

ABOUT THOMAS

by Father Lawrence Farley

Saint Thomas, it seems, can never catch a break, at least in popular culture. Our culture knows him as “doubting Thomas,” and one single and uncharacteristic lapse has forever labelled him as a doubter and made him the patron saint of sceptics. He is regarded as suffering from an innate tendency to doubt and to faithlessness, as if he somehow loved his Lord less than the other apostles. A quick look through the other pages of John’s Gospel reveals it is not so. If anything, Thomas loved Jesus more.

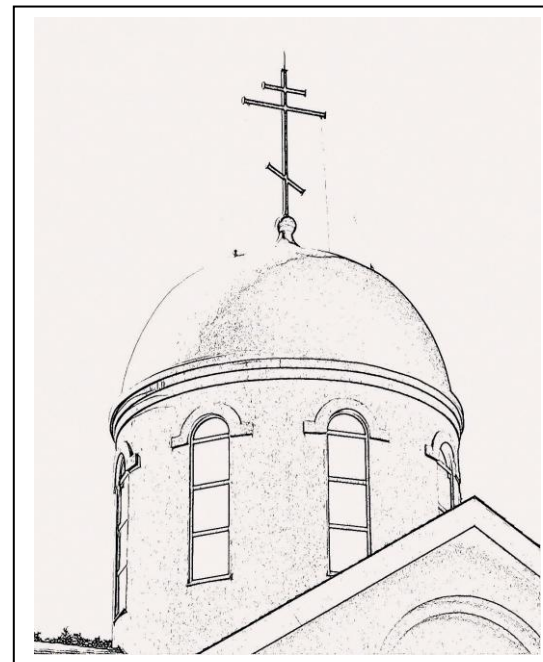
Remember how a few short days before the catastrophic events of Christ’s arrest, trial, and crucifixion all the other disciples hung back in fear when their Master spoke of leaving the safety of their place across the Jordan to return to Bethany in Judea to visit Lazarus? Jesus told them plainly that Lazarus was dead, and then said, “let us go to Him.” The apostles all thought that He meant visiting Lazarus’ bereaved family in Judea and being stoned to death for it, as He almost was before (John 11:7-8, 14-15). They all hung back, aghast at their Master’s determined plan. It was Thomas who refused to let Him go and die alone: “Let us also go,” he told them, “that we may die with Him” (v. 16).

Thomas’ famous lapse therefore did not spring from a cold heart, nor from a deficit of love. When the other apostles told him after the Resurrection that they had seen the Lord, and when Thomas responded, “Unless I see in His hands the print of the nails, and place my finger in the mark of the nails, and place my hand in His side, I will not believe” (John 20:25), this was not the voice of scepticism. If Thomas were a despairing sceptic, he would not then have been with the other apostles at all. He would have said, “I’m done,” and returned to Galilee. No, this was not the voice of scepticism. It was the voice of desire.

That is, Thomas desired more than anything in the world to see His Lord alive again. His poor heart had sustained such a pounding and been broken into so many tiny pieces by the events of that last terrible Friday that he could not risk having it broken again. He dared not believe this latest report, for fear that it was wrong. He felt that if he raised his hopes again only to have them dashed, he could not survive. No more risks, no more taking chances. From now on, seeing was believing. But he clearly wanted to see and to believe. When he drew his line in the sand and said he would not believe this report unless Christ appeared to him personally, he wanted more than anything for it to be so. He drew this line, hoping beyond hope that Christ would cross over it. When Christ did, and offered His risen flesh to Thomas for inspection, Thomas sank to his knees, exclaiming, “My Lord and my God!” Here was everything he ever wanted.

Thomas’ desire for Christ challenges us today—and not just to believe in Christ without seeing Him for ourselves. Thomas challenges not just our faith, but our priorities. Thomas wanted Christ more than anything else, and everything else grew dim in the face of that desire. What do we want? What is our deepest desire? Is it for money? For health and happiness? Is it for the health and happiness of our children? Is it for success and recognition in our chosen field? Thomas would cheerfully have sacrificed all these things, if only he could have his Jesus back again. For Thomas, nothing was more important than Jesus. After falling down before Christ with his confession, he turns to us with a question: what is our deepest desire? How important is Jesus to us?

WEEKLY



BULLETIN

Today is the beginning of our salvation, the revelation of the eternal mystery. The Son of God becomes the Son of the Virgin as Gabriel announces the coming of Grace. Together with him let us cry to the Theotokos: Rejoice O Full of Grace, the Lord is with you!

