

Thomas Sunday

Second Sunday of Pascha

6 / 19 April



Troparion of Thomas Sunday, Tone 7: While the tomb was sealed, Thou, O Life, didst shine forth from the grave, O Christ God. And while the doors were shut, Thou didst come unto Thy disciples, O Resurrection of all, renewing through them an upright Spirit in us according to Thy great mercy. Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, both now and ever, and unto the ages of ages. Amen.

Kontakion of Thomas Sunday, Tone 8: With his searching right hand, Thomas did probe Thy life-bestowing side, O Christ God; for when Thou didst enter while the doors were shut, he cried out unto Thee with the rest of the disciples: Thou art my Lord and my God.

The Holy and Glorious Apostle Thomas - He was one of the twelve Great Apostles. Through his doubt of the Resurrection of the Lord Christ, a new confirmation was given of that wonderful and saving event, for the risen Lord appeared again to His disciples, to convince Thomas. The Lord said to Thomas: Reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into My side; and be not faithless, but believing', and Thomas cried: 'My Lord and my God! (John 20). After the descent of the Holy Spirit, when the apostles cast lots to see who would go where to preach the Gospel, it fell to Thomas to go to India. He was somewhat saddened at having to go so far away, but the Lord appeared to him and comforted him. In India, St Thomas converted many, both rich and poor, to the Christian faith, and founded a Church there, making priests and bishops. Among others, St Thomas converted two sisters, Tertiana and Mygdonia, wives of Indian princes. Both sisters were ill-treated for their faith by their husbands, who would not live with them after their baptism, and divorced them. Being freed from their marriages, they lived godly lives till their deaths. Dionysius and Pelagia, a couple at first betrothed to each other, heard the Apostle's teaching and did not live together, but devoted themselves to the ascetic life. Pelagia died a martyr for the Faith and Dionysius was made bishop by the Apostle. Prince Misdaeus, the husband of Tertiana, whose wife and son Iuzanes Thomas baptised, condemned the Apostle to death, and sent five soldiers who ran him through with their lances, and thus the holy Apostle Thomas gave his soul into the hands of his Christ. Before his death, he, with the other apostles, was miraculously borne to Jerusalem for the funeral of the most holy Mother of God. Arriving late, he grieved bitterly and, at his request, the tomb of the Most Pure was opened, but the body was not there; the Lord had taken His Mother to His heavenly home. Thus St Thomas first, by his unbelief, confirmed the faith in the Resurrection of the Lord and then, by his late arrival, revealed to us the wondrous glorification of the Mother of God.

Vespers: Lord I have Cried, Tone 1, Pentecostarion on 10 (While the disciples were gathered); G/N: Pentecostarion (Thou didst come to Thy disciples, O Christ). Aposticha: Pentecostarion (O strange wonder), G/N: Pentecostarion (O Lover of mankind).

Matins Gospel I

Epistle: St. Acts of the Apostles 5: 12 -20

And through the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were done among the people. And they were all with one accord in Solomon's Porch. Yet none of the rest dared join them, but the people esteemed them highly. And believers were increasingly added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women, So that they brought the sick out into the streets and laid them on beds and couches, that at least the shadow of Peter passing by might fall on some of them. Also a multitude gathered from the surrounding cities to Jerusalem, bringing sick people and those who were tormented by unclean spirits, and they were all healed. Then the high priest rose up, and all those who were with him (which is the sect of the Sadducees), and they were filled with indignation, And laid their hands on the apostles and put them in the common prison. But at night an angel of the Lord opened the prison doors and brought them out, and said, "Go, stand in the temple and speak to the people all the words of this life."

MANY SIGNS AND WONDERS WERE DONE AMONG THE PEOPLE

For though the Apostles themselves modestly ascribe it all to this cause, declaring that they did these things in the name of Christ, yet at the same time the life and noble conduct of the men helped to produce this effect ...Observe how he now no longer tells the number of those who believe: at such a rate was the faith making way even to an immense multitude, and also widely was the Resurrection proclaimed. So then 'the people magnified them': but they were now no longer lightly to be despised as once they were: for in a little moment, at a single turn of the scale, such have been the effects produced by the fisherman and the publican! Earth had become a heaven, for manner of life, for boldness of speech, for wonders, for all: like angels they were looked upon with wonder.

