

SOBORNOST

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American Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Diocese

*ECUMENICAL PATRIARCHATE
OF CONSTANTINOPLE*

SERVICES

Public services are in abeyance pending resolution of the COVID-19 pandemic. Please refer to the information on our parish and diocesan websites on how you can worship at home.



April 26, 2020 | Sunday of Saint Thomas (Antipascha)

This Sunday commemorates the appearance of the Lord to the Apostles after His resurrection and the touching of His wounds by the Apostle Thomas. The circumstances of these events are sung in all the stikhera and troparia of the canon on Apostle Thomas Sunday and in the stikhera of the other days of this week. The appearance of the risen Lord to the Apostle Thomas and all the eleven is selected for the first Sunday after the Paschal Sunday because the circumstances of this appearance serve as the indisputable proof of the resurrection of the Lord from the tomb, "as from the chamber, with His immaculate flesh". It assures not only believers and the amazed of the joy of all the followers of the Lord, but even the infidel pagans and the enemies of Christ the Savior-the Judeans. It assures that by the power of His Divinity Jesus Christ is risen again from the tomb, that after the resurrection He did not have an imaginary or illusory flesh in which form the bodiless spirits or inhabitants of heaven are vested when they sometimes appear to us or to the holy brethren, but the real immaculate flesh which He has assumed from the womb of the All-holy Theotokos, with which He was nailed to the cross and on which there remained wounds even after the resurrection.

The eighth day after Pascha as the ending of the celebration of Bright Week was a special celebration since ancient times, as if it replaced the very same Day of

Pascha and was called Antipascha, and means instead of Pascha. From this day the cycle of Sundays and weeks of the entire year begins. On this day the commemoration of the resurrection of Christ is updated for the first time. This Sunday of the Antipascha was called the New Sunday, i.e. the first day of renewal or simply renewal.

According to the explanation of the Synaxarion there was an ancient custom to periodically do a solemn commemoration for some major events. So that time in the annual cycle does not pass by this very day on which the known event occurred, it annually did a commemoration in order that the memory of the great events was not forgotten. On this basis the Hebrews celebrated the Passover in Gilgal for the first time, renewing their memory of the passage through the Red Sea. On this same basis they celebrated the foundation, and with special solemnity, the renewal of the witness of the Tabernacle. According to this they commemorated the reign of David and other events of which there is no need to list. But so that the incomparably greatest of all events in the life of every one and exceeding every idea is the resurrection of the Lord that we not only commemorate annually, but also continually through every week. So the first renewal of this event in memory of the real Resurrection Day, which it would be possible to call the first renewal of this event by its own meaning both the eighth and the first: the eighth because it is the eighth from Pascha, as the first because it is the beginning of other Sunday commemorations. And this day can still be named the eighth because it will be placed in the image of that eternal day in the future age, which will also be the first and undoubtedly one not divided by night (Vladimirskiiia Eparchialniia Vedomosti [Vladimir DiocesanNews] 1898, 7).

The more proper name is the real day, the eighth day after Pascha, that on this eighth day the Lord Himself willed the renewal of the joy of His resurrection with a new appearance to the Holy Apostles. So that the renewal of the appearance of the resurrected Savior was especially for the sake of the Holy Apostle Thomas, who at this appearance also saw the salvatory wounds of the body of the Resurrected One, that from here and of our other more common usage of the name of Antipascha or by the Sunday of St. Thomas, or Thomian. In the ancient church Antipascha Sunday had yet another more special name of "White Sunday", which even now remains in the Roman Catholic Church. It is called so because the newly baptized, who received the sacraments of Baptism and Chrismation on the eve of Holy Pascha and wore the paschal white vestments for seven days in the image of the infancy and renewal in Christ, on Thomas Sunday, as the last day established for the commemoration after the reception of Baptism, the chrism was washed off from the body and they solemnly wore those clothes in which they were vested after the holy font in the temple.

St. Gregory the Theologian says in his Homily on this Sunday, "With the ancient and good purpose, it is to honor the day of renewal as established law, or better to say, to honor the new benefactions with the day of renewal. But was not the day of renewal also the first Resurrection Day, followed by the blessed and radiant night? Why you give this name to the present day? That was the day of salvation, but this day is the commemoration of salvation. That day differentiates the burial and the resurrection in itself, but this day is purely of the new birth. It is the first day among those following it and eighth among those coming before it".

