



Christ is Risen! Indeed, He is Risen!
Thomas Sunday, April 26, 2009

THOMAS SUNDAY TROPARION - TONE SEVEN:

From the sealed tomb, Thou didst shine forth, O Life! Through closed doors Thou didst come to Thy disciples, O Christ God! Renew in us, through them, an upright spirit by the greatness of Thy mercy, O Resurrection of all!

THOMAS SUNDAY KONTAKION - TONE EIGHT:

Thomas touched Thy life-giving side with an eager hand, O Christ God, when Thou didst come to Thine apostles through closed doors. He cried out with all: "Thou art my Lord and my God!"

INSTEAD OF "IT IS TRULY MEET...":

The angel cried to the Lady Full of Grace: Rejoice, O Pure Virgin! Again I say: Rejoice! Your Son is risen from His three days in the tomb! With Himself He has raised all the dead! Rejoice, all ye people! Shine! Shine! O New Jerusalem! The glory of the Lord has shone on you! Exult now and be glad, O Zion! Be radiant, O Pure Theotokos, in the Resurrection of your Son!

INSTEAD OF "WE HAVE SEEN THE TRUE LIGHT...":

Christ is risen from the dead, trampling down death by death, and upon those in the tombs bestowing life! (*once*)



EPISTLE & COMMENTARY

The Prokeimenon— Psalm 147: 5 in the Third Tone:

Great is our Lord and abundant in power. His understanding is beyond measure.

Acts 5: 12-20

In those days, 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."

The Alleluia Verses - Psalm 95: 1, 3

Come, let us rejoice in the Lord! Let us make a joyful noise to God our Savior! For the Lord is a great God, and a great King above all the earth!

Epistle Commentary

This passage reminds us that life in the infant Church was characterized by unity, the power of God and persecution.



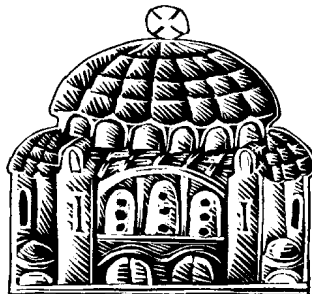
GOSPEL & COMMENTARY

John 20: 19-31

At that time, 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 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.

Gospel Commentary

Christ commissions the disciples to continue His mission on earth, granting them the Holy Spirit and the power to forgive sins. These words of Christ are among the scriptural foundations of the Sacraments of Ordination and Confession. Through the consecration and empowerment of the Apostles by the Lord, and through their ordination of others to continue the apostolic mission, Christ's own Holy Priesthood is communicated to the bishops and priests of the Church.



SPIRITUAL ARTICLES

Reflection from *The Prologue* for April 13 by St. Nikolai Velimirovic

When they brought the martyr Crescens (a nobleman of Myra in Lycia) to court, the judge counseled him for a long time, trying to persuade him to worship idols. When he did not succeed, he finally said to Crescens: “Bow down only in body, but in spirit bow down before your God!” To this the honorable Crescens replied: “The body cannot do anything independently of the soul, which is its driving force and leader.” For that Crescens was killed—an obvious lesson that a Christian cannot be duplicitous. Still another lesson: A Christian has an obligation to serve his Creator not only with the soul but also with the body. This refutes the false position of certain Christians, who live physically as pagans, while praising themselves that they believe in God and love God with their souls. They divide themselves in two, placing themselves in the service of two masters, even though the holiest lips proclaimed that to be an impossibility.

From, *The Agape of the Church in Time of Crisis*, by Archimandrite Nektarios Serfes

We, as Christians, together comprise the Church - the great community which is the Body of Christ on this earth. As individuals, we are also organized into the temporal communities of our local churches - the regional diocese, the particular congregation, the specific “church family” to which we belong and contribute our support. As each of us navigates through the crises that inevitably arise in every life's journey, the love and the grace and, if we need it, the tangible support we receive from other members of our church family can make all the difference in our ability to get through adversity and heal. Because the church family is Christ-centered, the assurance of His sustaining love is central to the support we receive as members of that family. Love is the cardinal Christian virtue. Because we acknowledge a God of love, a God Who IS love, then our love for one another - within our particular church family and also into the wider world beyond, even to those who don't know us, who may hate us for what they think we are must be the first and foremost thing we offer others. The love of God in Christ must be the precious gift we freely share...The Orthodox Church emphasizes its teaching of agape-love. The Church is the new ark of salvation in which everyone and anyone can find love, respect, support and assistance in times of sorrow, need or crisis. The church assures us of God's offered salvation, that “amazing grace” which can lift us from despair. For no crisis we ever face can sever us from the unconditional love (*agape*) of God. Our Lord, in His love for us all, has made His Church available to all who will enter into it, today, tomorrow, and for all eternity. The Church is like a great heavenly hospital open to anyone in need of healing. As the eternal Kingdom of God will be opened to ultimately receive all creation at the end of time when God fulfills His promise to “make all thing new,” the Church in the earthly kingdom, that is, the *Ecclesia*, is available to those who toil in God's vineyard here and now. We glimpse the Heavenly Kingdom whenever we show our love for one another, serving our God and His Church by working within our own local, temporal churches to bring about the goodness and justice and peace that unites and lifts our earthly realm to the eternal Kingdom of God.

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IMPORTANT REMINDERS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

ST. GEORGE'S DAY SUNRISE GATHERING -DJURDJEVANSKI URANAK! - Saturday, May 2, 2009 Sretenje Monastery - Divine Liturgy 10:00 am followed by a picnic and afternoon activities

With the blessing of His Grace, Bishop Maxim, the Western American Diocese is organizing the first St. George Day Sunrise Gathering on the grounds of the Monastery Sretenje in Escondido, on Saturday, May 2nd, 2009.

At the Diocesan Assembly in San Marcos held in February 2009, the decision was made to have an additional celebration of Diocesan Days in South California, in spring, near the time of the feast of St. George – Djurdjevdanski Uranak! The purpose of an additional Diocesan Days gathering is to help accommodate the concentration of faithful in the southern part of the Diocese. So this year we have planned such an event at the Monastery grounds as a one day event. The Diving Liturgy will begin at 10:00 a.m. followed by an all-day picnic with music and many activities for our youth.

The place is challenging because it offers many natural beauties and activities. The monastery, located in a deep valley and surrounded by the echoing hills of Escondido and its gentle streams, will make a peaceful impression, setting a powerful tone for our first South Djurdjevdanski Retreat. The heart of youth activities will be the beautification of the Monastery grounds.

The host parishes will be St. George parish in San Diego, St. Petka parish in San Marcos and the Nativity of the Most Holy Theotokos parish in Orange County. More information regarding the schedule and events of our St. George's Day Sunrise Gathering will be available soon.