

## THOMAS SUNDAY HYMNS

### • TROPARION OF THOMAS SUNDAY, Tone Seven:

Whilst the tomb was sealed, Thou, O Life, didst shine forth from the grave, O Christ God; and whilst 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.

### • KONTAKION OF THOMAS SUNDAY, Tone Eight:

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

## THOUGHTS ON THE SUNDAY OF SAINT THOMAS

JUST AS THE APOSTLES gathered on the day when Jesus Christ rose from the dead, and said to them “Peace be to you,” so we gather together, and we receive this same peace from Him Who is our peace. His peace dispels our fear, doubts and anxieties, for we have read the words of the Gospel of St. John, who says he wrote the Gospel so we may believe, and in believing, “have life in His name” (John 20:31). And having eternal life from Christ, we don’t regard death—when the heart stops, breathing stops, and there is a separation of soul and body—as the end of life. No, for us that’s not death, it’s just the end of *this life*. So we call this separation of the soul and the body “rest” (that of the body)—a “falling asleep in the Lord.” Here’s how St. John Chrysostom says it: “it is true, we still die as before, but we do not remain in death; and this is not to die...the power and very harshness of death is that a dead man has no possibility of returning to life...but if after death he is to be bodily quickened and moreover to be given a better bodily life—without death—then this is no longer death, but a falling asleep.” St Paul wrote that “We also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to his glorious body” (Philippians 3:20). To the congregation at Corinth, he wrote: “...now Christ, risen from the dead, has become the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since by man came death, by a man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall

be made alive.” When we have a funeral service and go to the grave to lower the body into the ground, we should think on these words from St. Paul: “What is sown in corruption [breakdown and decay] is raised in incorruption. Sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. Sown in weakness, it is raised in power.” But what is death then? Separation from Christ is truly death, so we call Christ our Savior, because without Him we are perishing—as much as someone drowning or trapped in a burning house. So, it’s of utmost importance that we come to a true faith, and a living faith, one founded on the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

You see, our Orthodox Christian faith isn’t about accepting someone’s teaching about religion, a book or a philosophy. Our faith is founded on those who witnessed, taught and were martyred for the literal and factual belief that Jesus rose bodily from death. After being beaten, crucified by professional executioners, killed and buried, Jesus bodily rose from the grave. He wasn’t a spirit. He ate and drank in Emmaus, He made a fish breakfast on the shore and ate with the apostles—yet He was also utterly changed from before His death. So it was right that St. Thomas was hesitant to simply accept someone’s word about something that had NEVER happened before in history and never has since. He wanted to see Jesus for himself, as we do too. Upon seeing Him, St. Thomas confessed Jesus as “my Lord and my God.” We may be sur-

### RÁDONITSA — DAY OF REJOICING:

The Tuesday after Bright Week is dedicated to the blessing of graves and prayers for the repose of the departed, those who are waiting in the Lord for the General Resurrection. Starting at 9:30 AM, on Tuesday, April 29, I will bless graves: 9:30 AM, Pleasant Hill in Sebastopol; 10:45 AM, Forestville; Noon at the Healdsburg Cemetery; 2 PM at Santa Rosa Memorial cemetery. All are welcome to attend these joyful Paschal prayers for the departed. —Fr. Lawrence

## INFORMATION

Protection of the Holy Virgin & St. Seraphim of Sarov Church  
90 Mountain View Ave, Santa Rosa, CA 95407  
Parish office phone: 707-584-9491 / fax: 585-9445  
website: [www.saintseraphim.com](http://www.saintseraphim.com)

Our Parish Secretary—Fr. John Ramos—may be reached at the Church office Mon., Tues. and Wed., 9 AM to Noon, at 584-9491. Fr. Lawrence Margitich may be reached at the Parish office phone, or at [Lmargitich@sbcglobal.net](mailto:Lmargitich@sbcglobal.net). He is available Tuesday–Saturday, from noon onwards each day.

