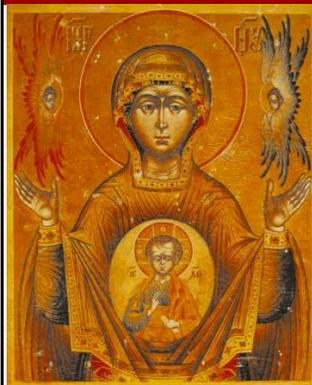


SAINT ANTHONY ORTHODOX CHURCH



Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese

www.orthodoxbutler.org

ADDRESS: 400 S. Sixth Avenue, Butler, PA 16001

RECTOR: Rev. Bogdan Gabriel Bucur

CONTACT: 724-287-6893 (church); 412.390.8208 (priest);

frbogdan@orthodoxbutler.org

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER PASCHA:

The Holy Apostle Thomas

NOTES FOR THE THOMAS SUNDAY LITURGY

This Sunday we receive the blessing of hosting His Grace, our Bishop Thomas. Please join the chanters and visiting clergy in singing the “**Preserve, O Lord, our Master and Chief Priest, and grant him many years. Many years to thee, Master!**”

We are glad to also have among us Deacon Ned Trbovich and Deacon Luke Toumi, both from St. George Cathedral in Pittsburgh.

SPECIAL HYMN TO THE THEOTOKOS: O most radiant lamp, the Theotokos, the immeasurable honor, which is more exalted than all creatures: with praises do we magnify thee!

INSTEAD OF "WE HAVE SEEN THE TRUE LIGHT": Christ is risen. . . (*once*)

AT THE CONCLUSION OF LITURGY: Christ is risen! Indeed He is risen!

Arabic: *Al Maseeh qam! Haqan qam!*

Greek: *Hristós anesthi! Alithós anesthi!*

Romanian: *Hristós a inviat! Adevarat a inviat!*

Slavonic: *Hristós voskresey! Voyistino voskresey!*

“Preserve, O Lord, our Master and Chief Priest, and grant him many years. Many years to thee, Master!”

FIRST ANTIPHON

Shout with joy to God, all the earth; sing to His Name, give glory to His praises.
Through the intercessions of the Theotokos, O Savior, save us!

Say to God: How awesome are Thy works; let all the earth worship Thee, and sing to Thee. *Through the intercessions of the Theotokos, O Savior, save us!*

Glory ... Now and ever ... *Through the intercessions of the Theotokos, O Savior, save us!*

SECOND ANTIPHON

May God have mercy upon us, and bless us, and may He cause His face to shine upon us, and have mercy upon us. *O Son of God who art risen from the dead, save us, who sing unto Thee, Alleluia!*

That Thy way may be known upon earth, Thy salvation among all nations.
O Son of God ...

Let the people give thanks to Thee, O God, let all the people give thanks to Thee. *O Son of God ...*

May God bless us, and may all the ends of the earth fear Him.
O Son of God ...

Glory ... Now and ever... *O Only-Begotten Son and Word of God ...*

THIRD ANTIPHON

Let God arise, and let His enemies be scattered, and let those who hate Him flee from before His face. *Christ is risen ...* [English, the Byzantine melody]

As smoke vanisheth, so let them vanish; as wax melteth before the fire.
Christ is risen ... [Greek]

So let sinners perish before the Face of God, but let the righteous be glad.
Christ is risen ...[Arabic]

This is the day which the Lord hath made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.
Christ is risen ... [Romanian]

AT THE LITTLE ENTRANCE

ENTRANCE HYMN:

In the gathering places bless ye God the Lord from the springs of Israel.

**O Son of God, who art risen from the dead, save us who sing unto Thee:
Alleluia!**

TROPARION FOR THOMAS SUNDAY (Tone 7): While the tomb was sealed, Thou didst shine forth from it, O Light. While the doors were closed, Thou didst come in to Thy Disciples, O Christ God, Resurrection of all, renewing in us through them an upright spirit, according to the greatness of Thy mercy.

KONTAKION OF PASCHA (Tone 8): O Christ God, though Thou didst descend into the grave, yet didst Thou overthrow the power of Hades, and rise as an Immortal Conqueror. Thou didst greet the myrrh-bearing women with joy, and to Thine Apostles Thou didst send Thy peace, and to the fallen O Lord, Thou didst bring resurrection.

TODAY'S APOSTLE READING

Prokeimenon: *Great God is our Lord and of great power!
Praise the Lord, for He is good.*

The Reading is from the Acts of the Apostles

(Acts of the Apostles 5:12-20)

In those days, many signs and wonders were done among the people at the hands of the apostles. They were all together in Solomon's portico. None of the others dared to join them, but the people esteemed them. Yet more than ever, believers in the Lord, great numbers of men and women, were added to them. Thus they even carried the sick out into the streets and laid them on cots and mats so that when Peter came by, at least his shadow might fall on one or another of them. A large number of people from the towns in the vicinity of Jerusalem also gathered, bringing the sick and those disturbed by unclean spirits, and they were all cured. Then the high priest rose up and all his companions, that is, the party of the Sadducees, and, filled with jealousy, laid hands upon the apostles and put them in the public jail. But during the night, the angel of the Lord opened the doors of the prison, led them out, and said,

"Go and take your place in the temple area, and tell the people everything about this life."