St. John Chrysostom. Homily XII on Acts V B#55. p. 78.

The Gospel According To St. John 20: 19-31

Then, the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the midst, and said to them, "Peace be with you." When He had said this, He showed them His hands and His side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. So Jesus said to them again, "Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also 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 them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained." Now Thomas, called the Twin, one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. The other disciples therefore said to him, "We have seen the Lord." So he said to them, "Unless I see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe." And after eight days His disciples were again inside, and Thomas with them. Jesus came, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, "Peace to you!" Then He said to Thomas, "Reach your finger here, and look at My hands; and reach your hand here, and put it into My side. Do not be unbelieving, but believing." And Thomas answered and said to Him, "My Lord and my God!" Jesus said to him, "Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed." And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His 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.

RECEIVE THE HOLY SPIRIT

For great is the dignity of the priests. 'Whosoever sins,' it says, 'you remit, they are remitted unto them' ...And hold them very exceedingly in honour ...The priest, even if he rightly orders his own life, if he does not have an anxious care for yours, yes and that of all those around him, will depart with the wicked into hell; and often when not betrayed by his own conduct, he perishes by yours, if he has not rightly performed his part... 'For they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account' (Heb.13:17)...For this is the Faith, to receive things not seen, since 'Faith is the substance of things hoped for; the evidence of things not seen' (Heb. 11:1).

St. John Chrysostom. Homily LXXXVI, 4 and LXXXVII, I on John XX. B#58, pp. 326,327

“But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came. The other disciples therefore said unto him, We have seen the Lord. But he said unto them, Except I see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into His side, I will not believe (Jn. 20:24-25).

What does this mean, his “I will not believe”? Is it possible he could not believe the other eleven Apostles, his brothers? Is it possible they could lie to him? The whole evangelical life of Christ, all His miracles, Golgotha, the death on the Cross, they had experienced together. And now this joy which they all had experienced they wanted to share with him. No, this was not a lie.

But He, Whom they had seen, was He really the same Christ? Was this not a vision or some other Christ? Was this not a mistake? And Thomas was afraid to lose what he had. And what did he have? This is what: during the years of fellowship with Christ, he had absorbed His teaching, the entire makeup of His life; and by now he was incapable of living any other way. It was painful for him not to have personal fellowship anymore with Christ; but by this time he understood that Christ came to earth in order to teach us the main commandment of God: love for God and neighbour, to perform it Himself, and to give us the strength to fulfill it.

In Paradise the first man fulfilled the commandment of God. The strength to fulfill this commandment of God he drew from eating the fruits of the Tree of Life. But then came the Fall. Paradise was lost, the Tree of Life was lost, and together with it, the strength for a godly life. And Christ came in order to give us the New Testament Tree of Life—His Body and Blood. “This do in remembrance of Me,” He said at the Last Supper (Lk. 22:19).

Thomas knew the commandments of Christ, and he knew where to draw the strength to fulfill them. He lived this. Although he lived without the human presence of Christ, he lived in Christ. He was afraid to make a mistake. What if another Christ had appeared to the disciples, not the One in Whom he lived and continued to live? This is what his “I will not believe” meant. And on the eighth day after His Resurrection, the Lord again appeared to His disciples, while Thomas was also in the house, and allowed him to touch His wounds. And here resounded Thomas’s triumphant cry, which even now stirs our hearts: “My Lord and my God!” (Jn. 20:28). And here are the words of Christ which relate to you and me, opening a new era of faith which will remain until the end of the world: “Because thou hast seen Me, thou hast believed. Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed... But these are written,” adds the Apostle John the Divine, “that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through His name” (Jn. 20:29, 31).

