormous number of Jews in the valley of Topnet, in the place where children had died as sacrifices to idols and where the prophet had broken the pot. Jeremiah, with the Levites, took the Ark out of the Temple and bore it off to the mountain of Nebo, where Moses had died, and hid it in a cave. He hid the fire from the altar in a deep well. He was forced by some Jews to go with them to Egypt, where he lived for four years and was then stoned to death by his countrymen. He prophesied to the Egyptians the destruction of their idols and the coming there of a Virgin with a Child. There is a tradition that Alexander the Great himself visited the grave of the Prophet Jeremiah,\* and ordered that his body be moved and buried in Alexandria. \*The Egyptians almost deified St Jeremiah, and they therefore buried him as a king. He was regarded as a wonder-worker after his death. The dust from his tomb was taken as a medicine against snake-bite, and today many Christians invoke his help against it; Our Holy Father, the Martyr Acacius the Slipper Maker; Our Holy Father Paphnutius of Borovsk;

**St. Asaph, bishop of Llanelwy, Wales c.550** - Related to Saint Deiniol and Saint Tysilo. Hermit near Tenegal, Wales. Servant to Saint Kentigern. Second bishop of the Welsh see now known as Saint Asaph. At Tengenel, near Holywell, Wales, there are an ash-tree, well, and valley that tradition says belonged to Asaph.

**2 / 15 May — The Holy Martyrs Hesperus, Zoe, Cyriac and Theodulus** - in the time of the Emperor Hadrian (117-138), a pagan called Catallus bought Hesperus, his wife Zoe and their sons Cyriac and Theodulus as slaves. Being convinced Christians, they refused to eat anything that had been sacrificed to idols, but threw all that had been thus offered to the dogs, and themselves went hungry. Catallus, discovering this, became very angry and began to torture his slaves cruelly. He first tortured the children, but they remained unfaltering in the Faith and sought yet harsher tortures. At last all four of them were cast into a burning furnace where, after prayers of thanksgiving, they gave their spirits into the Lord's hands. Their bodies remained whole and untouched by the fire; St Athanasius the Great, Archbishop of Alexandria - on this day are commemorated the translation of his relics and their miracles;

**The Holy Martyrs Boris and Gleb** - they were sons of the great Prince Vladimir, Baptiser of the Russian people. Until his baptism, Vladimir had many wives, and children by them. Boris and Gleb were brothers of one mother. Before his death in 1015, Vladimir divided the Kingdom among all his sons. But Svyatopolk, his eldest son and Prince of Kiev, desired to take the parts that were set aside for Boris and Gleb, so he sent men to kill Boris in one place and Gleb in another. Both brothers were deeply devout and pleasing to God in all things, and they met death with prayer and the lifting up of their hearts to Him. Their bodies remained uncorrupt and fragrant, and were buried in the town of Vishgorod, where to this day blessed strength flows forth from them to heal men of divers ills and sufferings;

**St Michael (Boris), King of Bulgaria** - born and educated as a pagan and was baptized under the influence of his uncle Bojan and his sister. At baptism, he was given the name Michael. Patriarch Photius sent him priests who gradually baptized all the Bulgarian people. Many Bulgarian noblemen opposed this new Faith but the new Faith conquered and the Cross glistened on many churches built by the devout Tsar Michael. The Faith among the Bulgarians, as among the Serbs, was especially established by the Five Followers, the disciples of St. Cyril and St. Methodius, who preached to the people the knowledge of Christ in the vernacular: the Slavonic language. In his old age Michael retreated to a monastery and was tonsured a monk. When his son Vladimir began to destroy his father's work and to exterminate Christianity, Michael again donned his military uniform, girded himself with a sword, ousted Vladimir from the throne and installed Simeon, his younger son, as Tsar. After

that, he again clothed himself in the monastic habit and retreated in silence where, in mortification and prayer, he completed his earthly life "in the good faith; in the correct confession of our Lord Jesus Christ; great, honourable and devout," and took up habitation in the heavenly life on May 2, 906 A.D.

## What is a Radonitsa?

"On this day, the Tuesday of St. Thomas week, according to the order instituted by our Holy Fathers, we call to remembrance, in Paschal joy, all those who have died from the beginning of the ages in faith and in the hope of resurrection and life eternal.

"Having previously celebrated the radiant feast of Christ's glorious Resurrection, the faithful commemorate the dead today with the pious intent to share the great joy of this Pascha feast with those who have departed this life in the hope of their own resurrection. This is the same blessed joy with which the dead heard our Lord announce His victory over death when He descended into Hades, thus leading forth by the hand the righteous souls of the Old Covenant into Paradise. This is the same unhopd-for joy the Holy Myrrhbearing Women experienced when discovering the empty tomb and the undisturbed grave clothes. In addition, this is the same bright joy the Holy Apostles encountered in the Upper Room where Christ appeared though the doors were closed. In short, this feast is a kindred joy, to celebrate the luminous Resurrection with our Orthodox forefathers who have fallen asleep.

"There is evidence of the commemoration of the dead today in the writings of the Church Fathers. St. John Chrysostom mentions the commemoration of the dead performed on Tuesday of St. Thomas week in his "Homily on the Cemetery and the Cross."

"Today, the faithful departed are remembered in Divine Liturgies, 'koliva' is prepared and blessed in the churches in memory of those who have fallen asleep, and the Orthodox graves in cemeteries are blessed by the priests and visited by the faithful. On this day alms are given to the poor. Furthermore, it should be noted that due to the great spiritual joy this jubilant commemoration bears, it is called in the Slavonic tongue, 'Radonitsa,' or Day of Rejoicing."

*From the "Synaxarion of the Lenten Triodion and Penecostarion" (published in 1999 by HDM Press, Rives Junction, Michigan) on "Radonitsa":*

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A note in the English-language edition of the Synaxarion says that the above account was written "by a monk who wished to remain anonymous." This account does not appear in the Slavonic or Greek Pentecostaria.

The development of a special commemoration of the dead during Thomas Week is undoubtedly related closely to the fact that memorial services are prohibited by the Typicon from being served from Great Thursday through Thomas Sunday. Thus, in the entry for Holy and Great Thursday, the Typicon states: "It is fitting to know: That the Litia for the reposed does not take place in the narthex until Thomas Sunday." Then, in the entry for Monday of Thomas Week, the Typicon states at the end of the instructions for Matins and the First Hour: "And the usual Litia in the narthex." Thus, the beginning of Thomas Week presents the first opportunity to commemorate the departed (other than at the Proskomidia) since the middle of Passion Week.

It is interesting to note that in the Typicon and Pentecostarion that are currently in use in the Russian Church, there is no specific mention of a commemoration of the dead on Tuesday of Thomas Week, and the services appointed for that day do not contain any requiem elements. Nonetheless, it is quite common to serve a General Panikhida in church on that day and also to serve Requiem Litas at the graves of the departed.

There are many folk customs associated with Radonitsa. Perhaps other members of the Ustav List would like to share their knowledge and experience of these customs with us.

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*Copied from <http://www.orthodox.net/ustav/radonitsa.html>*