Commemorating this day of "renewal" the Holy Church inspires in us the necessity for our beneficial spiritual renewal. "The real renewal", the same Holy Father teaches, "we now celebrate, is the going from death to life. And so we put off ourselves the old man and renewed ourselves; that we too might walk in newness of life (Rom.6:4)". "The old has passed away, behold, the new has come"(2 Cor.5:17)." Let us bridle all lusts from which death was born, let us become accustomed to the feeling of obedience, let us begin to hate any evil food from prohibited fruit and let us remember the former only and henceforth first be wary of the same. Christian be made new from the old and in this way celebrate the renewal of the soul". "Change yourself with a good change, and in this case do not think highly of yourself, but say with David: "This is a change being wrought by the right hand of the Most High"(Ps. 76:11), from whom is everything successful in people. God the Word wants that you not stand in the place alone, but that you ever move, moving smoothly, be completely newly created and if you sin turn yourself away from the sin, and if you are successful, you will have strained the powers even more".

"It is needful to know that on this Antipascha Sunday that we do not sing the Resurrection services, but that everything is of the feast". This means, that we do not sing the stichera of Pascha with the known refrains: "Let God Arise" at Vespers "for the Aposticha" that is sung on following Sundays before the Ascension of the Lord. In Matins the Paschal Canon is not sung but is sung on the following Sundays. All this is not sung, certainly, so that in the eyes of the faithful it will be closer to the subject of the actual festival, which in itself is the most amazing proof of the Resurrection of Christ, solemnly celebrated by us during all of Bright Week" (Rukovodstvo dlia Seljskikh Pastirej (Manual for Village Pastors 1892, 15). (*from Handbook for Church Servers, 2nd ed., by S. V. Bulgakov (Trans. Archpriest Eugene D. Tarris)*)



Today's Epistle Lesson – The Acts of the Apostles 5:12-20

In those days, many signs and wonders were done among the people through the hands of the apostles. 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."

Today's Gospel Lesson – Saint John 20:19-31

On 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 be unto 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, "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.

A Word From the Holy Fathers

[Christ said to Thomas:] "...touch my body which suffered as I willed...and learn through this experience which of my natures is touchable, and which one you cannot touch; learn which of my natures suffers and which nature does not..."

Thomas said: "You are 'my Lord and my God' (Jn. 20:28). You are both eternal and temporal; you are both heavenly and earthly; you are both invisible and visible; you are both without form and in my form; you are both without shape and in this shape; you are truly God and truly man; you are in heaven together with the Father, and on the cross for our sake; you are seated upon the royal throne before the ages, and yet fixed by nails to the cross; you are impassible according to the spirit, and suffer according to the flesh; you are immortal as one in essence with the Father, yet for a time you were made mortal as one in essence with us; you the same were buried in the grave while resting upon the cherubim; you were in death as the giver of life; you were among the dead as the liberator of the dead; you were dead for three days and coeternal with your begetter; you raised up the temple of your body by your own power; you are with us in the flesh and you exist with the Father before the ages, you are in the heavens, you are upon the earth, you are everywhere filling all things. You who hold all things in the hollow of your hand are held by me. I see you with the eyes of the body, but I understand you with the eyes of faith."

– St. Proclus, Archbishop of Constantinople, *Homily 33*

PATRIARCHAL ENCYCLICAL FOR HOLY PASCHA

**† B A R T H O L O M E W, BY GOD'S MERCY ARCHBISHOP OF
CONSTANTINOPLE-NEW ROME AND ECUMENICAL PATRIARCH
TO THE PLENITUDE OF THE CHURCH: MAY THE GRACE, PEACE
AND MERCY OF CHRIST RISEN IN GLORY BE WITH YOU ALL**

Dearest brother Hierarchs and beloved children in the Lord,

Having arrived at Holy Pascha and becoming partakers of the joy of the Resurrection, we praise the Lord of glory, who trampled down death by death and resurrected with Him the entire race of Adam, opening for us all the gates of paradise. The splendid Resurrection of Christ is the confirmation that what prevails in the life of the world is not death, but the Savior who abolished the dominion of death. Formerly known to us as the Word without flesh and subsequently as the Word who assumed flesh for us on account of love for humankind, who died as man and was risen with might as God, He is the Savior who will come again in glory to fulfil the Divine Economy.

The mystery and experience of the Resurrection constitutes the core of the ecclesiastical life. The radiant worship, the sacred mysteries, the life of prayer, fasting and asceticism, pastoral ministry and good witness in the world – all of these emanate the fragrance of Paschal joy. The life of the faithful in the Church is a daily Pascha, “a joy from above,” “the joy of salvation,” as well as the “salvation as joy.”