The One Thing Needful - Archbishop Andrei

Saints of the Week

6 / 19 April — St Eutychius, Patriarch of Constantinople - Born in Phrygia of devout parents, he was the son of an officer. Once, Eutychius was playing with some other children of his own age, their game being to write their names on a wall and put beside them the rank that they reckoned they would have in life. When Eutychius' turn came, he wrote: 'Eutychius—Patriarch!' He became abbot of a monastery in Amasea at the age of thirty, and ten years later the Metropolitan of Amasea sent him to the Fifth Ecumenical Council in 553 as his representative. At the Council, he shone like a bright star among the Church fathers, both for his learning and his devotion. When a quarrel arose about whether heretics could be anathematised after their deaths or not, he supported his belief that they could by citing III Kings (A.V. I Kings) 13:1-8, and IV Kings (A.V. II Kings) 23:16. He became greatly liked by both Emperor Justinian and Patriarch Menas. The Emperor very frequently turned to him for advice, and Menas (at that time very rich) designated him his heir and asked the Emperor to ensure that this happened. And so it came to pass. Eutychius governed the Church in peace for twelve years. But then the devil raised a storm against him. This storm reached the Emperor Justinian himself. The Emperor was deluded and fell into the Monophysite heresy of Aphthartodocetism, which taught the falsehood that the Lord Jesus, before the Resurrection, had a divine and uncorrupting body, not feeling hunger or thirst or pain. Eutychius stood firmly against this heresy, for which the Emperor sent him into exile to his first monastery. There Eutychius lived for twelve years and eight months, being shown to be a great wonder-worker, healing people of various diseases by his prayers and by anointing with holy oil. Justinian repented and died, and his successor, Justin II, called Eutychius back to the patriarchal throne, on which this saint remained till his death, governing the Church of God in peace. In 582, at the age of seventy, he went to the Kingdom of Christ the Lord; the Lord whom he had served so faithfully and courageously all his life.

The One Hundred and Twenty Martyrs in Persia - When the Persian Emperor Sapor plundered the lands of Byzantium, he enslaved one-hundred twenty Christians. Since his attempts to persuade them to deny Christ and worship fire proved to be in vain, the emperor tossed them into the fire and burned them alive. Among those martyrs, were nine virgins dedicated to God. They all suffered honourably between the years 344 A.D. and 347 A.D. and took up habitation in the mansions of Christ the King.

Also commemorated on this day: Martyrs Jeremiah and priest Archilias of Rome (3rd C); Venerable Platonida (Platonis) of Syria (†308); Venerable Paul of Studion Monastery (5th C); Holy Equal-to-the-Apostles Methodius, archbishop of Moravia, enlightener of the Slavs (†885); Venerable Gregory of Mt. Athos (†1326); Martyr Nicholas of Lesbos (†1463); St. Aphonios, metropolitan of Novgorod (†1653); Martyr Paul the Russian (†1683); Hieromartyr Gennadius of Mt. Athos (†1818); New Martyrs Peter Zhukov and Prohor Mikhailov (†1918); Hieromartyr John Boikov, priest (†1934); New Hieromartyr Jacob Boikov, priest (†1943); Venerable Sebastian, confessor of Karaganda (†1966).

7 / 20 April — St George the Confessor - For his great virtues, which he acquired through long asceticism, George was chosen and installed as Metropolitan of Mitylene. And this saint governed his flock with zeal and wisdom to old age. But when a persecution arose under Leo V, the Armenian, who destroyed the holy icons, this holy elder was summoned by the Emperor to Constantinople, to the Council of bishops which was summoned, at the Emperor's desire, to put a stop to the veneration of icons. But George not only refused to act according to the Emperor's desire; he, together with some other courageous bishops, stood up in defence of the holy icons. For this he was held in derision by the Emperor and exiled to the region of Cherson, where, in physical pain and every sort of need, he spent the remainder of his earthly life. He died and went to immortal life in about 816. He was a wonderworker both during his life and after his death, through his great righteousness and love for the Lord Jesus.