We are reading today about the earliest Christian community, as described in the Acts of the Apostles, the book that we started reading at Pascha. Saint Luke conveys a spectacular image that: angelic apparitions, miraculous healings, mass conversions; and, on the other hand, fierce opposition to the Good News that the Apostles are spreading. On a human level, the cause of this opposition is a petty one: **"the high priest rose up and all his companions ... and, *filled with jealousy*, laid hands upon the apostles and put them in the public jail."** This envy of the public success of the apostles recalls the envy that possessed the Pharisees when they saw that the people were deserting them to go after Jesus (John 12:17-19). However, this is only the surface of a much deeper resistance.

On Pascha night we heard that "[the Word of God] **was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him.**" It is not that Jesus was, as a Jew, rejected by his Jewish compatriots. The Evangelist emphasizes that the entire world, *the cosmos*, although made and sustained by the Logos (the Word or Power or Mind of God) failed to recognize and embrace the *Word-become-flesh*, Jesus Christ. In other words, there is a fundamental and deep-seated resistance to the intimate presence of God at the heart of things and in our very hearts; it is the continuation of that original rejection of God that we call "the Fall"; and all of us, descendants of Adam, find it rooted in the depths of our inner being.

The Resurrection is not simply a coming-back-to-life, a resuscitation. Unlike Lazarus, who was brought back to life, but later died, Christ is risen from the dead never to die again. The Resurrection is rather the undoing of the Fall, the undoing of our separation from God, the healing of the disease of God-rejection that we inherit from Adam, the beginning of a *new kind* of life. How this new, resurrected life looks like we see, for now, in Christ; yet we will follow, too. At the moment, we are already Christ's, but not yet risen with Him; still mortal, but already tasting from the fountain of immortality (as we sing about the Eucharist), as we anticipate our coming resurrection.

If we judge ourselves descendants of the apostles, we receive the same call as they did: **"Go and take your place in the temple area, and tell the people everything about this life."** This means that we should learn about this new life by living it, and that we should spread the Good News first and foremost by embodying it.

TODAY'S GOSPEL READING

The Reading is from the Gospel according to Saint John

(John 20:19-31)

On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being shut where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, "Peace be to you." When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, "Peace be to you! As the Father has sent me, even so I 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; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained." Now Thomas, one of the twelve, called the Twin, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord." But he said to them, "Unless I see in his hands the imprint of the nails, and place my finger in the mark of the nails, and place my hand in his side, I will not believe." Eight days later, his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. The doors were shut, but Jesus came and stood among them, and said, "Peace be to you!" Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side; do not be faithless, but believing." Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!" Jesus said to him, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe." Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the 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!

The "doubting" of the Apostle Thomas is not so much a personal weakness, as much as the (very honest) expression of the fundamental difficulty everyone and anyone has in encountering the risen Christ. Mary Magdalene met the risen Christ and mistook him for the gardener (John 20); two other disciples conversed with the risen Christ for some two hours and failed to recognize him (Luke 24); when Christ presented himself to the apostles, it took them a long time to abandon the idea that it was a ghost (Luke 24).

So, when Thomas encounters him, he tries at first to verify by touching the risen body of Christ. And Christ does not deny him his “proof”; he invites him to touch and see and believe. We don’t know if in fact the Apostle managed to complete his physical investigation before recognizing the divine Presence with all his heart and mind: **“My Lord and my God!”**

As for us, although we have been singing and proclaiming “Christ is risen!” throughout the night of Pascha, the resurrection is bound to remain beyond the grasp of thought or words. And if we think that the apostles might have had the advantage of “seeing” the Resurrected One, we know now that meeting the risen Christ has always and will always be difficult. The reason is that the resurrected state is something beyond the confines of the fallen reality in which we function; it is, Saint Paul tells us, “a mystery” (1 Cor 15:51).

Today’s Gospel encourages us with these words: **“Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe!”** This concerns us directly; we are those who have not seen, yet believe. Or, in other words, we do not see physically, but see through faith. Our vision is shaped, first, by the Divine Liturgy, where we “taste and *see*” and then, after receiving the Eucharist, proclaim “*we have seen the true light!*” The outer liturgy shapes us and enables us to engage in the inner liturgy of the heart, the life of individual prayer “until the day dawns and the morning star rises in our hearts” (2 Peter 19:1). The end is that we, too, with the apostles may say that *we have seen the Lord*.

As beginners on this journey into God, we start with the confession of the Holy Apostle Thomas—**“My Lord and my God!”**—and with the full assurance that the risen Lord is with us directing our every step on the way.

Remember in your prayers

LIVING: Sam, Bill, Jennifer, Karen (Joanna’s mother), Victoria (Frank’s mother), Diane, Sula, Fran, Dolores (Sipos), Leatrice (Totin), Ed, Dolores (Bingham), Angelica, Karyn, Brian, Justin, Sara, Lorine, Stella, Jonathan and Joanna, Andrei and Nyoka.

DEPARTED: Tillie, Abie, Nicolae (Silviu’s father), Joseph (Rose’s father), Fred (Dollie’s uncle), Bob (Diane’s father), George (Botsis), Michael, priest James, Gabriel, Eduard, Lance, Nancy.