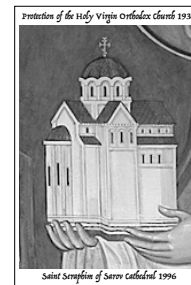


The Sunday after Pascha is called by three names: *St. Thomas Sunday*, *Anti-Pascha* and *Renewal Sunday*. IN the Gospel of John, we hear Jesus say: “Thomas, because thou hast seen Me, thou hast believed. Blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed.” Faith is not discovered by investigation (although it paves the way) or even by seeing. Keep in mind that the Apostles, the Pharisees and Judas all saw the incredible miracles. Not all believed (St. Matthew records that “they worshipped Him, but some doubted”). Faith is given, revealed, received, learned, lived and then understood only when one meets and accepts the Lord Jesus Christ. Faith is about a person, not acquiring doctrine. Remember the Lord’s words to Peter: “flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father in Heaven.” We come to faith because the Father, Who loves us before we love Him, reveals Jesus to us, when we are faithful. Theology is a result of knowing Christ—which happens through faithfulness to Him. “Seeing is believing,” we say. However, from the beginning the evil one, that liar, along with hypocrites, charlatans, thieves, philosophers, politicians, those guessing and those deceiving, and you name it, have used the approach that *seeing is believing* only to dupe the mind and heart; and this has lead to all kinds of falsehoods, fictions and disasters, sorrows, disappointments, heresies and sins. Only God, the Risen Lord, to be exact, can cut through fiction, lies and deception; and He only can gently present Himself to the human heart (and then the mind), and bring a person, who is willing, to the illumination of faith. We believe—then we understand. And then we will call Jesus, Lord. Only God can get us there, and only if we offer Him a little way in to ourselves. Jesus, says Luke, “opened their minds to understand the Scriptures,” particularly that “the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead.” And so he does for us as well. So, this is one aspect of Renewal Sunday. Let us not forget that we are in a battle for our spiritual lives; we exercise and feed the soul. Be faithful, and the Lord will bring you to knowledge. —*Fr Lawrence*

ST. SERAPHIM CATHEDRAL

PROTECTION OF THE HOLY VIRGIN ORTHODOX CHURCH



May 12, 2024

St. Thomas Sunday



- TROPARION OF THE RESURRECTION, Tone Five:
Christ is risen from the dead, trampling down death by death, and upon those in the tombs bestowing life.
- 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.

ACTIVITIES & EVENTS THIS WEEK

- Friday, May 10: 6 PM, Bright Friday, Paschal Vespers
- Saturday, May 11: 9:30 AM, Paschal Divine Liturgy in San Francisco
5 PM, Great Vespers / Confessions
- Sunday, May 12: 10 AM, Divine Liturgy
Noon, Agape Meal / Mentorship
- Tuesday, May 14: Blessing graves at the cemeteries
- Wednesday, May 15: 5:30 PM, Akathist to Matushka Olga
6 PM, Vespers
6:30 PM, Catechumen ceremony for Jaimie and her children
- Thursday, May 16: 7 PM, Online Bible Study

During Holy Week and Bright Week, other than funerals, the Church forbids us to sing memorial hymns and *Panikhidas*. Why? Because Christ has destroyed the power of the devil and death by His death and resurrection, and the faithful are alive in Him. Memorial prayers are simply not needed. However, on the Tuesday after Bright Week, which we call the Day of Rejoicing (*Radonitsa*) we once again begin to sing hymns for those who have departed this life. I will be visiting the following cemeteries to bless graves:

10 AM at Pleasant Hill in Sebastopol / 11 AM in Forestville
Noon at Healdsburg's Oak Mound Cemetery (Bring a picnic)
1:30 approx at the Windsor Cemetery / 2:30 approx at Santa Rosa

Christ is risen. We all give thanks for the tremendous blessings of Holy Week and Pascha, especially for those who organized all the various ingredients that make for a successful and bright feast. There are countless things to do to prepare for Holy Week and Pascha, to manage during Pascha and to arrange after Pascha. Please, extend a personal word of thanks to those that did so much to make our Paschal Feast so beautiful.

Scaffolding gets erected under the dome this week, followed by two weeks of plasterers working on the arches and the area under the dome. As previously announced to the congregation on a recent Sunday, this is a big job. What's the purpose of all this? In order to paint the four Evangelists on the Pendentives (the triangular shaped areas under the dome) and the decorative work on the arches, Anton Daineko needs a smooth, finish, dry

coat of plaster (in contradistinction, Fr Patrick applies his own plaster and paints on it while it's wet). In preparation for this project we need to clear the area under the dome, protect the frescoes on the columns and the icon screen from damage, cover up everything in the altar, move the icon and candle stands, move the carpets, choir stands and chairs, etc. All this will be extremely disruptive to normal parish life since the project won't be completed until about Memorial Day. Church Services—including the Sunday Liturgy—will be celebrated in the Protection Church from May 15 until Memorial Day. During these two weeks, you are encouraged to visit other Orthodox parishes in the area. If you are prepared to receive Holy Communion, please let the serving priest at that parish know ahead of time, so he does not have to ask who you are at the chalice, which is always awkward. When the project is completed, an appeal for help with cleaning and reassembling the nave will be sent out. —*Fr Lawrence*

Reminder: the next Parish Council meeting is scheduled for Thursday, May 23 at 6:30 PM. Parish Library.

There's a change in the Calendar for May: There will be no Liturgy for Sts. Constantine and Helen on May 21. I need to be in San Francisco that morning for a meeting at Holy Trinity. —*Fr Lawrence*

Our parish will host a retreat led by Professors Mary and David Ford of St. Tikhon's Seminary. David will speak about St John Chrysostom, his life and teachings and Mary will speak more generally about the spiritual life, focusing especially on positive and negative thoughts. See the flyer, or register with this QR code here.



God's presence is absolute and perfect in our trials and tribulations, just at the moment when the sense of abandonment by Him is most intense. It is impossible for God to be absent from our salvation. Ultimately, the world is not the one that we see but another world that exists and that we have to discern. Then we shall glorify God for the rich blessings He gives us: for the possibility not so much of gaining our health (we shall lose that at some point), nor of escaping some threat to our life (that too will come to an end), but above all of enjoying our salvation—the possibility for us too to become partakers and members of the Kingdom of God eternally, and to see our God and Savior “face to face.” —*Metropolitan Nikolaos, Metropolitan of Mesogaia and Lavreotiki*