

THOMAS SUNDAY



Icon of the Sunday of Saint Thomas

Pysanky still available

There are still a few pysanky available for purchase. These are from large goose eggs and are very beautiful. See Mary Kitt.

Parish Rummage Sale

There will be a rummage sale this Spring to benefit the parish. It will feature a special Ukrainian craft section! We will start accepting donations two weeks prior to the event. Date: to be announced. Volunteers are needed. Please contact Olena Bankston at (619) 567-6967.

Prayers For Those Serving In The Military



Let us especially remember in our prayers those family members and friends who are actively serving our country in the Armed Forces: Luke and Slavamira Haywas, Elizabeth Heltsley, Oksanna Hirniak, Michael Lopes, Paul Richelmi and Brian Tuthill. Please give any names of those you would like remembered in the Liturgies to Fr. James.

A Reminder about Standing on all Sundays and from Pascha to Pentecost

This is not an innovation, rather it is the explicit reiteration of a long tradition and teaching of the early church about the nature of the celebration of the Lord's Day (i.e. Sunday.) This proscription of the church dates from the time of the Œcumenical Council of Nicaea (325 AD.) There was a divergence in practice in various places and the church identified the need to emphasize the resurrectional character of the Lord's Day. The fact that an Œcumenical Council discussed and eventually issued a Canon (rule) on this subject shows the importance in the eyes of the church fathers. Canon 20 of the Council states: *Since there are some communities that still bend their knees on the Lord's Day and on the days of Pentecost, this Holy Council decrees that the common prayers (i.e., at Liturgy) are to be rendered to God standing.*

Mark your calendars!

On Sunday, May 10, we will celebrate Mothers' Day with a special Luncheon following the Divine Liturgy. The women will not be allowed in the kitchen since the Luncheon will be prepared and served by the Gentlemen of the parish! There will be one Divine Liturgy that day so that we can all celebrate that essential role in the Christian Family – the Mother. (*Don't worry Fathers... your day is coming on June 21!*)

Spring Cleaning day for the men

I'm not picking on the men – really, I'm not... But, since the last cleaning day before Pascha was done solely by our dedicated women, I don't want the men to feel forgotten. We have lots of odd jobs around the church that need the brawn of our Gentlemen. The tentative date for this event is May 2.

Up, Up, and Away...

Pani Maria asked her catechism class to draw pictures of their favorite Bible stories. She was puzzled by Yaroslav's picture of four people on an airplane, so she asked which story he was illustrating.

“Oh, it's Mary, Joseph, and Baby Jesus on their flight to Egypt.”

“But who's the fourth person, Yaroslav?”

“Oh, that's Pontius – the Pilot.”

ARTOS

In our Church, there is the custom for a single loaf of blessed bread (*Artos* in Greek), to lie before the Iconostasis throughout Bright Week in memory of the Risen Lord, Jesus Christ, before it is shared among the whole congregation. Depicted on the top of the *Artos* are either the symbol of Christ's victory over death – the Cross, surmounted by a crown of thorns, or the icon of the Resurrection of Christ. On the first day of Pascha, during the Holy and Divine Liturgy, after the Prayer Before the Ambo, the *Artos* is blessed by a special prayer and sprinkling with the Holy Water. Throughout Bright Week, at the end of the Holy and Divine Liturgy, the *Artos* is carried around the church in solemn procession. On the Saturday of Bright Week it is distributed as a blessing of the Arch-Pastor (that is to say Christ) to the congregation (sometimes after Sunday Holy and Divine Liturgy, on Saint Thomas Sunday).

The significance of the *Artos* is that it serves to remind all Christians of the events connected with the Resurrection of Our Lord God and Saviour Jesus Christ. While still living on earth, the Lord called Himself the Bread of Life, saying: I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me shall not hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst (John 6:35). After His Resurrection, more than once Jesus appeared to His disciples, ate before them, and blessed their own food. For example, as evening fell on the first day of His resurrection, He was recognized in Emmaus by two of His disciples as He blessed and broke bread (Luke 24:13-35).