Our Holy Father Nil Sorsky - Nil is one of the great Fathers of the Russian Church. He was the founder of the Scete way of monastic life in Russia. He died peacefully in the year 1508 A.D. His relics repose in the Sorsky Monastery. His "Rule of Life" for the "Scete" way of monastic living represents a first-class work on the spiritual and practical life of a monk.

The Holy Martyr Calliopius - an only son granted by God to a senator from Perga in Pamphylia after the senator had shed many tears in prayer. From his early youth his devout mother, Theoclea, taught him to respect God and to live a chaste life. Calliopius was still a youngster when a terrible persecution began during the reign of Emperor Maximian. To spare him from death, his mother placed him in a boat, gave him an ample amount of money and saw him off to the city of Pompeiopolis. However, God in His Divine Providence, planned it otherwise. Landing in Pompeiopolis he fell into the midst of a tumultuous polytheistic celebration. When Calliopius refused to participate in this ridiculous feast, at the insistence of the crazed mob, he was pushed toward Maximus the commander, before whom Calliopius confessed that he was a Christian. The commander ordered that Calliopius be beaten with lead canes and burned by fire. Wounded throughout, they cast him into prison. Learning about the tortures of her son, Theoclea distributed her entire estate to the poor and needy and with a paltry sum of money hurried to her son in prison. Upon entering the prison, Theoclea bowed down before her son and dressed his wounds. Finally, the commander pronounced the ultimate sentence. Calliopius was to be crucified on a cross. Joy and pain intermingled in the heart of his mother. When they brought her son to the place of execution, she slipped five pieces of gold to the executioners to have her son crucified, not as the Lord was, but rather upside down. Theoclea did this out of humility before the Lord. Calliopius was crucified upside down on Holy Thursday. His mother stood beneath the cross-giving praise to God. One the second day when they removed his lifeless body from the cross, she fell upon her son and she, herself, died. Thus, these two went before the Throne of the King of Glory together. They honourably suffered in the year 304 A.D.

Our Holy Father Daniel of Pereyaslavl – he had, as a unique form of mortification, that of caring for the dead. Whenever he heard that someone was found frozen to death or that had died in some other manner, Daniel would hasten to bury him decently and to offer prayers to God for him. He died peacefully in the year 1540 A.D. His relics remain intact.; Our Holy Father Gregory the Sinaite.

Also commemorated on this day: Righteous Hegesippus (†180); Martyrs Rufinus the deacon and Aquilina with 200 soldiers (†c.310); Venerable Serapion the Sindonite (5th C); St. George, patriarch of Jerusalem (†807); Uncovering of the relics of Venerable Serapion of Novgorod (1517); Venerable Gerasimus of Patmos (†1739); St. Gabriel, archbishop of Ryazan (†1862); New Hieromartyr Arcadius Dobronravov, priest (†1933); Nun-martyr Eudocia (Pavlovoy) (†1939).

8 / 21 April — The Holy Apostles Herodion, Agabus, Rufus, Asyncritus, Phlegon and Hermas - They were all among the Seventy, and are all mentioned by St Paul in his Epistles. Herodion was a kinsman of Paul's: 'Salute Herodion my kinsman', he writes to the Romans (16:11). Herodion suffered greatly at the hands of the Jews as Bishop of Neoparthia; he was beaten about the head, stoned on the mouth and stabbed in the legs. When they had left him for dead, St Herodion arose and continued to serve the apostles. He helped the Apostle Peter in Rome, and was beheaded along with many other Christians on the same day that Peter was crucified. St Agabus had a spirit of prophecy. Two of his prophecies are recorded in the Acts of the Apostles. First, he prophesied a great famine throughout the world, which came to pass in the time of Claudius Caesar (Acts 11:2~). The second was when he met the Apostle Paul in Caesarea. Paul was on his way to Jerusalem, and Agabus took Paul's girdle and bound himself hand and foot, saying: 'Thus saith the Holy Spirit: so shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle' (21:11). St Rufus was Bishop of Thebes in Greece. The Apostle Paul mentions him also: 'Salute Rufus, chosen in the Lord' (Rom. 16:13). St Asyncritus (Rom. 16:14) was Bishop of Hyrcania in Asia. St Phlegon, who is mentioned in the same place as St Rufus, was bishop in the Thracian city of Marathon. St Hermas, mentioned with the others, was bishop in Dalmatia. All these, with bee-like industry, spread the Gospel, suffering greatly for the love of Christ. They all went to the eternal Kingdom of their beloved Christ.

