

THOMAS SUNDAY

One can say that everyone rejoices when they hear the troparion of the Resurrection. But they sometimes grow bored when it is sung often. This hymn, however, should be endlessly joyful to people: its continual repetition about the victory over death and the devil should be an infinite source of consolation. Therefore if this joy soon passes, it passes because one's faith is not so living and strong. People find it difficult to believe because their souls do not especially love this victory.

They say: Thomas, who had been previously ready to die for Christ, also did not believe.

No, Thomas asked for assurances not because he did not believe, but because he desired an untroubled faith, for he longed for the resurrection and understood its significance.

Before their entry into Jerusalem, having learned that there would not be any external success but, to the contrary, that the Savior awaited suffering, the disciples thought that the same death awaited them as a reward for following Him. They were overcome by horror and fear, and then Thomas said: Let us go that we might die with Him [Jn 11:16]. Thomas had a loyal heart. How many of them were troubled when they learned that there was not, and would not be, any external success! When He was to them a great miracle worker, healing them and giving them bread, they believed; but when they learned that He was ready to accept and bear the great deed [podvig] of patience and suffering for the sake of their spiritual benefit – then they all ran away, their faith weakened and, if their conscience rebuked them, they easily found an excuse in themselves: we trusted that it had been He [Lk 24:21].

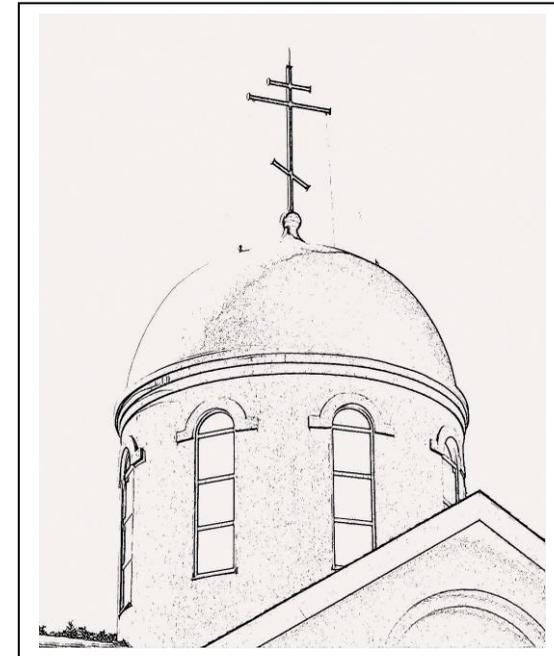
People say: if we had seen Him we would not have denied Him. This is not true: the majority of those who denied Him had seen Him, and they denied Him because they did not love spiritual values, and the victory over the devil spoke but little to their hearts; they desired external success.

Cases of full denial are not many. Normally a remnant of faith remains, and this half-acknowledgment and half-faith is perhaps even worse, and such half-believers are in the majority. If they were to be excluded from so-called believing society we would see that there are but few true worshippers. Church and cross, unity in Christ, unity in the name of the feat [podvig] of love – there is the outline of our relationship towards the Lord. But half-believers do not strive to understand either one or the other – unity or Christ's love – in the way that Christians understand it.

Half-faith has many degrees, but one thing inevitably follows from all half-belief. Those who deny know both what they have denied and to what to return. But the half-believer does not have any such clarity and grows accustomed to a life guided by sophistries, half-truth, and hints at some sort of supposed truth.

Metropolitan Anthony (Khrapovitsky)

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

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Rev. Fr. Alexander Smida, *Attached Priest*

Tara Paxton, *Senior Warden*

Matthew Hascha, *Choir Director*

May 5, 2019
ANTIPASCHA. 2nd SUNDAY OF PASCHA
St. Thomas Sunday

Tone 1. Great Martyr Irene (1st-2nd c.). Uncovering of the Relics of Ven. Jacob (James), Abbot of Zheleznobórovsk.

Today's Readings:

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

Upcoming Service Schedule:

Today – **9:00am Divine Liturgy**

Saturday – **7:00pm Great Vespers**

Sunday – **9:00am Divine Liturgy**

Next Sunday's Readings:

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



St. Thomas Sunday

Coffee Hour Teams:

Today – TEAM D (Paxton, May, Alpaugh)

Next Sunday – TEAM E (Bass, Petrides)

Digital versions of our diocesan publication, **Jacob's Well**, are available online. Parishioners with email capability have received instructions for accessing the latest issue. Featured in this issue are articles from our own Angelina Christos and Larisa Paxton! Paper versions of the publication are expected to arrive this week at our parish.

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: **Betty James, Olga Kornafel, Deryl Tczap, Reader John Economou, Paul Hanas, Meni Mari, Tom Collins, Tom Kopec, Alan Diaz, Cathy Diaz, Brian Price, Ann Marie Gahr, Dennis Gahr, Ron Madensky, Dorothy Studier, Helen Ciurczak, Pauline Barnowsky, Elba Cinciarelli, and Catherine Ratushnuk.**

We are happy that you have joined us for worship today and hope that you will join us for coffee hour after the service. Please note that **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.**

Annunciations

TODAY – **Church School** will be held today after the Divine Liturgy. Please allow the church school children, their teachers and parents of the younger children to venerate the Cross first (after the clergy) after the Divine Liturgy.

TODAY – Plants that were ordered during our **Church School Plant Sale** have arrived. They can be found on the concrete pad across from the parish hall. Many thanks to all who participated in this fund-raising event. Please see **Kristine Nilsen** with any questions. Happy planting!

TODAY – Father Gary will **bless graves** at St. Vladimir Cemetery in Jackson, NJ and at Ocean County Memorial Park in Toms River.

THIS SATURDAY – A celebration of the **225th Anniversary of Orthodoxy coming to America** will be held at Mother of God Orthodox Church in Princeton. The day will feature a molieben and speakers. His Beatitude, Metropolitan Tikhon and His Eminence, Archbishop Michael will lead the celebration. Please see the flyer located on the parish bulletin boards for more information.

Saturday, May 18 - A **Troika Dinner Fundraiser** to benefit St. Andrew's Camp in upstate NY will be held at St. Peter and Paul Church in South River from 6:00 - 10:00PM (Vespers will be at 5:00PM). A full Eastern European dinner will be served. There will also be entertainment, basket raffles, and a chance to win two tickets to the smash hit *Come From Away*. Event tickets are \$33.00 per adult and \$25 for seniors over 65 and students. For reservations, please contact Natalie May or Phil Rogozenski (908)331-1297.

Saturday, June 1 – A **very important workshop** for all parishioners and especially for members of the **Parish Council** will be held at Ss. Peter & Paul Church in South River. Please see the flyer located on the parish bulletin boards for more information.

A limited number of **Pierogis** are available for sale at \$10 per dozen. Please see **Matushka Mary** at Coffee Hour if you are interested in purchasing some.

Many thanks to choir director **Matthew Hascha** and **all who sung** during the services of Holy Week, Pascha, and Bright Week! Thanks also to those who **decorated the church and kept it clean** throughout that time. God bless you all!

MANY YEARS

Birthdays this week:

Wednesday – Tami Economou

Thursday – Mary Breton

Saturday – Manya Shark

OUTREACH

- **Food Pantry donations** are *always* accepted. Place non-perishable food items in blue bin in the narthex
- **Clothing donations** are accepted on the last Sunday of each month. Place donations next to the food pantry bin.