This is why the services of Holy and Great Week are not gloomy but filled with the victorious power of the Resurrection. There, we discover that the Cross does not have the last word in the plan for the salvation of humankind and the world. This is foreshadowed already on the Saturday of Lazarus. The raising from the dead of Christ’s intimate friend is a prefigurement of the “common resurrection.” The hymn “Today is hung upon the wood [of the Cross]” comes to a climax in the invocation “Show us, too, your glorious Resurrection.” Before the Epitaphios, we chant “I magnify your Passion, I praise your burial, together with your Resurrection.” And during the Paschal service, we resoundingly declare the true meaning of the Cross: “For behold, through the Cross, joy has come into the whole world.”

The “chosen and holy day” of Pascha is the dawn of the “eighth day,” the first-fruit of the “new creation.” The experience of our own resurrection, the great “miracle of my salvation.” It is the lived affirmation that the Lord suffered and was led to death for our sake and that He rose from the dead for us “foreshadowing for us the resurrection for boundless ages.” Throughout the Paschal period, we hymn with unparalleled poetry the anthropological meaning of the resplendent Resurrection of Christ, the Passover of humankind from slavery to genuine freedom, “the progression and ascension from below to the above and to the promised land.” This salvific renewal in Christ is realized in the Church as a dynamic extension of the Eucharistic ethos in the world, as “speaking the truth in love,” as synergy with God for the transfiguration of the world, so that the world may be rendered an image of the fullness of the final revelation of the divine love in the Kingdom of the last times. Living in the risen Lord means proclaiming the Gospel “to the ends of the earth,” in the manner of the Apostles; it is the witness in practice of the grace that has appeared and the expectation of the “new creation,” where “death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain any more.” (Rev. 21.4)

Faith in the Resurrection of Christ and in our own co-resurrection does not deny the painful presence of death, pain and the cross in the life of the world. We do not suppress the harsh reality or secure for ourselves, through faith, a psychological assurance before death. However, we know that the present life is not life in its entirety, that here we are “sojourners,” that we belong to Christ and that we are journeying to His eternal Kingdom. The presence of pain and death, no matter how

tangible these may be, does not constitute the ultimate reality. That lies in the definitive abolition of death. In the Kingdom of God there is neither pain nor death, but never-ending life. “Before your precious Cross,” we chant, “death is terrifying for human beings; but after your glorious Passion, humankind is terrifying for death.” Faith in Christ grants us power, perseverance and patience to endure trials. Christ is the one who “heals us from every illness and delivers us from death.” He is the one who has suffered for us and has revealed to us that God is “always for us” and that God’s love for us belongs intrinsically to God’s truth. This hopeful voice of divine love is echoed in Christ’s words to the paralytic “take courage, my child” (Matt. 9.2) and to the woman with the issue of blood “take courage, daughter” (Matt. 9.22), in His words “take courage; I have overcome the world” (John 16.33) before the Passion, and to the imprisoned Apostle of the Gentiles, threatened by death, “take courage, Paul” (Acts 23.11).

The present pandemic of the novel coronavirus has demonstrated how fragile we are as human beings, how easily we are dominated by fear and despondency, how frail our knowledge and self-confidence appear, how antiquated the notion is that death comprises an event at the end of life and that forgetting or suppressing death is the proper way of dealing with it. Limit situations prove that we are incapable of handling our existence resolutely, when we believe that death is an invincible reality and insurmountable boundary. It is difficult to remain human without the hope of eternity. This hope lives in the hearts of all doctors, nurses, volunteers, donors and all those generously supporting their suffering brothers and sisters in a spirit of sacrifice, offering and love. In this indescribable crisis, they radiate resurrection and hope. They are the “Good Samaritans” that, at the risk of their own lives, pour oil and wine on wounds; they are the modern-day “Cyrenaeans” on the Golgotha of those lying in illness.

With these thoughts, most honorable Hierarchs and dearest children in the Lord, we glorify the name of the Risen Lord which is above all names, the source of life from His own light, who illumines the universe with the light of the Resurrection. And we pray to Him, the physician of our souls and bodies, who grants life and resurrection, that in His ineffable loving-kindness He may condescend to the human race, in order to grant us the precious gift of health and direct our steps on the straight ways, to vouchsafe the divine gift of our freedom in the world, foreshadowing its perfection in the heavenly Kingdom of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Christ is Risen!

At the Phanar, Holy Pascha 2020

† Bartholomew of Constantinople

Your fervent supplicant to the Risen Lord

Also Commemorated Today: Hieromartyr Basil, Bishop of Amasea, and with Him Virgin-Martyr Glaphyra

The Hieromartyr Basil, Bishop of Amasea, lived at the beginning of the fourth century in the Pontine city of Amasea. He encouraged and comforted the Christians suffering persecution by the pagans. During this time the Eastern part of the Roman Empire was ruled by Licinius (311-324), the brother-in-law of the holy emperor Constantine the Great (May 21). Licinius deceitfully signed Saint Constantine's Edict of Milan (313), which granted religious toleration to Christians, but he hated them and continued to persecute them.

