

People often refer to Thomas as “doubting”. But was his doubt the same as that of the Jews who yelled: “Let Him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in Him.”?

The scribes and Pharisees knew about all of Christ’s miracles and, it appears, guessed Who Jesus really was. But every time they were faced with the Divine, they became even more rooted in blasphemy. Having found out that Christ had healed a man born blind, instead of lifting praises they spewed curses: “This man is a sinner, [and] you were steeped in sin at birth”. Having heard that Christ had resurrected a four-day-old already-smelling dead man, and, apparently, not having any more doubts about Christ’s divinity, the elders of the nation decided “to kill Lazarus as well”. Finally, after being faced with the fact of Christ’s miraculous resurrection, and having heard the eyewitness accounts of the guards who had fallen on the ground trembling in the presence of a shining angel, the elders bribed the soldiers and deceived the people, further deepening their blasphemy.

But Saint Thomas is not one of them. We know about his faithfulness and sacrificial love for his Teacher. After following the Saviour for three years, Thomas understood very well the danger Christ faced from the scribes and the Pharisees. The other disciples also understood it very well; that is why when the Savior decided to go to Jerusalem, the apostles tried to talk Him out of it, warning Him of the danger. But it was St. Thomas who said, “Let us also go, that we may die with Him”. One does not often hear such words from a doubter! After the Ascension of the Saviour, the Apostle Thomas went to preach the Gospel in one of the furthest and most difficult to reach places of the ancient world — India, where he was tortured and killed for Christ.

But on that day, a week after the Resurrection, when the Saviour came to His disciples and Thomas was with them, the holy apostle needed only a push, only a step, in order for this disciple who so selflessly loved his Teacher to realize to Whom he had devoted his life. “My Lord and my God!” exclaimed Thomas from the bottom of his loving heart. To such a person as Thomas God comes. This is the kind of person that He allows to touch Himself!

Fr Sergii Sveshnikov, Mulino, Oregon

Christ is Risen!
Χριστός Βοσκρесе !
Χριστος Ανεστη!

Sunday, May 1

Second Sunday of Pascha (Anti-Pascha)
Saint Thomas Sunday

Divine Liturgy 9:30 A.M.

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Tuesday, May 3

Radonitsa / Commemoration of the Departed

Parastas 9:00 A.M.

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Wednesday, May 4

Moleben 6:30 P.M.

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Sunday, May 8

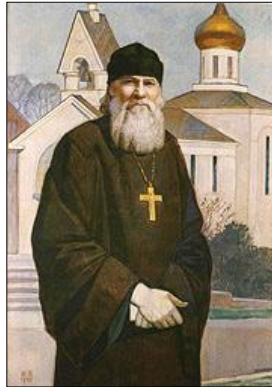
Third Sunday of Pascha
Sunday of the Myrrh-bearing Women

Divine Liturgy 9:30 A.M.

Commemoration of Apostle and Evangelist Mark (†63) and Right-believing Tamara,
Queen of Iberia (Georgia) (†13th century)

The Sign of the Cross

From *The Law of God*, by Protopriest Seraphim Slobodskoy



Representing traditional Orthodox Christianity, Father Seraphim Slobodskoy's edifying, richly illustrated book has been described as the best simple overview of the Orthodox Faith with lucid and profoundly simple explanations of the Church's Feasts and Fasts, as well as Orthodox practice. Recognizing the need to confirm the believer's faith in a sea of heterodoxy, skepticism, rationalism and ecumenism, it was written by Protopriest Seraphim Slobodskoy as a catechetical manual for the parochial school he and his wife established at Holy Protection Orthodox Church in Nyack, NY. Fr Seraphim Slobodskoy's *Law of God* alone, for instance, is used by hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of children in Sunday schools, while teenagers use this book to prepare for seminary.

We call ourselves **Christians** because we believe in God as we were taught to believe by the Son of God Himself, Our Lord **Jesus Christ**.

Jesus Christ not only taught us to believe in God correctly, but He also **saved us from the power of sin and eternal death**.

The Son of God, Jesus Christ, out of love for us sinners came down from Heaven and, as a man, suffered instead of us for our sins: **He was crucified, He died on the Cross**, and on the third day **He resurrected**.