St Niphon, Bishop of Novgorod - distinguished by his great enthusiasm in constructing and restoring the churches of God and by showing great courage in opposing the stances of the tyrannical princes. Thirteen days before his death, St. Theodosius appeared to Niphon and announced his imminent passing over to the other world. He died in the year 1156 A.D.

Also commemorated on this day: Martyr Pausilipus (†138); Monk-martyrs Josiah and Joseph, of Mt. Kharasam, Persia (†c.341); St. Celestine, pope of Rome (†432); Venerable Rufus, recluse of the Kiev Caves (14th C); New Martyr John Naukliros ("the Navigator") (†1669); New Hieromartyr Sergius Rodakovsky, priest (†1933).

9 / 22 April — The Holy Martyr Euppsychius - He was of gentle birth and was reared in faith and devotion. In the time of the Emperor Julian the Apostate, when St Basil the Great was governing the Church in Caesarea, Euppsychius married a girl of good family. But he was not given even one day to live in wedlock, for, on his wedding day itself, there was a pagan festival with sacrifices to the idol of Fortune. Euppsychius went out with some others and smashed all the idols in the temple, then pulled down the temple itself. Julian was furious, and commanded that the culprits be beheaded, that many Christians be taken into the army, that an enormous levy be imposed on Christians, the proceeds of which were to be used to rebuild the Temple of Fortune, and that the town cease to be called Caesarea (as it had been named by Claudius Caesar), and revert to its former name, Maza. Euppsychius was first bound to a tree and cruelly tortured, and then beheaded, in 362. A little after this time, the wicked Emperor Julian visited that town on his way to Persia, against which he was waging war. St Basil went to meet him, bearing three barley loaves as a sign of honour and welcome. The Emperor ordered that, as a return gift, the saint be given a fistful of hay. Basil said to the Emperor: 'You ridicule us now, O King; we bring you bread, by which we are fed, and you give us miserable food which you, with all your power, are not able to turn into nourishment for men!' To this the Emperor replied: 'You can be sure that I will feed you with this hay when I return from Persia !' But the wicked apostate did not return alive from Persia, but perished there by a fitting and un-natural death.

Our Holy Father Vadim the Martyr - During the reign of the Persian Emperor Sapor, Vadim, the abbot of a certain monastery and a man famous for his generosity was cast into prison with seven of his disciples. With them in prison was a certain Prince Nirsan who was also a Christian. Everyday they were taken out and beaten. Prince Nirsan became terrified and promised to deny the Faith and worship the sun. This was gratifying to Sapor and he promised to give Nirsan, among other things, the entire estate of Vadim's monastery if he would behead Vadim by his own hand. Nirsan agrees to this. With a quivering hand and frightened by the majestic countenance of St. Vadim, he struck this holy man with the sword many times on the neck until he finally beheaded him. Shortly after that, Nirsan succumbed to despair and stabbed himself with the sword and received at his own hand, the due punishment for the murder of the righteous one. St. Vadim suffered in the year 376 A.D.

Also commemorated on this day: St. Maximus, patriarch of Alexandria (†282); Martyrs Fortunatus, Donatus, twelve virgins, and six laymen, at Sirmium (†304) ; Martyrs Desan, bishop, and Mariabus, priest, Abdiesus and 270 others (†362); St. Akakios, bishop of Amida (5th C); Martyrs Raphael the archimandrite, Nicholas the deacon, and Irene, of Lesbos (†1463); New Martyr Gabriel Fomin (†1942).