## Parish Contacts

Fr. Michael Margitich, Pastor Emeritus	473-0314
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prised that it took twenty chapters until someone finally recognized the truth of chapter one, that “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”

Isn’t this what we must all come to experience? Lent, Holy Week and Pascha are not simply religious holidays, with easter eggs, lamb and kulich; rather, they are given to us so we can walk with St Thomas, and hear the Savior say: “Blessed are you that have not seen and yet believe.” Belief and confession of Jesus as Lord doesn’t come by visual signs and wonders...it seems like that might work, but really it doesn’t, because belief in Jesus Christ comes in a different way—and the initiative is always with God. There are many who would say, “if I were in the time of Jesus I would believe.”

But that’s just not true—scribes and Pharisees knew about all of Christ’s miracles and, it appears, had an idea of Who Jesus of Galilee really was. But every time they were faced with the Divine, they became even more rooted in blasphemy and the desire to kill Jesus. Having found out that Christ had healed a man born blind, instead of praising they cursed: “This man is a sinner (John 9:24), [and] you are altogether in sin from birth” (John 9:34). Having heard that Christ had resurrected a four-day-already-smelling dead man, and, apparently, not having any more doubts about Christ’s power, the elders of the nation decided “to kill Lazarus as well” (John 12:10). Finally, after being faced with the fact of Christ’s miraculous resurrection, and having heard the eyewitness accounts of the guards (Matthew 28:11) who had fallen on the ground trembling in the presence of a shining angel (Matthew 28:4), the elders bribed the soldiers and deceived the

people (Matthew 28:12-14), further deepening their blasphemy. The disciples also did not believe the report of the woman who came from the grave. Belief comes from God, who gives us the insight that without Him we are perishing from sickness, ignorance, sin and death. It’s then that we realize that our Lord Jesus Christ went about Judea saving people from those very things. What is death then? Death is separation from Christ, so we call Christ our Savior, because without Him we are perishing. — *Fr. Lawrence*

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## ON RE-INCARNATION

THE RESURRECTION is the hope that Christ brought to the world that lived under the dominion of death. It is an event that shows the value of the human body, because what we expect as a result of the Resurrection of Christ is the resurrection of the bodies that were dissolved after their separation from their souls.

The proclamation, therefore, of the Resurrection of Christ, and the consequences it has on the whole human race, is the answer of Christianity to all those who talk about reincarnation, whether they have been influenced by ancient Greek philosophers or by Oriental religions.

Reincarnation undervalues the body. It considers it a prison of the soul or a garment cast off in order for the individual soul to be lost in the fantastic universal soul. It believes that man is his soul. Orthodox teaching says that man is a combination of soul and body, created in the “image of God.” ...Due to the relationship of the saints with Christ their resurrected bodies will radiate with the glory of divinity. Proof of this fact are their myrrhgushing and wondrous relics.

—*Protopresbyter Fr. Thomas Vamvini*

## OUR PARISH AND OUR YOUTH

IT HAS BEEN correctly noted that our parish does not have any youth activities other than Church School and St. Seraphim Week. While there are regularly scheduled Diocesan youth activities in the area, summer camp, Project Mexico, and so forth, as a parish we haven't had a "youth group" for about three years.

Anyone reading my reports to the Annual Meeting for the last fifteen years, my frequent bulletin articles addressing parenting and youth, or heard me promoting the Diocesan youth activities, knows that I am a supporter of having parish youth groups and am extremely concerned about our youth and their faith. However: it is my contention that a parish youth group will become a reality when, *first*, parents or interested parishioners with or without children desire this for our parish children and organize it (whether it be a casual get-together of families, or something more formal). It will become a reality, *second*, when the youth of this parish feel the need to strengthen their Christian faith by having closer contact with each other. I therefore challenge the members of this parish to organize youth activities. These two essential factors and desires are normal for the family living the faith at home. In other words, it is my considered opinion that faith-building youth activities will take place at Church only when parents who care about these things are already living the faith at home. Consider the following from a recent article called ***Losing our Religion: On "Retaining" Young People in the Orthodox Church*** by Seraphim Danckaert, found at the website at *Orthodoxy and Heterodoxy.org*.

Data collected and interpreted by sociologists of religion in a major project called the *National Study of Youth and Religion* show that there are three main factors that contribute to a young person retaining their religious tradition into adulthood:

1. The young person's parents practiced the faith in the home and in daily life, not just in public or churchly settings.
2. The young person had at least one significant adult mentor or friend, other than parents, who practiced the faith seriously.
3. The young person had at least one significant spiritual experience before the age of 17.