On the 40th day after His Resurrection, the Lord ascended into heaven, and His disciples and followers found comfort in their memories of the Lord: they recalled His every word, His every step and His every action. When they met for common prayer, they would partake of the Most Holy Body and Most Precious Blood of Christ, remembering the Last Supper. When they say down to an ordinary meal, they would leave a place at the head of the table empty, for the invisibly present Lord and would lay bread on that place.

Remembering this custom of the Apostles', the Fathers of the Church made it their custom to put out the *Artos* at the Paschal Feast in memory of the appearances of the Risen Lord to His disciples, and also in memory of the fact that the Lord Who suffered and was resurrected for our justification has made Himself the true Bread of Life and is invisible present in His Church always, to the close of the ages (Matthew 28:20).

Whereas special Paschal breads, called *babka* or *paska* are broken and eaten on the first day of Pascha, the *Artos* is kept whole throughout the whole of Bright Week as a reminder of the presence of the Risen Saviour in the midst of those who believe in Him and is only divided and distributed on the end of the Bright Week. In this way, the Bright Week begins and ends with the eating of especially baked and blessed bread.

The *Artos* may also be compared to the unleavened bread of the Old Testament, of which ancient Israel, delivered from their captivity in the land of Egypt, ate during the week of the Passover (Exodus 12:15-20). As Cyril, the Bishop of Turov, who lived during the 12th century, said in a sermon for the Sunday after Pascha: "Even as the Jews bore the unleavened bread upon their heads out of Egypt through the desert (Exodus 12:34), until they had crossed the Red Sea, after which they dedicated the bread to God, divided it amongst all their host, and having all eaten thereof, became ... terrible to their enemies, even so do we, saved by our Resurrected Lord from the captivity of that Pharaoh of the mind, the Devil, bear the blessed bread – the *Artos* – from the day of the Resurrection of Christ and, finally, having dedicated this bread to God, we eat of it and preserve it to the health of body and soul."

It is a custom among our people to this very day, to keep the *Artos* throughout the year and with due reverence and faith to eat of it in time of illness or distress. This is eaten, often together with a drink of Holy Water, which had been blessed at the Feast of the Theophany of Our Lord.

„МИР ВАМ”

На другий вечір по Страсній П'ятниці, перелякані Христові учні зібралися в кімнаті і зачинили двері. Їх тривожила думка, що жидівська старшина може арештувати тих, що були приятелями Людини, яку покарено за зраду і ересь. Страх і скорбота мучили їхні серця.

Нараз, до тих переляканих і безпомічних учнів, прийшов Христос і промовив: „Шелом”, що значить: „*Мир вам*”. Це було в жидів звичайне поздоровлення, як в нас добрий день, або добрий вечір. Однак це поздоровлення разом з подією, про яку розказує сьогоднішнє Євангеліє, набуває незвичайного значення.

„Мир вам” - це слова нашого Спасителя Христа. Це слова Того, про якого говорили старозавітні пророки, називаючи Його „*Князем миру*”. Це слова Христа, при народженні якого ангели співали пісню миру: „*Слава на висотах Богові і мир людям доброї волі*”. Цю форму поздоровлення: „Мир вам”, вживали перші християни. Апостол Петро заохочує християн поздоровляти один одного святим поцілунком, який, звичайно, був злучений зі словами: „Мир вам”. Тому, що прийняття Тайни Пресвятої Євхаристії є найглибшим виявом братньої любові, поцілунок миру увійшов до нашої Літургії. Він збережений сьогодні між священиками, котрі спільно служать Святу Літургію. Апостол Павло закінчує майже кожен свій лист поздоровленням: „*Нехай ласка Божя і мир Господа нашого Ісуса Христа буде з вами*”. Словами: „*Мир вам*”, звертається священник до вірних під час служби, а вірні відповідають: „*І духові твоєму*”.

Через прощення гріхів приходить мир. Немає щасливішої хвилини в житті людини ніж та, коли вона може сказати після сповіді: „Я - знову з Богом”. Свідомість того, що я є в згоді з Богом, перевищує усі радощі цього світу. Це, насправді, відчуття, котрого за гроші годі купити. Хто цього миру не зазнав, його життя не може бути повним.