10 / 23 April — The Holy Martyrs Terence, Africanus, Maximus; Pompeius and 36 others with them - They suffered for Christ and were crowned with wreaths of glory in the time of the Emperor Decius. By the Emperor's orders, the governor of Africa notified all the people that they must offer sacrifice to idols. In the case of opposition, the governor was to put the stubborn to harsh torture. Hearing this threat, many lapsed from the Faith and worshipped idols. But these forty martyrs remained steadfast, for which they were put to torture. St Terence encouraged his companions with these words: 'Let us, my brethren, keep ourselves from denying Christ our God; that He may not deny us before His heavenly Father and the holy angels.' The governor divided them into two groups; thirty-six of them, after flogging and having salt rubbed in their open wounds, he beheaded. But the first four he cast into prison with heavy chains round their necks and on their hands and feet. An angel of God appeared to them in the prison and touched their chains, which fell from them. Then the angel brought them a table abundantly heaped with food, and fed them. They were again taken out and tortured, and again shut up in the prison. Also, the governor ordered sorcerers to gather as many poisonous reptiles as possible, such as snakes and scorpions, and to shut them up with the martyrs. But the reptiles would not touch the men of God, but huddled together in one corner, where they remained for three days. When the prison was opened on the third day, the reptiles fell on the sorcerers and bit them. At last the governor passed sentence of death on these four martyrs. When they were taken to the scaffold, they joyfully sang psalms and hymns of thanksgiving to God, who had accounted them worthy of a martyr's death. They suffered with honour and attained to the Kingdom in the year 250.

The Six Thousand Martyrs in Georgia - In the wilderness of David-Garejeli in Georgia, there were twelve monasteries in which many monks practiced and lived the ascetical life for centuries. In 1615 A.D., the great king of Persia, Shah Abbas I, attacked Georgia, devastated it and beheaded many Christians. Once while hunting early in the morning on the Feast of the Resurrection, Shah Abbas noticed many lights in the mountains. They were the monks from the twelve monasteries in procession around the Church of the Resurrection with lighted tapers in hand. When the Shah discovered that they were monks, he asked in amazement: "Has not all of Georgia been given over to the sword?" He then ordered his soldiers to immediately go and behead all the monks. At that moment an angel of God appeared to Abbot Arsenius and informed him of impending death. Arsenius informed his brethren. They all received Communion of the All-Pure Mysteries and prepared themselves for death. Suddenly, the assailants arrived and hacked to pieces, first of all, the abbot, who came before the others and, after that, all the rest. They all suffered honourably and were crowned with incorruptible wreaths in the year 1615 A.D. Thus, ended the history of these famous monasteries which, for more than a thousand years, served as the spiritual hearth of enlightenment for the Georgians. Only two of the monasteries exist today: St. David and St. John the Forerunner. The Georgian Emperor Arcil gathered the relics of the monks and honourably interred them. Even today, these relics emit a sweet-smelling Chrism (oil) and heal the sick.

Also commemorated on this day: Prophetess Huldah (7th C. BC); St. Miltiades, pope of Rome (†314); Martyrs James the priest and the deacons Azadanus and Abdicius (†c.380); New Nun-martyr Anastasia, abbess of Uglich, and 35 nuns with her (†1609); New Hieromartyr Arsenius and the other venerable fathers who were killed in the Davido-Garedzhiisk Monastery (†1615); Hieromartyr Misail, archbishop of Ryazan (†1655); New Martyr Demos of Adrianopolis (†1763); New Hieromartyr Gregory V, patriarch of Constantinople (†1821) [Heb. 13:7-16 (§334); Luke 12:32-40 (§67)]; New Monk-martyr Chrysanthus of Xenophontos monastery (†1821); New Hieromartyr Flegont Pongilsky, priest (†1938); New Martyr Demetrius Vdovin (†1942).