As the sinless Son of God, **by His Cross** (that is, by suffering and death on the Cross for the sins of all men and of all the world), He conquered not only sin but also death itself! **He arose from the dead**, and He made the Cross the weapon of His victory over sin and death.

As the vanquisher of death, Who arose on the third day, He saved us also from eternal death. He will resurrect all of us, all the dead, when the last day of the world comes; He will resurrect us for joyful, eternal life with God.

The Cross is the weapon, or the sign, of Christ's victory over sin and death.

One teacher gave the following example in order to explain to his students how Jesus Christ could conquer evil in the world by His Cross:

For many years the Swiss fought against their enemies, the Austrians. Finally, the opposing armies met in a certain valley for a decisive battle. The Austrian soldiers, wearing their armor, were drawn up in battle array with their lances extended forward, and the Swiss, beating them with their maces (heavy clubs with weights on the end), tried without success to break the ranks of the enemy. Several times the Swiss threw themselves on the enemy with blind courage, but every time they were thrown back. They were not strong enough to break through the thick row of lances.

Then one of the Swiss soldiers, Arnold Winkelried, sacrificed himself, ran ahead, grabbed with both arms several of the spears pointed at him, and allowed them to pierce his chest. In this way an opening was made for the Swiss and

they broke into the ranks of the Austrians and won a decisive and final victory over their enemies.

So the hero, Winkelried, sacrificed his own life and died, but he made it possible for his people to conquer the enemy.

In the same way, Our Lord Jesus Christ received in His breast the terrible spears of sin and death which were invincible for us. He died on the Cross, but He also arose, as the vanquisher of sin and death, and thus opened for us the way to eternal victory over evil and death. That is, He opened the way to eternal life.

Now everything depends on us: if we wish to be delivered from the power of evil, sin and eternal death, then we must **follow Christ**, that is, **believe in Christ, love Him**, and fulfill His holy will, being obedient to Him in everything, live with Christ.

This is why, in order to express our faith in Jesus Christ Our Saviour, we wear a Cross on our body, and during prayer we **make the sign of the Cross** over ourselves with our right hand.

For the sign of the Cross we put the fingers of our right hand together as follows. We bring the tips of the first three fingers together (the thumb, index and middle ones), and bend the last two (the "ring" and little fingers) against the palm.

The first three fingers together express our faith in God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, as the Trinity one in essence and indivisible, and the two fingers bent show how the Son of God, when He came down from Heaven, being God, became man; that is, they signify His two natures: divine and human.

In order to make the sign of the Cross, with our fingers in this position, we touch our **forehead**, for the blessing of our mind, our **stomach**, for the blessing of our internal feelings, then our right and left **shoulders**, for the blessing of our bodily strength.

The sign of the Cross gives us great strength to repel and conquer evil and to do good, but we must remember to make the sign of the Cross **correctly** and **without haste**, otherwise it will not be the sign of the Cross, but just waving our hand around, which only gladdens the demons. By making the sign of the Cross carelessly we show a lack of reverence for God. This is a sin. This sin is called **sacrilege**.

We make the sign of the Cross, or "cross ourselves", at the beginning of prayer, during prayer, at the end of prayer, and when we draw near to anything holy: when we enter the church, when we reverence the Cross or an icon. We should cross ourselves at every important moment in our life: in danger, in sorrow, in joy and so on. When we cross ourselves, mentally we say, "In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." Thus we express our faith in the All-holy Trinity and our desire to live and labor for the glory of God.

The word 'amen' means 'truly', 'let it be so', 'so be it'.

..... News From All The Ends Of The Earth

New York, NY: More Americans believe that Christian values are at odds with capitalism (44%) than those who believe they are compatible (36%), according to a national survey conducted by Public Religion Research Institute. The new survey also finds that there is some disagreement among religious groups about what issues are most important for religious leaders to address. White Evangelical Protestants are more likely than Catholics or white mainline Protestants to say that it is very important for clergy to speak out on the issue of abortion, while Catholics are more likely to think it's very important for priests to speak out about the gap between the rich and the poor than about the issue of homosexuality. Nearly 66 % of Americans say that it's fair for wealthier Americans to pay more taxes than others. However, white Evangelical Protestants are divided on this question, with 50% agreeing and 49% disagreeing.