One could therefore say that a person is most likely to retain Christian faith throughout adult life if he or she had three meaningful and healthy relationships in their early to mid teenage years: *one with faithful Christian parents, one with a faithful Christian mentor outside of the family, and one with God Himself.*

If a young person experiences all three relationships in their childhood and especially in their early teenage years, they are far less likely to drift away from their family's faith tradition as they transition into "emerging adulthood" and beyond. In addition, while all three relationships are important, what the young person observes in the actions and daily life of his or her parents is the most decisive element by far.

The practical conclusion is rather straightforward: For most people, and when viewed as a sociological trend, unless there is a specific adult in a teenager's life who shows the teenager by example and in the context of a meaningful, long-term relationship how an adult incorporates Christian faith into daily life, *no program, camp, mission trip, youth group, worship style, musical trend, Sunday school, church reform, updated pastoral style, modernization, or even catechetical class will make a statistically significant difference.* Further, to retain their faith into adulthood young people need to experience God's grace for themselves, preferably before the latter part of high school...

One of the major findings of the ***National Study of Youth and Religion***...is that American teenagers are actually very good at practicing the faith that their parents teach them: not what parents **say** they believe, but what they **actually** believe as evidenced by actions.

The result is that most American teenagers and emerging adults, including Christians of all traditions, believe in and practice "Moralistic Therapeutic Deism," not Christianity. [see footnote\*] Considering this reality, it is hardly surprising that, over time, many emerging adults drift away from their family's Christian roots, choosing to marry outside their church or even Christian faith itself. Yet their doing so is not actually a departure from or a change in their religious convictions: it is merely an alignment of certain external practices (e.g., what they do on Sundays or Easter) with the actual religious beliefs they have held since their teenage years.

As shocking as such a conclusion may seem, here is the most important point: **Teenagers and emerging adults believe in and practice “Moralistic Therapeutic Deism” not because their parents and their local church have failed to teach them otherwise, but precisely because that is what their parents and their local church are actually teaching them...** The actual doctrine of family and local church, as taught to most young people in word and especially deed, ends up driving the next generation from the Church, not because the Church is out of touch with the broader society but because the local church never actually taught and lived by the Gospel of Jesus Christ in the first place.

Just in case it is not already obvious, it is worth noting that the research indicates the problem of apostasy is universal across religious traditions in America. It is not a problem of just the Greek Archdiocese or other Orthodox jurisdictions. One thing this reality should tell us is that the problem is not caused merely by confusion over issues such as ethnicity or language. On the contrary, very Americanized churches, which use only English in their worship, suffer from the same problem of apostasy. In other words, the issue is much deeper than people want it to be, and it requires repentance and change far greater than switching the language of the liturgy. In fact, there are studies that indicate that most American teenagers (and adults) do not understand the theological or spiritual lessons in hymns or worship services, regardless of language or style. It does not actually do anything, in and of itself, to use all English, to update the music, to use contemporary worship strategies, etc.

The fundamental problem is far scarier and far harder to “fix”: the Gospel of Jesus Christ is neither taught nor followed by the vast majority of Christian parents in America. Period. The data are unavoidable. Now, the question arises: Is this fact the parents’ “fault”? On a certain level, yes; but, at the same time, they themselves were neither taught nor disciplined. It therefore falls to the whole Church herself, as the Body of Christ—clergy and laity—to correct this reality through prayer, example, and instruction. Without seriously grappling with the sociological research that exists on these questions, as well as the depths of our own Orthodox Christian tradition, which is replete with wisdom on what it takes to make disciples of all nations, we will neither understand the problem of mass apostasy nor find a successful solution to it. ❖

— *Seraphim Danckaert, a graduate of Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology, is currently a Ph.D. candidate at the Amsterdam Centre for Eastern Orthodox Theology within the Faculty of Theology at Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam. Some of his other articles are available on his academia.edu page.*

\* Briefly, what is *Moralistic Therapeutic Deism*? First, it believes the creator God exists and orders the world and watches over human life on earth, but from a distance. Second, in this system, God wants people to be good, nice, and fair to each other, as taught in the Bible and by most world religions (which are more or less equal). Third, the central goal of life is to be happy and to feel good about oneself. Repentance, worship, regular prayer and belief that Jesus Christ is Lord, that we follow Him by carrying our cross, and experience His life and death in our baptism and resurrection, is not part of this system. Fourth, God does not need to be particularly involved in one’s life except when he is needed to resolve a problem. Fifth, good people go to heaven when they die. As one person said, “Well, God is almighty, I guess [yawns]. But I think he’s on vacation right now because of all the crap that’s happening in the world, cause it wasn’t like this back when he was famous.”

