

Announcements and Activities

Great Vespers— Saturday, at 5:30PM.

Divine Liturgy— Sunday, at 10AM.

Coffee Hour— This week's Coffee Hour is our Paschal Picnic. Next week's Coffee Hour will be "Pizza"

Fundraiser on May 20th— We are doing a joint fundraiser to both help the church with our budget and Syrian families related to the many Syrian Orthodox families living on the central coast. We are distributing tickets for you to sell to family and friends. The food will be a Middle Eastern food: Shwarma— beef and chicken cooked on a rotisserie, dolma, rice, tabouli and baklava, a \$20 combo. This is a great cause and a way to lift our own budget up. Please make an effort to buy and sell tickets.

Pray for... Sarah, the daughter of Fr. Lawrence's godfather, health issues. **Youseff and Jimmy**— who are ill. **Matushka Ann Hopko**, reposed. **Jonathan**— ill. **Reposed Barbara Ranjo**. Fr. **And Matushka's Granddaughter Annabella** is past her illness, but still needs prayer for the return all body parts to normal. **Laure**— battling Cancer. **Paul**— ill **Ralph**—ill **Archpriest Lawrence**, from Canada, progressive eye disease. **Tsige Roman**— our beloved Tsige reposed on December 3rd. Please keep praying for her homeland of Ethiopia. **Brian**—ill. **Jonathan**— ill. **Katia**— sister of Shkbarra's **Grace**, Heather's goddaughter. **Reposed Priest, James**. **Reposed Hierarch Tikhon**. **Diane** — surgery. **Rufin**— soldier in Ukraine. **Elise**, ill. **Sally**, surgery, **Reposed Patrick**, **Reposed Jim**, **Reposed Alex**; **Christian**, prayers. **Chris**, reposed. **Galina**, reposed. **John D.**, anniversary of repose. **Patrick**, reposed. **Alex**— reposed.

St. Thomas Sunday

Today is the Apostle Thomas's day. You remember that the Lord appeared to him in a special way. Ten of the disciples were together when the Lord, having conquered death, came to them and said "Peace be with you". These were precious words. He brought peace into human souls, that peace which also comes to us now. He stood talking to them and sent them out to preach the word of God. However, one of them, Thomas, was not present. When he arrived, the others all rushed to him, saying, "Brother Thomas, we have seen the Lord, we have seen Him alive, we touched Him!" Then Thomas felt such pain in his heart, felt so hurt that he said, "I don't believe it, I don't!" (even though ten people - his brethren - were telling him so). He declared "Unless I touch His wounds with my own hands, unless I feel His newly resurrected body, I will not believe it."

Some time later the disciples had met again, locking the doors from fear of persecution, when suddenly a familiar voice rang out again, the voice of Jesus: "Peace be with you!" And there He was, standing among them. The first to whom He turned was Thomas. Jesus said "Thomas, give me your hand, touch my wounds, verify them and make sure." But of course Thomas did not try to: as soon as he saw the Lord, he was overwhelmed and fell before Him in tears, crying "My Lord and my God!" Jesus said to him "Because you have seen, you believed. But blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe."

Whom is He talking about? Why, you and me. We did not see the Lord during His earthly life, but we see Him with our spiritual eyes. He is alive amongst us and we have no need to touch Him. How many saw Him with their own eyes, heard Him speak, followed Him along the streets - and did not believe, because their hearts did not respond to Christ's call. We, however, have responded. Though we are weak and powerless, though we are very different, we have come to the Lord saying "My Lord and my God."

It is true that we seem to sense the Lord's presence, as everything around us is from Him and all of it is His. I remember a scholar who spent many years studying flowers, trees and herbs - all kinds of plants and animals. He made notes on everything and drew up long lists, which even now, thirty years later, are used throughout the world. Finally, when he had finished his work with the list of living things, he said "God has been near me. I have sensed Him in His creations." Indeed, the sun above us is the eye of God, the wind's breath is God's voice, all the laws of this world are God's laws, all the reverses and changes of our fate are also from the Lord. We see and sense Him in prayer, in the Holy Scriptures and in the sacraments. When the sacred Cup is brought to us - it is the real and living Lord who is present here, in this church, as He is in all the churches of the earth. He is present not only in churches, but in all the places where people pray to Him - in the far North, in deserts and in the mountains, as well as in populous towns where millions are crowded together: everywhere there are souls turning to the Lord. They see Him and feel His presence, for they are a hundred times happier and more blessed than those who lived two thousand years ago. The Lord is with us here, living, resurrected and giving us His blessing - and we, together with His apostle Thomas, bow before Him, saying "Lord, you stand alive before me, my Lord and my God."

*Translated from **Bulgakov's Handbook**, by Archpriest Eugene Tarris)*

"There do not exist many or few, nor small or great problems. The only problem is the absence of Christ from our lives" (From the life and teachings of Elder Epiphanius Theodoropoulos)