11 / 24 April — The Hieromartyr Antipas, Bishop of Pergamum - He is mentioned in the Book of Revelation as 'Antipas My faithful martyr, who was slain among you where Satan dwelleth'(Rev.2:13)—the city of Pergamum. The inhabitants of this town dwelt in the darkness of idolatry and in the depths of impurity: they were slaves to their passions, slanderers, bullies, incestuous; in brief, slaves of Satan. There among them lived Antipas 'as a light in the midst of darkness, as a rose among thorns, as gold in mud'. He who would seize and kill a Christian was regarded as good and just. The whole of their idolatrous faith consisted in soothsaying, the interpretation of dreams, the service of demons and the extreme excesses of debauchery. In terror of Antipas as of fire, the demons appeared to the pagan priests in their dreams and told them how greatly they were in fear of him, and how this fear was driving them from the city. The priests stirred up the multitude, and they began to torment

him and to press him to deny Christ and worship idols. Antipas said to them: 'When your so-called gods and lords of the universe are afraid of me, a mortal man, and have to flee the city, why do you not learn from this that all your faith is in vain?' And the saint spoke further with them of the Christian faith as the only true and saving Faith. But they became incensed like wild beasts and dragged the aged Antipas before the temple of Artemis, where there stood an ox cast in bronze. They heated the ox and threw the servant of God inside. St Antipas, inside the red-hot ox, glorified God with thanksgiving, like Jonah in the whale and the Three Children in the burning fiery furnace. Antipas prayed for his flock and for the whole world until his soul parted from his exhausted body and went to join the angels in the Kingdom of Christ. He died under torture and was crowned with unfading glory in the year 92.

St. Guthlac, hermit of Crowland (714) - as a young man Guthlac had been a soldier, fighting for Ethelred, the King of Mercia. At the age of twenty-four he renounced both violence and the life of the world and became a monk in an abbey (inhabited by men and women) at Repton and ruled by an abbess named Elfrida. Even in these early years his discipline was of an extraordinary kind. Some of the monks in fact disliked him for refusing any wine or cheering drink. After two years in the monastery it seemed to him far too agreeable a place. He found a wet, remote, unloved spot on a bed of the River Welland in the Fens, and there lived for the rest of his life as a hermit, seeking to imitate the rigours of the old desert saints. His temptations rivalled theirs. Wild men came out of the forest and beat him up. Even the ravens stole his few possessions. But Guthlac said we should be patient, even with wild creatures. Bit by bit the animals and birds came to trust him as their friend. A holy man named Wilfrid once visited Guthlac and was astonished when two swallows landed on his shoulders and then hopped all over him. Guthlac told him, "Those who choose to live apart from other humans become the friends of wild animals; and the angels visit them too - for those who are often visited by men and women are rarely visited by angels."

Also commemorated on this day: Martyrs Processus and Martinian (†c.67); Hieromartyr Dominus, bishop of Salona in Dalmatia, and eight soldiers with him (†c.100); St. Philip, bishop of Gortyna (†180); Venerable Pharmuthius of Egypt (4th C); Venerable John, disciple of St. Gregory of Decapolis (9th C); Venerable James of Zhelezny Borok (†1442), and his disciple, James of Bryleevsk (15th C); Venerable Euthymius (before 1465) and Chariton (†1509) of Sianzhema; St. Barsanuphius, bishop of Tver (†1576); St. Callinicus of Cernica, bishop of Rimnic, Romania (†1868); New Hieromartyr Nicholas Gavarin, priest (†1938).