Ми, як члени Христової Церкви, є покликані засновувати мир і будувати світ братньої любові навколо нас. Серед потреб світу одна з найбільших це потреба голосу миротворців. „Мир вам”, - промовив Христос до своїх учнів не один раз, але два. Сказавши це, додав: „*Як післав мене Отець - так Я посилаю вас*”. Це значить, що ми, християни, послідовники Христа, покликані виконувати завдання миротворців. Але, чи ми віримо, що таким є наше післанництво? Чи ми стараємося поширювати мир навколо нас?

Брати і сестри! Призадумаймося серйозно над нашим післанництвом як миротворців. Без злоби, з любов'ю до всіх стараймося нести мир в наші родини, в нашу громаду. Кожен із нас може бути миротворцем. Чи ви віруєте в цю правду? „*Щасливі ті, які увірували*”, - сказав Христос до апостола Томи, який сумнівався. В тому хаотичному, несправедливому, пошарпаному війнами світі щасливі ті, що кажуть: „*Ми змінимо, ми обновимо світ, бо ми всеціло віддані нашому князеві миру, Христові*”.

“PEACE BE WITH YOU”

The next evening after Good Friday, the frightened disciples of Christ hid behind closed doors, afraid that they would be arrested for their association with Christ, Who had been executed for treason and heresy.

Suddenly, Christ appeared and said: “*Shalom*”, which means “*Peace be with you.*” This was a normal greeting among the Jews, like saying “good morning” or “good evening”. But the circumstances described in today’s Gospel gives it supernatural meaning.

The words “Peace be with you,” are spoken by Christ, Whom the Old Testament prophets called “*the Prince of Peace*”, and at Whose birth the angels sang: “*Glory in the highest and peace to men of goodwill.*” These words were used as a greeting by the first Christians. The apostle Peter urged Christians to greet each other with these words and with a kiss, a tradition that continues today among the priests concelebrating the Liturgy. The apostle Paul ended almost all his letters with: “*May the grace of God and the peace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.*” The priest turns to the faithful with the words: “*Peace be with you*” and they respond: “*And with your spirit.*”

Peace comes through forgiveness of sin. There is no happier moment in a person’s life than when he can say after confession: “I am again with God.” This knowledge that I am in union with God exceeds any joy found in this world. This is, truly, a feeling which money cannot buy. The person who has never known this feeling cannot find true contentment in his life.

As members of Christ’s Church, we are called to spread peace and build a world based on brotherly love. Of all the needs in this world, the greatest need is the voice of the peacemaker. Christ said to His disciples: “*Peace be with you,*” not once, but twice. In saying this, He also added: “*As My Father has sent me, I send you.*” This means that we, Christians, followers of Jesus Christ, are called to fulfill the role of peacemaker. But, do we believe that we have this calling? Do we try to spread peace in the world around us?

Brothers and sisters! Let us think seriously about our calling to be peacemakers. With love to all, let us spread peace in our family and in our community. “*Happy are those who believe*” Christ said to the apostle Thomas, who was filled with doubt. In this chaotic, unjust, war filled world, happy is the person who can say: “We will change and renew the world, for we follow the Prince of Peace.”

The God-Man

Written by the Very Rev. Vladimir Berzonsky

"Being found in appearance as a man, [Christ] humbled Himself and became obedient to death -- even death on a cross! Therefore God exalted Him to the highest place and gave Him a name that is above every name that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow" (Galatians 2:8)

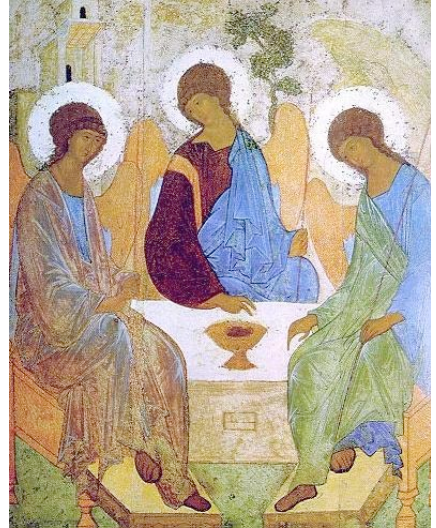
In reading certain theologians, you find them consistently referring to Jesus Christ as the God-Man. They do it to stress the actions of our Lord God and Savior to be that of the Father and the Holy Spirit in consort with Him. Nothing He does, says or intends is accidental, arbitrary or impulsive. All is part of the mystical plan for the salvation of humanity. It may help to have in the mind's eye the awesome icon by St. Andrei Rublev, *Hospitality of Abraham*, called also *The Holy Trinity*.

