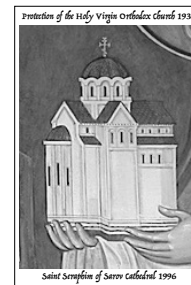


The Sunday after Pascha is called by three names: *St. Thomas Sunday*, *Anti-Pascha* and *Renewal Sunday*. IN the Gospel of John, we hear Jesus say: “Thomas, because thou hast seen Me, thou hast believed. Blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed.” Faith is not discovered by investigation (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 being faithful in following Jesus Christ, not acquiring doctrine (doctrine comes). Remember the Lord’s words to Peter: “flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father in Heaven.” We come to be faithful because the Father, Who loves us before we love Him, reveals Jesus to us. “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. Theology is a result of knowing Christ. And then we will call Jesus, my Lord and my God. 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*

Memory Eternal. May the Lord grant rest to His loving and devoted servant, Elsie Elizabeth Avalon, departed this life during Bright Week, Thursday, April 16, while we are celebrating the Lord’s resurrection and the assurance of our resurrection from the dead and gift of Immortal Life. May the Lord grant consolation to her family. See the schedule above for memorial service details.

ST. SERAPHIM CATHEDRAL

PROTECTION OF THE HOLY VIRGIN ORTHODOX CHURCH



April 19, 2026

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.

Protection of the Holy Virgin Orthodox Church • 90 Mountain View Ave • Santa Rosa
707-584-9491 • LMargitich@icloud.com • saintseraphim.com

ACTIVITIES & EVENTS THIS WEEK

- Saturday, April 18: 3:30 PM, *Thriving Parish Project* Discussion
4:30 PM, Litya for Elsie Avalon
5 PM, Great Vespers / Confessions
- Sunday, April 19: 8 AM, Divine Liturgy
9:15 AM, Choir Rehearsal
9 AM, Baptisms
10 AM, Divine Liturgy
11:30 AM, Church School
Noon, Agape Meal
- Tuesday, April 21: Blessing graves at the cemeteries
6 PM, Panikhida for Elsie Avalon
- Wednesday, April 22: 11 AM, Funeral for Elsie Avalon/Burial in Healdsburg
6 PM, Vespers for the Great Martyr George
- Thursday, April 23: 9 AM, Divine Liturgy for the Feast of the Great Martyr George
7 PM, Online Bible Study
- Friday, April 24: 8 AM, Matins
11:30 AM–1 PM, Confessions

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 Santa Rosa Memorial Cemetery

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 and put it all together to 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, your thanks to those that did so much to make our Paschal Feast so beautiful.

This Sunday at 9 AM we will have the joy of baptizing Jeff and Kira Boyd’s baby and Natalie and Gregory Severs’ baby at 9 AM. And we will also receive Caleb Marks as a catechumen that morning.

Parents, please keep a watchful eye on your children at all times. Children should never—that should be stressed, **never**—be left unattended on the playground, in the Hall, the restrooms, or the church. Children should not be playing in the vineyard, behind the parish hall or in the parking lot. I do understand that some children need a break at some point during the Liturgy, but I would kindly ask that they not play on the play structure or on the lawn next to the church during the Divine Liturgy. When kids need a break, you do what you need to do as parents, but children should be clear that the break is not a time for play. —*Fr Lawrence*

Please join our second discussion of the *Thriving Parish Project* (TPP) presentation on Bright Saturday, April 18 at 3:30 in the Parish Library. We will view two brief videos by priests drawing from their own experience and studies. First is Deacon Abraham Labrada, an immigrant from Mexico who has done missionary work throughout Mexico and translates liturgical texts into Spanish, who will be speaking on welcoming the Hispanic community into the Orthodox Church. The second presenter is Fr. Samuel Davis, son of Columbian and Panamanian immigrants, on welcoming all to the Church. Fr. Samuel considers the Nubian Church traditions for shaping church growth in America. He is the assistant priest at the Greek Orthodox Church at the National Shrine of the World Trade Center, NYC. Karla Van Meter, our TPP coordinator will lead the discussion with Fr. Daniel.

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*