

THOMAS SUNDAY



Icon of Saint Thomas and the Lord

Reflections on the Scripture Readings for this Weekend

On this weekend after Pascha, which is known as the Antipascha or St. Thomas Weekend, we hear readings from the *Acts of the Apostles* and also *John's Gospel*. In Acts we hear that the people held the Apostles in high esteem and brought their sick to be cured by them. We also hear that the Apostles preached to the people *all about this new life*.

John's Gospel, of course, relates the first two appearances of Jesus to His disciples. At each appearance the disciples were locked in an upper room presumably in Jerusalem. They were afraid of the Jews. Jesus, however, appears to them, coming through locked doors.

It is interesting that the Church ends her eight day celebration by sharing with us that at least one disciple, Thomas, *doubted* that Jesus rose from the dead. This, I believe, the Church shares with us since belief in Christ's resurrection requires faith. We have to place our trust in those who actually saw Jesus after His death. Thomas, as the story goes, refused to trust in the veracity of his fellow disciples when they told him that Jesus had appeared to them.

Think about this and ask yourself, *Do I really believe that Jesus rose from the dead?* The only proof I have is the witness of His disciples and others who claimed to have seen Him.

I do believe that one of the greatest proofs we have that the disciples did not attempt to deceive people is their willingness to DIE for their belief and to prove the truth of their witness. This fact alone offers proof.

A second proof, I believe, that the disciples bore witness to the truth of the resurrection is the fact that they went out and preached to people after the Lord's death about this *new life*.

What is meant by this *new life*? It seems



obvious that the *new life* they preached was a new way of living and a new understanding of purpose of life. They understood, it seems, that the Risen Lord revealed something to them about their own lives. They sensed, after seeing the Risen Lord, that there is life beyond the earthly grave - that somehow life goes on. They preached to open the hearts of others to this very important truth.

So, the question is: *What do I really believe about life and the Lord's resurrection? Do I really embrace the idea of eternal life - immortality? Challenge yourself and think about these things!*

Understanding Our Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church

This weekend includes the eighth day of our celebration of the Resurrection of Christ. From Pascha to Antipascha is a span of eight days. The number seven symbolizes perfection – perfection that is achievable via natural means – while eight symbolizes that which is beyond nature and its inherently limited perfection. The Church wants us to know that what God has accomplished through Jesus is beyond nature. BRIGHT WEEK captures this thought.

The celebration of the eighth day after Pascha as the conclusion of Bright Week, from earliest times, has been regarded as a separate feast. The theme of the services of this feast and of the week that follows is the gospel event describing the apparition of Christ on the eighth day after His Resurrection and the moving scene of St. Thomas' conversion and profession of faith. Regarding the significance of this feast St Gregory the theologian said:

The old law, which was established for a good purpose, honors the day of renewal, or rather, should we say, that with the day of renewal it honors new blessings. For was not the first day of the resurrection, which occurred after the holy and glorious night, also a day of renewal? Why, then, do we give this name to today's feast? That day was a day of salvation, which this day is the commemoration of salvation. By its very nature, that day separates the burial and the resurrection, while this day is a day of an altogether new birth. Today we celebrate a genuine renewal, going from death to life. Therefore, cast off the old man and renew yourselves and live the newness of life."

Our Church celebrates the memory of St. Thomas the Apostle who doubted the Lord's Resurrection. Why? Because she knew that we would probably doubt the truth of this event.



We are called to believe that this happened. Indeed, Christ DID rise from the dead. This is the basis of our faith. He came back to reveal to us that human life is truly immortal. Of course this is only a truth of faith, something that we cannot prove. Our belief in this truth radically and truly changes our experience of life. Do you believe that life is really immortal? If not, why not? If life is immortal, what does it mean to you and how you live this present life?

All of this takes faith and belief that what the Church says is true!

Understand More About the Resurrection

I would continue sharing ideas about Christ's *Descent into Hades* which I started on Pascha. It is important that I would first present some information about the sources of our knowledge of the Resurrection.

An unconditional and indisputable doctrinal authority for all Christians is, of course, the New Testament.