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## FROM THE SAINTS

A man becomes spiritual insofar as he lives a spiritual life. He begins to see God in all things, to see His power and might in every manifestation. Always and everywhere he sees himself abiding in God and dependent on God for all things. But insofar as a man lives a bodily life, so much he does he does bodily things; he doesn't see God in anything, even in the most wondrous manifestations of His Divine power. In all things he sees body, material, everywhere and always— “God is not before his eyes.” (Ps. 35:2) —*St. John of Kronstadt, My Life in Christ*

“Someone who bears a grudge while he prays is like a person who sows in the sea and expects to reap a harvest.” — *St. Isaac The Syrian*

“If we have true love with sympathy and patient labor, we shall not go about scrutinizing our neighbor’s shortcomings.” — *St. Dorotheos of Gaza*

## EVENTS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

- **WE OFFER TO GOD OUR THANKSGIVING** for all those that gave their time, talent and resources during Holy Week and Pascha: those who decorated—we all agree that a scaffold never looked quite so good; the icons were adorned with flowers so beautifully; the Artos was magnificent and wonderful adornment; we are grateful for our choir director and the singers for the many, many hours of work; for our deacons, our subdeacon, the altar servers, and the sacristans; for those who read the Psalter, and the book of Acts; for those who read the Old Testament readings on Holy Saturday; for those who made the Easter eggs and the Pascha Baskets for shut-ins; those who setup, cooked, barbecued and cleaned at the Holy Saturday repast; for those who set up and cleaned at the agape meal; those who set up and cleaned at the Paschal picnic; those who organized the egg hunt and games; for our clergy Father Michael and Father John; for those who took care of the yard work and the lawns; for our ushers and candle desk attendants. There are so many people for which we give thanks to our Savior. Christ is risen.
- **FATHER LAWRENCE AND MATUSHKA ANN** will be going on a pilgrimage to Macedonia and Serbia to see the ancient Churches and Monasteries there. They depart on May 23 and return two days before Pentecost, June 6.
- **WEDNESDAY EVENING LECTURES:** Join us for a study of the Book of the Acts of the Holy Apostles, on the next four Wednesday evenings. Daily Vespers at 6 PM, followed by a potluck dinner and the lecture. Vincent Rossi will give the first two talks.
- **MIGUEL CASTILLO** was made a Catechumen on Holy Saturday. We welcome and congratulate him.
- **MARTIN THONG** will be made a Catechumen on Sunday, April 27, prior to the Divine Liturgy. Please pray for all our Catechumens: Jonathan, Shiloh, Miguel and Martin.
- **WE CONGRATULATE** Sophia Kathie Dadjou who received the Holy Illumination of Baptism on Lazarus Saturday, prior to the Divine Liturgy. Many Years! Her Godparents are Gretchen Johanna McPherson and Ray Michael Basch.
- **HIS EMINENCE** Archbishop Benjamin joined us as always, on Bright Monday, for Paschal Matins and Divine Liturgy. We are grateful to Vladyka for his loving care for us. We were also honored by the presence of Protodeacon Brendan Doss. Following the Liturgy there was a wonderful lunch served by Khouria Jasmine El-far and others. The Senior Lunch group participated, making the meal quite festive. Our Seniors held in a pledge drive to fund some of the frescos. \$4000 was pledged, which will go toward the Prophet Joel in the dome.
- **FATHER LAWRENCE** will be going to Nashville from May 6-9 to be the celebrant at Zoe Doss' wedding.
- **THE QUESTION** is often asked, "when will the scaffold come down?" We expect the dome fresco project to be completed at the end of June, first week of July. When all twelve prophets are finished in five weeks' time, the final painting will be the decorations on the three large rims of the dome.
- **PARENTS:** Please call the parish office with the names of your high school and/or college graduates. The parish would like to honor them.
- **PENTECOST** is fifty days after Pascha, as it's name implies, placing it on Sunday, June 8.