Moscow, Russia: The Russian and Greek Orthodox Churches object to plans in both countries to introduce electronic national identity cards. Church officials are demanding close study of the cards and asking that authorities make them optional. They say that the personal and financial information that would be consolidated on the microchips in the cards could be manipulated to discriminate against believers. Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk said: "Credit cards, which a person uses to take money from a bank machine or for payment in a store, are one thing, but a personal card in which all the information about a person's life and activities will be entered, about his bank accounts, health and travels is a different matter. These are different grades of state control over people." There have been demonstrations in Athens and Moscow, their participants stating that the cards will compromise national and religious identity. Segodnia.ru, an Internet publication that often covers religious and national issues, wrote, "the introduction of the universal identity cards makes it possible to build an unheard of, super-totalitarian electronic dictatorship." With all person's information and financial assets under control, it is going to be possible to prevent a dissident from making a purchase in a store, make a payment for utilities, receive health care. Patriarch Kirill II of the Russian Orthodox Church said that "the Church understands the position of people who do not wish to be subject to control that makes it possible to gather all-encompassing information about their private life, and could in the long-term be used to discriminate against citizens based on their world view." Synod of Bishops of the Church of Greece expressed its concern about the cards and said it would hold meetings with top government officials.

Bishkek, Kirgizia: Members of Kirgizia's Parliament Thursday exorcised evil spirits from the Parliament House by slaughtering seven lambs. Participants of this campaign said the funds for this ceremony had been raised by taking 700 soms (\$14) from each of 120 deputies' salary.

Kiev, Ukraine: During 25 years from the date of Chernobyl accident the radiation level in the area of St. Elijah Church, the only church operating in the exclusion zone, was well below the level across the zone. "Even in the most difficult days of 1986 the area around St. Elijah Church was clean of radiation, not to mention that the church itself was also clean," said president of the Ukrainian Chernobyl Union Yury Andreev. Now the territory adjacent to the church has the background level of 6 microroentgen per hour compared with 18 in Kiev. Andreev also said many disaster liquidators had been atheists. "We came to believe later after observing such developments which could be explained only by God's will," he says. In particular, a few seconds after the explosion in the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant the cloud containing uranium particles started moving in the direction of Pripyat, a city located about 1,800 meters from the plant. There was a pine-tree on its way. The cloud stopped short of this pine, divided into two parts by some unknown reason and continued moving to the left and right sides of the city instead of covering its residential areas. The radiation level in contaminated areas was four or five roentgen per hour, and the city showed only half a milliroentgen.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

1. May bulletin covers' sponsors are Djuric family — Ryan Campbells' Chrismation and birthday and Alexander Djuric's 2nd birthday.
2. This Tuesday, May 3, is Radonitsa, the day when the Orthodox Church resumes (after the break for Paschal week) commemorative services for the departed. Parastas/Panihida will be served in church that Tuesday. Afterwards, priest will be available to travel with the faithful to the cemeteries to chant panihidas/litia for the departed over the graves.
3. Usually, we have a Mission Fund collection on the second Sunday of the month. This month, due to the celebration of Pascha, as well as to the fact that no memorial services can be celebrated till Radonitsa — Tuesday of the Second week of Pascha, the schedule of such the events has been changed. Today, we collect the non-perishable food items for Hobart Food Pantry. Next Sunday, May 8, instead of the customary Mission Fund collection, the collected will be taken to help the members of Saint Moses the Ethiopian Orthodox Community at the Indiana State Prison at Michigan City to launch an institutional religious education/family channel for the inmates. The estimated cost of the project is \$1,400. It would be wonderful if we could help even if with a portion of the needed sum. I hope all of us remember that last year, at the Lenten Mission at our parish, Peter Bylen gave a presentation on the Orthodox Christian community within the walls of the Indiana State Prison. Peter told us how much has been done and how greatly the community expanded through the work of only a couple of people. Fr Philip Drennan was instrumental in starting the community. Now, Fr Philip is retired and has moved to Michigan, 5 hours away. The Orthodox community at the prison needs our help and support.
4. Camp Nazareth raffle tickets are on sale for \$20.00 and kept in the Camp Nazareth envelope in the office.