In Eastern Christian tradition sacred Scripture is not seen as something primary in relation to church tradition. Scripture grew out of tradition and composes an inseparable part of it. Scripture is interpreted not spontaneously but from the perspective of tradition. Personal interpretations are allowed only as private opinions. Following St Paul's statement that the "veil" lying on the Old Testament was removed by Christ. The Old Testament is seen as a herald of the New Testament. Thus the Hebrew Scripture is interpreted through the prism of the New Testament. Both Old and New Testaments are interpreted in the light of tradition, as reflected in the liturgical life and in writings of the fathers and teachers of the Church.

Liturgical tradition of the early

church should also be granted unconditional and indisputable authority. Liturgical texts are not simply works of eminent theologians and poets but are part of the liturgical experience of many generations of Christians. It must be remembered that the New Testament grew out of the worship experiences of the early

church where people shared stories about Jesus and what He taught. The worship of our Church is filled with statements about what the early Church believed about Jesus.

The authority enjoyed by the liturgical texts in the Eastern Church is based on a process of acceptance that occurred over the course of many centuries. Certain

works of church fathers can contain disputable or even incorrect opinions. This cannot be said about the canonical liturgical texts, for church tradition throughout many centuries weeds out any such opinions. Therefore, if we were to create a certain hierarchy of reliable authorities, our liturgical texts would come in second place after Scripture.

(Continued on page 9)



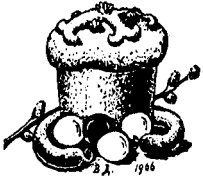


St. Michael's Parish News

A Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church in Dearborn Michigan

OUR EASTER DINNER

Today, April 8 - Sviachenne



We gather today to maintain a very noble, and honorable custom: that of gathering as a Parish Family to share a meal in celebration of Pascha. I would thank the members of the Parish Council for arranging this very special meal. **Christ IS Risen!**

CONTINUING EDUCATION



During the Great Fast, I provided three articles which I thought might provoke some thought and learning. I would like to know if anyone would like me to continue providing such articles to stimulate thought. It is my personal belief that the more we know about our faith and religion the greater will be our experience going to church. I know that I print a lot in the Bulletin, but in order to get a lot out of it you have to faithfully read it each week. Let me know what you think.

A man who flies from his fear may find that he has only taken a shortcut to meet it

CALLED TO HOLINESS

The call to holiness during this time of the year is a call to live with a new sense of the meaning of life - to live with an awareness of your union with Christ and, through Him in the Spirit, your union with the Holy Trinity.



During the time after Pascha, we are given a number of examples of how to live through the Gospel stories. It is for us, however, to make this all real in our own lives.

During these weeks we hear not only about Thomas the Doubter but also the Ointment Bearers, the Paralytic Man, the Samaritan Woman and the Man Born Blind. Each Gospel story has a message for us if we only take the time to reflect upon it. They are meant to encourage us to take more seriously our spiritual growth - to truly embrace the journey of life as a time of personal change.

How will you spend this time of Easter celebration? Will you make an extra effort to allow the revelation made by God through the Resurrection to permeate your thinking and living?

This is what the call to holiness is all about. (Continued on page 8)

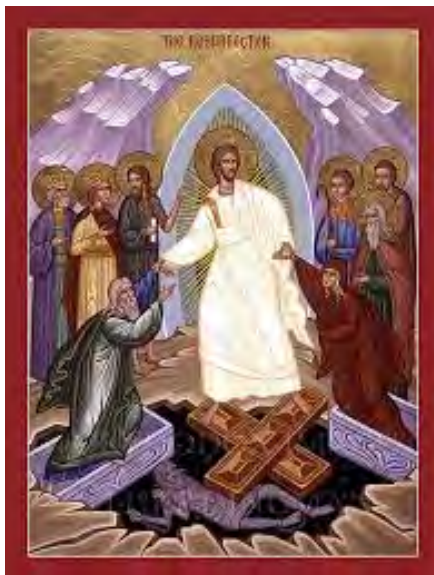
The World as Gift and Word

In light of our celebration of the Resurrection of the Word of God, Jesus, from the dead, I thought that I would share some thoughts about the role of the Word in creation and in our lives.

