

Thomas Sunday (2nd after Pascha)



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.

Troparion, tone 7

**From the sealed tomb you shone forth life, O Christ God,
And through closed doors you came before your disciples, O Resurrection of all:
Through them renew an upright spirit in us by your great mercy.**

Kontakion, tone 8

**Thomas touched your life-giving side with an eager right hand, O Christ God,
When you came through the closed doors.
Together with the other Apostles he cried out to you:
You are my Lord and my God.**

Magnification

**We magnify you, O Life-giver Christ,
Who for our sake descended into Hades
And raised all things with you.**

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* (ἀντὶ Πάσχα), 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*¹. 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 Apostles².

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).

In Matins "from today we begin to say: 'Let us sing to the Lord', through all of the Fifty Days". "In the **Hours** sing the Three Psalms according to the Ustav [Typikon]".

On the Sunday of Antipascha "the **Liturgy** will be early labor for the sake of the vigilant".

Matins Gospel: 1³. **Epistle:** Acts 5:12-20; sel. 14. **Gospel:** Jn. 20:19-31; sel. 65.

On Thomas Sunday **Vespers**, the Great Prokeimenon is prescribed.

See: From this day we say the Little Compline. And we sing the Molieben Canon of the All-holy Theotokos in the Octoechos and the Three Ode Canon of the day. Where we say the Three-ode Canon, the Theotokos Ode of the Canon is dropped. After "It is truly meet" and after "Our Father", we say the Kontakion of the feast all through the Fifty Days. In the Liturgy the Beatitudes are sung with the verses from the festal Canon of the Sunday, the ordinary ode for each day, with the Irmos on 6, in this way: on Monday the first, on Tuesday the fourth, on Wednesday the fifth, on Thursday the seventh, on Friday the eighth, on Saturday the ninth.

See in the Ustav [Typikon], how from Thomas Sunday the Triodion is sung with the Menaion during all the fifty days in Vespers and Matins, in all the weeks up to the Leave-taking of Pentecost, except for Saturdays and Sundays.

See in the same place about Saturdays of the Pentecostarion.

"The decree written in the Ustav [Typikon] on the Pentecostarion, states that it behooves the Rector or Ecclesiarch to always look diligently, with care and deliberation: how the Menaion service, which saints from the Triodion, is sung in Vespers, Matins and the Liturgy during the five week days and on Saturdays".

On Thomas *Monday*, in some places on *Tuesday*, the commemoration of the departed is done. Actually in the service of these days according to the Ustav [Typikon] the special prayers for the departed are not prescribed and the commemoration on these days is done according to the pious custom of the Russian Church⁴. The basis for this commemoration of the departed, on the other hand, serves to commemorate the descent of Jesus Christ into Hades, tied not only to Thomas Sunday but also for another reason, is the decision of the church Ustav [Typikon] (see pages 505, 533 and 538) to do the usual commemoration of the departed, beginning with Thomas Monday⁵. Under this decision the faithful come to the graves of their relatives with the joyful news about the resurrection of Christ⁶. From here also the very day of commemoration is called *Radonitsa [Day of Rejoicing]*⁷.

¹ 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 Diocesan News] 1898, 7).

²So 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.

Our simple people called Thomas Sunday the Sunday of the "wire", or of the "wires", obviously, because these celebratory days come to an end and is led by the Bright Sunday of the Resurrection of Christ. Thomas Sunday is also called "Krasnoiu gorkoiu [with bitter beauty]" from the ancient Pagan games, which were played in mountainous places in Spring, before other places were free from snow and were covered by the first beautiful grass, which in the majority concluded in marriages (see details in Rukovodstvo dlia Seljskikh Pastirej [Manual for Village Pastors] 1892, 15; Tserkovnyi Vestnik [Church Messenger] 1896, 8).

³For this and the following Sundays see below for the morning Gospels in the Index of tones and the rest.

⁴Concerning the confusion of how to serve Vespers and Matins on Radonitsa [Day of Rejoicing], according to the Paschal Triodion or according to the Parastasis, the "Tserkovnyi Vestnik [Church Messenger], 1892, 31" gives this explanation: it does not follow to allow deviations from the usual order of the divine services for the sake of the "parents".

⁵ The commemoration of the departed after Pascha was also done in extreme antiquity. St. Ambrose of Mediolanum [Milan] says in one of his sermons: "It is truly meet and right, brethren, that after the celebration of Pascha, which we have celebrated, to share our joy with the holy martyrs and by them as participants in the suffering of the Lord, to announce the glory of the resurrection of the Lord". Although these words of St. Ambrose relate to martyrs, they may be an indication of our custom to commemorate the departed after Pascha on Monday or Tuesday of Thomas Week because the beginning of the solemn commemorations in the faith of those who died is established in the New Testament Church as a pious custom to the memory of the martyrs, but among the martyrs buried in antiquity and the others who have died (see details in the Astrakhanskiia Eparkhialniia Vedomosti [Astrakhan Diocesan News] 1891, 10).

⁶ Up to present time in some places there exists a shocking custom of wild drunken revelry after the Paschal remembrance of the departed. In 1895 in Kiev the local Diocesan Authorities issued an order to prohibit bringing vodka and other intoxicated drinks into the cemeteries during the time of the paschal memorials, and assigned the responsibility to the cemetery rectors for the sober Christian behavior of visitors of the cemeteries, but the police were offered vodka to pass by the cemetery and thereby not remove the drinking parties from the graves. All Kiev parish clergy announced this order beforehand in the temples and admonished their parishioners to abandon this sinful custom to celebrate only after the pagan drunken funeral feast on the graves of their deceased. This new order was published in the local newspapers. Besides this the rectors of the Kiev cemeteries also posted special posters about the city, notified the townspeople on the enacted order and accepted the measures against drunkenness in the cemeteries (see the Tserkovnyi Vestnik [Church Messenger], 1895, 16). May God grant that also in other places they do not hesitate to take corresponding measures against allowing wild orgies so offensive for all Christian feelings in the cemeteries during the memorials of the deceased.

⁷In some places they give the Old Slavonic name "Navii [corpse]" to this day (Dushepoleznoe Chtenie [Edifying Reading], 1871, 11, page 273).

*S. V. Bulgakov, **Handbook for Church Servers**, 2nd ed., 1274 pp. (Kharkov, 1900), pp. 0586-0589.
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