Troparion of the Annunciation to the Theotokos

ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN CHURCH OF THE ANNUNCIATION

A Parish of the Diocese of New York and New Jersey of the Orthodox Church in America

360 Van Zile Road, Brick, New Jersey 08724

Phone: (732) 458-9032 Email: orthodoxbrick@gmail.com

Fax: (732) 295-0007 Website: www.orthodoxbrick.org

Very Rev. Fr. Gary Joseph Breton, *Rector*

Very Rev. Fr. Paul Kucynda, *Retired Attached Priest*

Rev. Fr. Michael Pejovic, *Attached Priest*

Matthew Petrides, *Senior Warden*

Christian Gamboa, *Choir Director*

April 27, 2025

ANTIPASCHA. 2nd SUNDAY OF PASCHA - St. Thomas Sunday

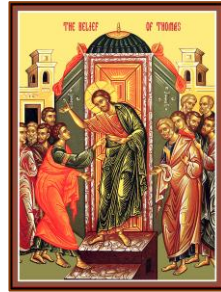
Tone 1. Hieromartyr Simeon, kinsman of the Lord, second Bishop of Jerusalem (107). Ven. Stephen, Abbot of the Kiev Caves and Bishop of Vladimir in Volyn' (1094). St. Eulogius the Hospitable, of Constantinople (4th c.). The Burning of St. Sava's relics (13th c.).

Today's Readings:

Epistle: Acts 5:12-20 *Gospel:* John 20:19-31

Upcoming Service Schedule:

Today – 9:00am Divine Liturgy
Saturday – 6:00pm Great Vespers
Sunday – 9:00am Baptism & Chrismation of Mohrs
Sunday – 9:30am Divine Liturgy



St. Thomas
Sunday

Next Sunday's Readings:

Epistle: Acts 6:1-7 *Gospel:* Mark 15:43-16:8

We are happy that you have joined us for worship today and hope that you will join us for Coffee Hour after Divine Liturgy. **The reception of the Holy Eucharist** is only for baptized members of the Orthodox Church who have prepared with prayer, fasting, and periodic confession. You are encouraged to receive the blessed bread that is **offered at the end of the service and which may also be offered to you by one of your neighbors during Communion.**

Please pray for vocations to the Holy Priesthood!

Many Years! – Birthdays

Last Tuesday – Jason Price
Last Thursday – Kathy Diaz
This Tuesday – Stephen Chidylo
This Thursday – Olga Kornafel
This Saturday – Betty James

Keep up on OCA news by visiting www.oca.org, diocesan news by visiting www.nynjoca.org, and parish news by visiting www.occa-brick.org.

Special Prayers

We pray for **all** our parish family members, but we pray especially for those who are ill and afflicted. Among them are **Fr. Paul Kucynda, Brian Price, Victorianne Vessio, Mary Herelick, Betty James, Manya Shark, Deryl Tczap, Mary Tczap, George Stavrou, Margaret Makara, Dennis & Ann Marie Gahr, Michael Getmanov, Alan Diaz, Ellen Norman, Maryann Sivilic, Lia Eickhorn, Jack Rinderer, and Lori Ratushnuk.**

Annunciations

TODAY – Please join us for **Coffee Hour** in the Parish Hall after the Veneration of the Cross. **Team #1** is in charge.

TODAY – **Church School** class will be held during Coffee Hour.

TODAY – **May Parish calendars** are available.

THIS SUNDAY – **Fred Mohr** will be received into the Orthodox Faith by Chrismation. His daughter, **Kirsten**, will be baptized and chrismated. These sacraments will take place at 9:00am, prior to the start of the Divine Liturgy. **Everyone is welcome** to come and be a part of this important day for the Mohrs and the parish.

Thursday, May 8 – A celebration in honor of **Archbishop Michael's Episcopal Consecration Anniversary (15 years)** will take place at Ss. Peter & Paul Church in Jersey City. A Divine Liturgy followed by a meal will begin at 10:00am. Flyers are posted around the church and parish hall; one is posted on the parish website. Please RSVP if you plan to attend. All are welcome!

Friday, May 16 – A 3-day **Diocesan Young Adult Retreat** will begin at St. Andrew's Camp in Jewell, NY. **Flyers** for this event are also posted. All who are between the ages of 18 and 35 are invited and encouraged to participate!

We are in the process of acquiring new **refrigerators and freezers** for the Parish Hall. In the meantime, please refrain from purchasing any Coffee Hour items that require refrigeration or freezing. We currently have minimal space for these items.

Many thanks to all who made the **Lenten and Paschal seasons** edifying and memorable at our parish.

Please continue to use the **clothing bin** located in the church parking lot. A list of items that can be donated is located on the whiteboard in the Parish Hall. Each donation helps the parish financially. Many thanks for your participation.

St. Thomas Sunday
*Thomas touched Thy life-giving side with an eager hand, O Christ God,
when Thou camest to Thine Apostles through closed doors.//
He cried out with all: "Thou art my Lord and my God!" his faith was made certain.
Having touched and seen,
he confessed Thee to be truly God, not only man,
crying: "My Lord and my God, glory to Thee!"*
Stikheron at Great Vespers