According to the Christian faith, the world was created by God as a gift for the human person. We find that even in the Old Testament “Life” is referred to as a gift from God. Everything that the human person eats and drinks and the pleasure he takes “in all his toil” are gifts from God. Knowledge, joy and wisdom are gifts from God. If the world had been given to the human person for the sake of knowledge alone, even so it would be a gift from God. But it is also given for the sake of his bodily life and for his spiritual formation in view of life everlasting.

Here God’s love for the human person is visible. From this point of view, too, the world is a word or a coherent utterance of God to the human person without a process that is continually advancing and thereby makes its own meaning clear. As one author wrote: “Things are the gift of the Word of God Who enlightens life. But if things, all that exists, were brought

into existence through the Word, then they are witnesses or signs of the Word. They bear, so to speak, the Word in them. By being brought into existence through the Word Who enlightens life, they are in themselves directions back to the Word and in the Word.” The Cosmos can and must be interpreted from the Word.



God shows us His love through the world as a gift, so that a progressive dialogue with us in love may come to be. In order to achieve this dialogue, nevertheless, we, too, must return a gift to God. Yet the human person has nothing of his own to give God. God rejoices, however, that the human person

should surrender claim to some of the gifts he has received as a way of returning them to God. This is the human person’s sacrifice, for while, in his greed, the human person can hold that everything God has given him is necessary for himself, he yet renounces title to some of those gifts.

We are called to join with Jesus and renounce title to the gift of life and offer it back to God. That is exactly what we attempt to do in the Divine Liturgy. We offer our lives to the Father in true thanksgiving for the gift of life.

Mysticism - A Characteristic of Our Church

Over the past five decades of my ministry, there is one thing that I have repeatedly heard about our Church, namely that “mysticism” seems to permeate our services and spirituality. I’ve thought about this often and decided that I would attempt to bring some thoughts together on this topic. I am also drawing on the writing of Andrew Louth to put these thoughts together.

It is not possible to begin to say anything about mysticism without pointing out that the very definition and connotation of the word are hotly disputed. Therefore a working definition is in order.

Mysticism will be used to refer to a relationship between God and men and women that is characterized as *union with God*, a union that is real, and therefore doubtlessly experienced, though the emphasis falls on the reality of the experience, rather than the experience itself.

Any Christian understanding of union with God will focus on the union between man and God established by God himself in the incarnation. Thus there are two different aspects of what we call mysticism. First, the union between God and the believer who, through baptism, is “in Christ”, whose life is “hid with Christ in God” and whose profoundest conviction it is, in St. Paul’s words, that “I live, and yet not I, but Christ lives in me. The second is the union with God expressed in and effected by the Eucharist, in which Christ is present to His Church, and men and women receive Christ’s Body and Blood and are made one with Him. *(This second aspect I will, at a later date, further expand since our Church’s sense of the Eucharist is different from that of the Western Church, albeit just as valid and Catholic).*

That this twofold aspect of mysticism is true of early Christianity becomes evident if we look at the only thing that can be regarded as a “peak



experience” (as mysticism is commonly regarded) in the experience of the early Christians: that is martyrdom. From the beginning, the Christian church experienced the threat of martyrdom; by the second century the martyr was regarded as the ideal Christian, and martyrdom as the ultimate test of one’s faith. In part this was doubtless because Christ’s death was readily seen as a martyr’s death and the Christian martyr thus most signally united with Christ, indeed united with God Himself.

(To be continued)