Shine, shine, O New Jerusalem, for the glory of the Lord has risen upon you.  
Now dance for joy and be glad, O Zion!



**Friday, May 2<sup>nd</sup> • 7-10pm**

at Fairfax Community Church  
2398 Sir Francis Drake Boulevard, Fairfax, CA 94930

**Tickets are \$7 in advance** (kids are free!)  
**and \$10 at the door**

**Bring a sweet or savory snack to share**

 If possible, please RSVP on our event page which can be found at St. Nicholas Orthodox Church on facebook

If you have any questions  
contact Tatyana Fateyeva (415) 342-2778

# PROTECTION OF THE HOLY VIRGIN MARY ORTHODOX CHURCH

## MAY 2014

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<b>27 - Thomas Sunday</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 9 AM, Confessions</li> <li>• 10 AM, Liturgy</li> <li>• Noon, Agape Meal</li> <li>• 12:45 PM, Church School</li> </ul>	28	<b>29 - Day of Rejoicing</b> <i>Blessing of Graves</i> 9:30 AM, Sebastopol 10:45 AM, Forestville Noon, Healdsburg 2 PM, SR Memorial	<b>30</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 6 PM, Vespers, Potluck and Talk on book of Acts</li> </ul>	<b>1</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 7 PM, Master Planning Meeting</li> </ul>	2	<b>3</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 5 PM, Great Vespers</li> </ul>
<b>4 - Myrrhbearing Women</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 9 AM, Confessions</li> <li>• 10 AM, Liturgy</li> <li>• Noon, Agape Meal</li> <li>• 12:45 PM, Church School</li> </ul>	5	6	<b>7</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 6 PM, Vespers, Potluck and Talk on book of Acts</li> </ul>	<b>8</b> <div>Fr. Lawrence in Nashville for Wedding</div>	<b>9</b> <i>(Saratoga Parish Feast of St. Nicholas)</i>	<b>10</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 5 PM, Great Vespers</li> </ul>
<b>11 - Paralytic</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 9 AM, Confessions</li> <li>• 10 AM, Liturgy</li> <li>• Noon, Agape Meal</li> <li>• 12:45 PM, Church School</li> </ul> <i>Mothers' Day</i>	12	<b>13</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 6 PM, Vespers for Midfeast</li> </ul>	<b>14</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 9 AM, Divine Liturgy for Midfeast</li> <li>• 6 PM, Vespers, Potluck and Talk on book of Acts</li> </ul>	<b>15</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 6 PM, Vespers</li> <li>• 7 PM, Parish Council Meeting</li> </ul>	16	<b>17</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 5 PM, Great Vespers</li> </ul>
<b>18 - Samaritan Women</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 9 AM, Confessions</li> <li>• 10 AM, Liturgy</li> <li>• Noon, Agape Meal</li> <li>• 12:45 PM, Church School</li> <li>• 3 PM, <i>Wedding (Ellen and Rob)</i></li> </ul>	19	20	<b>21</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 9 AM, Liturgy for Sts. Constantine and Helen</li> <li>• 6 PM, Vespers, Potluck and Talk on book of Acts</li> </ul>	22	23	<b>24</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 5 PM, Great Vespers</li> </ul>
<b>25 - Blind Man</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 9 AM, Confessions</li> <li>• 10 AM, Liturgy</li> <li>• 12:45 PM, Church School</li> <li>• Noon, Agape Meal</li> </ul>	26	<b>27</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 7 PM, Matins, Leave-taking of Pascha</li> </ul>	<b>28</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 6:15 PM, Vigil for Ascension</li> </ul>	<b>29 - Ascension of Christ</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 9 AM, Divine Liturgy for the Ascension</li> </ul>	30	<b>31</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 5 PM, Great Vespers</li> </ul>

- Fr. Lawrence and Matushka Ann away on Pilgrimage in Macedonia from May 23 until June 6.