He teaches us humility and obedience. Some say it's not natural for a human to be humble. Our culture especially encourages and rewards assertiveness, even to the point of aggression. "Better feared than pitied" would serve as an American motto, at least in most places. But the God-Man's commandments as expressed in the Sermon on the Mount bless and reward the meek, the peacemakers, the poor in heart, and the like. How do you do that and retain some semblance of self-respect? It's not a proper question that helps in the process of our salvation. The God-Man would say -- indeed, did say -- that if we want to find our selves, we must first lose self, for the one who loses his or her self will ultimately save it. How can that be possible?

The God-Man demonstrated how it's done. He who was God, the Son of God, "*humbled Himself and became obedient to death.*" St. Paul grasped the key to salvation and shared it with his readers. Humility [*kenosis*] is the beginning of all monastic rules. But it's not just for monks and nuns. The God-Man whom we honor and magnify the week of Passion ending with the cross, grave, burial and resurrection, demonstrated what many have always felt to be impossible; that is, the complete surrender of one's selfhood or will, in order to offer it as a gift to the Creator. "*Even to death on a cross!*"

The plan of the Holy Trinity in the icon is about salvation, but not only that, if we may say so. The plan is for union with what was created, the human being. Salvation is a negative word. It means being saved from something -- namely, sin. But once saved, then what? Union with Father, Son and Holy Spirit, adopted as siblings of the God-Man so that we may not "only" live forever, but live in communion with what is possible, for a creature to unite with the uncreated, or as St. Gregory Palamas put it, with the energies of God. It does demand an unconditional, total surrender of human will.

To grasp what the God-Man is about in the gospels, especially the Johannine writings, it is important to bear that in mind. When even as a lad, He tells His mother after she and Joseph turn back from the journey to Galilee and find Him rapt in discussion with the elders in the temple: "*Didn't you know I must be about My Father's business?*" (Luke 2:49) Even then He understood that He had a mission more relevant than any task ever carried out by a human being, because He was more than a mere human being. Everything is consumed by that commitment. His is a life of total obedience. God is Father, God is Son, and God is Holy Spirit. There is no room for what we mere humans consider freedom, if by it we mean arbitrariness, indecision, choosing what and whom to obey or disobey. All that is for those limited by the vagaries of self-affirmation, suffering by self-pity or individuality. Here is a profound mystery, and the events of that awesome Holy Week are an excellent time to meditate on it.



Українська Католицька Парафія Матері Божої Неустаючої Помочі

Церква Святого Пророка й Предтечи Йоана Хрестителя
Святиня Святого Миколая, Архієпископа Мір Лікійського, Чудотворця

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Blessed Are Those Who Have Not Seen, and Yet Believe.

Thomas' profession of faith came swiftly when, eight days after he had declared his unwillingness to believe, Jesus showed him His side and the nail marks in His hands and removed every possible doubt. Our Lord Jesus Christ had miraculously entered the room when the doors were closed. As this would have been impossible for an ordinary earthly body He reassured Thomas, and through him the other disciples, by letting him see His side and the wounds in his flesh.

As always, Christ had to be patient with Thomas when he said he would not believe and with the other disciples too when they thought they were seeing a ghost. Because of His desire to convince the whole world, He most willingly showed them the marks of the nails and the wound in His side; because He wished those who needed such signs as a support for their faith to have no possible reason for doubt, He even took food although He had no need for it.

But when anyone accepts what he has not seen, believing on the word of his teacher, the faith by which he honors the one his teacher proclaims to him is worthy of great praise. Blessed, therefore, is everyone who believes the message of the Holy Apostles who, as Luke says, were eyewitnesses of Christ's actions and ministers of the word. If we desire eternal life and long for a dwelling place in heaven, we must listen to them.

Saint Cyril of Alexandria