The Virgin Glaphyra. Licinius burned with passion for Glaphyra, a maidservant of his wife Constantia. The holy virgin reported this to the empress and sought her help. Dressing her in men's attire and providing her with money, the empress Constantia sent her to Pontus in the company of a devoted servant. They told the emperor that Glaphyra had gone mad and lay near death. On her way to Armenia, Saint Glaphyra stopped in Amasea, where the local bishop, Saint Basil, gave her shelter.

At this time the saint was building a church in the city. Saint Glaphyra donated all the money that she had received from Constantia for its construction, and in a letter to the empress she asked her to send additional funds to complete the church. The empress fulfilled her request. However, Saint Glaphyra's letter fell into the hands of the emperor. The enraged Licinius ordered the governor of Amasea to send him the hierarch and the maidservant. Saint Glaphyra died before the edict arrived in Amasea, and Saint Basil was sent to the emperor. Two deacons, Parthenius and Theotimos, followed after him and lodged near the prison where the saint was held.

The pious Christian Elpidophoros bribed the jailer and each night he visited the saint with Parthenius and Theotimos. On the eve of the saint's trial, he sang Psalms and chanted, "if I should sojourn at the extremity of the sea... even there Thy hand would guide me, and Thy right hand would hold me" (Ps 138/139:9-10). These were prophetic words.

Three times he broke down in tears. The deacons were afraid that the saint would not be able to endure the coming torments, but he calmed them. At the trial Saint Basil resolutely refused the emperor's offer to become a pagan priest, and so he was sentenced to death. Elpidophoros gave the soldiers money, and they allowed the saint to pray and to speak with his friends before execution. Then the saint said to the executioner, "Friend, do as you have been ordered." Calmly, he bent his neck beneath the sword.

When the martyr had been beheaded, Elpidophoros tried to ransom his relics from the soldiers. But the soldiers were afraid of the emperor and they threw the saint's body and head into the sea. After this, an angel of God appeared to Elpidophoros three times in a dream, saying, "Bishop Basil is in Sinope and awaits you."

Heeding this call, Elpidophoros and the deacons sailed to Sinope, and there they hired fishermen to lower their nets. When they lowered the net on the suggestion of the deacons Theotimos and Parthenius, they came up with nothing. Then Elpidophoros declared that he would ask them to lower the net in the name of the God Whom he worshiped. This time, the net brought up the body of Saint Basil. The saint's head was attached to his body once more, and only the gash on his neck indicated the blow of the sword. The relics of Saint Basil were taken to Amasea and buried in the church he built. (*from oca.org*)

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In Your Prayers – Please Remember... His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch BARTHOLOMEW, His Eminence Metropolitan GREGORY, Fr. Joseph & Family, Greek Orthodox Archbishop Paul Yazigi of Aleppo, Syriac Orthodox Archbishop Yohanna Ibrahim of Aleppo, His Grace Bishop Neofitos of Nyeri and Mt. Kenya, Fr. John & Pani Betty Jean Baranik, Presbytera Katie Baker and family, Dn. Steve Hall, Santiago Alzugaray, Jeffrey Carey, Tatyana and Slava Chumak & family, Xenia Chilkowich, Jon Church, Ramius Connour, Curtis Cooper, Luke Cooper, Tina Crull, Mary Diane David, Ron Dominiecki, Linda A. Georgiev, Heather Himler, John Homick, Cameron Houk, Howl Family, Helen Janowiak, John M. Janowiak, Tucker Karl and family, Robert & Pam Karpin, Andrew Kinn, Kopan family, Brian, Helen, and Luke Mahony, Valentina Makowelski, Susan Matula, Anna Meinhold, Dn. Henry Middleton, David & Kathryn Newman, Bobby Nutter & Family, Henry & Lisa Osborne, Westin Perry & Parents, John Reece, Mary Reed, Chris & Kaitlin Rixey, Jerry Von Ronne, Anne Rosario, James, Theodore and Christina Ristas, Robinson Family, Samson Family, Sharon Sheptak, Bernie Takabayashi & family, Dawn & Faith Ulmschneider, Lydia Vita, Christine, Marshall, Nathaniel, Dcn. Nectarios and Ia, the Syrian Christians displaced by war, Mother Virginia Marie and the Carmelite Nuns of Port Tobacco, and all those in need of our prayers. (Please advise Fr. Joseph of changes.)