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LITURGY SCHEDULE

Sundays @ 10:00 AM
Ukrainian & English

Weekdays @ 8:00 AM
English

SACRAMENTS

Penance
By Appointment

Baptism & Matrimony
*In most instances membership
required for six months*

Funerals
*Membership of an immediate
family member required*

Parish Life Council

Bob & Corinne Boyko
734.451.1893

John & Janet Dicky
313.563.5509

Daria Drobny
313.791-0292

Robert Krokosky
248.431.9554

Leo & Mary LaDouceur
313.278.7378

Gordon Malaniak
734.564.9817

Leonard Mier
313.584-6795

Greg & Esther Petrovich
734.453-4354

Rafic Vawter
313.624.9867

SCHEDULE OF SERVICES

WEEK OF ST. THOMAS

Sunday April 8 - ANTI-PASCH - St. Thomas Weekend - Festal Tone

10:00 AM - Parish Family

Easter Dionner - Sviachenne

Monday, April 9 - Euppsychius, Martyr

8:00 AM - Special Intention

Tuesday, April 10 - Terence & Others, Martyrs

No Service Scheduled

Wednesday, April 11 - Antipas, Bishop-Martyr

8:00 AM - Special Intention

Thursday, April 12 - Basil, Bishop

No Service Scheduled

Friday, April 13 - Artemon, Priest-Martyr

8:00 AM - Special Intention

Saturday, April 14 - Martin, Pope

No Service Scheduled

WEEK OF THE OINTMENT BEARERS

Sunday, April 15 - Weekend of the Ointment Bearers

10:00 AM + Mary Boyduy; Schlicht Family

(Continued from page 5 - Called to Holiness)

It is all about making your faith in a loving God real! It is all about making God first in your life! It is all about making your religion reasonable and understandable!

Holiness is not just about living a decent life. It is also about coming to an understanding of the meaning and purpose of your life. Life changes when you discover its meaning and purpose. You no longer just go through life without a clue as to why it is the way it is. You begin to more clearly see the lessons that it is attempting to teach you. So, how do you plan on spending this time after Pascha?



<http://www.stmichaelarchangel.org>
[Facebook.com/stmichaelugccdbn](https://www.facebook.com/stmichaelugccdbn)

Understanding More About the Resurrection

(Continued from page 4 - Resurrection)

The dogmatic statements of the ecumenical and local councils, which have also undergone the same process of acceptance, also enjoy the same authority, though it must be remembered that council decisions ought not to be examined outside of the context in which they were written. Each council responded to the challenges of its times, therefore not everything that was decided by the councils is of equal significance for the contemporary Christian. Moreover, the church has the authority to return to the decisions of its councils and, if necessary, modify them.

Next in significance after Scripture, liturgy and councils are the writings of the church fathers on doctrinal questions. In examining patristic works one should differentiate between those written on behalf of the church, which express general church teaching, and those reflecting personal theological opinion. Personal opinion is not sanctified by a general church acceptance and therefore cannot be placed on the same level with opinions that have wide-ranging acceptance. They should also not be eliminated in the attempt to construct a simplified theology or to find a certain “common denominator” of true Christian dogma. The authority of personal opinion is based on the fact that the authors are recognized by the church as fathers or



teachers. If personal opinions are expressed by a father of the church and not condemned by a church council, they are considered to be within the boundaries of what is allowed and possible. They cannot, however, be regarded as obligatory for Eastern Christians.

Among the works that compose the patristic legacy, the writings of the church fathers are to be given priority, especially those of Eastern fathers who exerted a decisive influence on the formation of dogma. The opinions of Western fathers that agree with the teachings of the Eastern Church are organically assimilated into Eastern tradition, comprising the Eastern and Western theological legacy. The opinions of Western fathers that clearly contradict the teaching of the Eastern Church, however, are not authoritative for Eastern Christians.

All this is a preface to what I will be sharing about Christ's Descent into Hades which is important in our Eastern Church.

Some Thoughts About the Eucharist

For a long time now I have been contemplating writing about the Eucharist since our Eastern Church has an understanding about it which is different than the Western Church. I share these thoughts in order to enhance, hopefully, the faith of my readers.

Early Christianity and the patristic tradition understood the Eucharist as a mystery of true and real communion with Christ. Speaking of the Eucharist, Chrysostom insists that “Christ even now is present, even now operates”; and Gregory of Nyssa, in spite of the Platonizing tendencies of his thought, otherwise stands for the same view of the Eucharist as a mystery of real “participation” in the glorified Body of Christ, the seed of immortality. Participation in these sources of immortality and unity is a constant concern for every Christian. Basil the Great writes this:

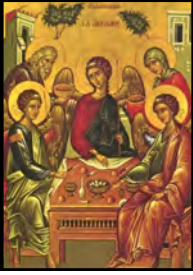
It is good and beneficial to communicate every day and to partake of the holy body and blood of Christ. For He distinctly says, “He that eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life”. And who doubts that to share frequently in life is the same thing as to have manifold life? I indeed communicate four times a week, on the Lord’s day, on Wednesday, on Friday and on the Sabbath, and on the other days if there is a commemoration of any saint.