12 / 25 April — Our Holy Father Isaac II of Syria - St Gregory the Dialogist writes about this Isaac. He went to Italy in the time of the Goths and went into the church in the town of Spoleto to pray. He asked the verger to leave him locked in the church all night, and thus spent the night in prayer without moving from that place. He spent the next day and night in the same way. The verger called him a hypocrite and struck him a blow—and lost his reason at that same moment. Seeing how the verger was so fiercely tormented, Isaac bent over him and the evil spirit fled from him, leaving him whole. People came to hear of this happening, and the whole town thronged around this wonderful old man. They offered him money and goods, but he refused them all and would accept nothing. Instead, he withdrew to a forest, where he built himself a cell which quickly became transformed into a large monastery. Isaac became famous for his miracles, especially for his discernment. One evening he told the brethren to take all the hoes out to the vineyard and leave them there. The next day, the brethren set out for the vineyard, taking their lunch, as they had no workers. When they got there, they found as many people working as there were hoes to work with. It transpired that these people had come as thieves to steal the hoes, but, by the power of God, they were constrained to work all night. On another occasion, a couple of almost-naked men came seeking clothing from Isaac. He sent a monk to a hollow tree at the end of the road, to bring what he found there. The monk went off, found some clothing and brought it back to the monastery. The abbot took the clothing and gave it to the beggars. They were profoundly ashamed as they recognised their own clothing, which they had concealed in that tree. A man once sent two beehives to the monastery. A monk hid one of them on the way, and brought the other to the abbot. The saint said to him: 'Be careful when you go back to that beehive you hid on the way. It's been taken over by poisonous snakes. Take care they don't bite you!'

Also commemorated on this day: Venerable Basil, bishop of Parium (†754); Hieromartyr Zeno, bishop of Verona (†360); Monk-martyrs Menas, David, and John (†c.636); Venerable Anthonia of Constantinople (†801); Venerable Athanasia, abbess of Aegina (†860); St. Sergius II, patriarch of Constantinople (†1019); St. Basil, bishop of Ryazan (†1295); Venerable Acacius of Mt. Athos (†1730); New Monk-martyr Sergius (Krestnikov) (†1938); Translation of the Precious Belt of the Mother of God to Constantinople (942); 'Murom-Ryazan' and 'Belynich' Icons of the Mother of God.

What is a Radonitsa?

"On this day, the Tuesday of St. Thomas week, according to the order instituted by our Holy Fathers, we call to remembrance, in Paschal joy, all those who have died from the beginning of the ages in faith and in the hope of resurrection and life eternal.

"Having previously celebrated the radiant feast of Christ's glorious Resurrection, the faithful commemorate the dead today with the pious intent to share the great joy of this Pascha feast with those who have departed this life in the hope of their own resurrection. This is the same blessed joy with which the dead heard our Lord announce His victory over death when He descended into Hades, thus leading forth by the hand the righteous souls of the Old Covenant into Paradise. This is the same un hoped-for joy the Holy Myrrhbearing Women experienced when discovering the empty tomb and the undisturbed grave clothes. In addition, this is the same bright joy the Holy Apostles encountered in the Upper Room where Christ appeared though the doors were closed. In short, this feast is a kindred joy, to celebrate the luminous Resurrection with our Orthodox forefathers who have fallen asleep.

"There is evidence of the commemoration of the dead today in the writings of the Church Fathers. St. John Chrysostom mentions the commemoration of the dead performed on Tuesday of St. Thomas week in his "Homily on the Cemetery and the Cross."

"Today, the faithful departed are remembered in Divine Liturgies, 'koliva' is prepared and blessed in the churches in memory of those who have fallen asleep, and the Orthodox graves in cemeteries are blessed by the priests and visited by the faithful. On this day alms are given to the poor. Furthermore, it should be noted that due to the great spiritual joy this jubilant commemoration bears, it is called in the Slavonic tongue, 'Radonitsa,' or Day of Rejoicing."

From the "Synaxarion of the Lenten Triodion and Penecostarion" (published in 1999 by HDM Press, Rives Junction, Michigan) on "Radonitsa"

† Daily Scripture Readings †

Monday – Epistle: Acts 3:19-26 (§9); Gospel: John 2:1-11 (§6)

Tuesday – Epistle: Acts 4:1-10 (§10); Gospel: John 3:16-21 (§10)

Wednesday – Epistle: Acts 4:13-22 (§11); Gospel: John 5:17-24 (§15)

Thursday – Epistle: Acts 4:23-31 (§12); Gospel: John 5:24-30 (§16)

Friday - Epistle: Acts 5:1-11 (§13); Gospel: John 5:30-6:2 (§17)

Saturday – Epistle: Acts 5:21-33 (§15); Gospel: John 6:14-27 (§19)