This realistic and existential theology of the Eucharist was later challenged by pastoral needs in the post-Constantinian Church; large congregations in large churches caused a lessening of participation by the laity. We have, thankfully, returned to the idea of the efficacy of frequent participation in the Eucharist. It is the means that Jesus Himself established to be



with His followers and support them as they go through life.

The history of how the Church has and does truly understand the Eucharist is interesting and I will share some of that along the way. Suffice it to say for now, that key to our understanding of the Eucharist is contained in these words: *He that eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life* and I am present to him. It is in the act of partaking of the Sacred and Holy Gifts that is important. To do this, we have to make a decision to partake of them. We have to actively seek to be one with Our Savior.



THE EASTERN HERALD

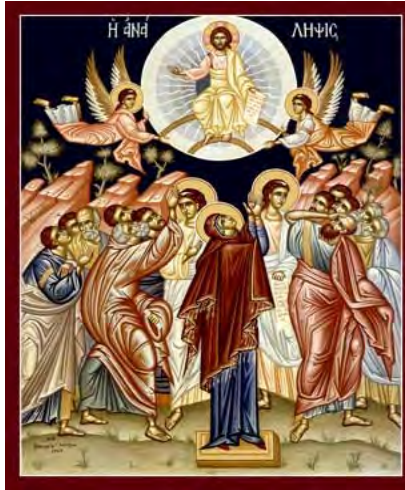
СХІДНЬЙ ВІСНИК

The Weekly Newsletter of Very Reverend Canon Wayne J. Ruchgy, Ph.D.
Vol. 64 No 14 Weekend of the Anti-Pasch - St. Thomas April 7-8, 2018

The Spirituality of the Christian East

Our Eastern spirituality is not pietism. Rather, for us it is in prayer and worship of God that our faith is defined and refined. Our spirituality leads us to a God who created the world and loves it and whose love is expressed in His identifying Himself with His creation, especially human creation. He made us humans in His image and through the Incarnation and the cross He has expressed a love that is manifested in its transfiguring power through the resurrection. Truly the centrality of prayer and worship prevent us from narrowing down our faith to some human construction, however magnificent.

Our spirituality is not “devotion-based” but, rather, “worship-based”. It is truly in worshipping God together with Jesus in the Spirit that we find a true Eastern Spirituality. Even our devotion to Mary, the Mother of God, is always centered on her role in



Life's Journey is an Ascension to the Heavenly Father

presenting Jesus to us. *(Think about this. All true icons of the Mother of God have her holding Jesus. Even the Hymn to the Mother of God that we use in the Chrysostom Liturgy we pray that we glorify her because she has borne God).*

Our spirituality also differs from the West in the way we prepared for Pascha. We serve the Liturgy of the

Presanctified Gifts instead of some other non-liturgical, devotional service. Further, we don't “give-up” things to impress God with our efforts but, rather, discipline ourselves so that we might focus on what it is that we are preparing to celebrate.

Again I would have you think about how we go about worshipping God. Our spirituality is like Early Christian spirituality. They didn't have devotions. Rather, they gathered to do what they understood would make Jesus present to them.

Incorruptible but Touchable

The Lord's body that made its entrance to the disciples through closed doors was the same as that which issued before the eyes of people from the Virgin's closed womb at His birth.

Is it surprising that He who was now going to live forever made His entrance through closed doors after His resurrection, who on His coming in order to die made His appearance from the unopened womb of a virgin?

But because the faith of those who beheld it wavered concerning the body they could see, He showed them at once His hands and His side, offering them the body that He brought in through the closed doors to touch.

By this action He revealed two wonderful and, according to human reason, quite contradictory things. He showed them that after His resurrection His body was both incorruptible and yet could be touched

By showing us that it is incorruptible, He would urge us on toward our reward, and by offering it as touchable He would dispose us toward faith.

He manifested Himself as both incorruptible and touchable to show us that His body after His resurrection was of the same nature as ours but of a different sort of glory.

St. Gregory the Great