



Sunday Bulletin May 8, 2016 *Greek Orthodox Church of the* *Annunciation*

4121 O'Hara Drive Vestal, NY 13850
Phone: (607) 797-0824 Fax: (607) 797-0824
<http://www.annunciationvestal.ny.goarch.org>

Rev. Dr. Michael Bahlatzis, Presiding Priest-Proistamenos

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### **Epistle Reading**

**The reading is from St. John's First Universal Letter 1:1-7**

THAT WHICH WAS from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon and touched with our hands, concerning the word of life - the life was made manifest, and we saw it, and testify to it, and proclaim to you the eternal life which was with the Father and was made manifest to us - that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you may have fellowship with us; and our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. And we are writing this that our joy may be complete. This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light and in him is no darkness at all. If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not live according to the truth; but if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.

### **Gospel Reading John 20:19-31**

On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being shut where the disciples were for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them 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. Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I 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; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained." Now Thomas, one of the twelve, called the Twin, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him: "We have seen the Lord." But he said to them: "Unless I see in His hands the print of the nails, and place my finger in the mark of the nails, and place my hand in His side, I will not believe." Eight days later, His disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. The doors were shut, but Jesus came and stood among them, and said: "Peace be with you." Then He said to Thomas, "Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side; do not be faithless, but believing." Thomas answered Him, "My Lord and my God!" Jesus said to Him: "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe." Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the 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.

*Message from Fr. Michael...*

Dearly Beloved Faithful in the Lord:

Happy Mother's Day to all mothers, grandmothers, aunts, godmothers, and all women have provided guidance to our youth!

Christos Anesti! Meci Hakum! Christos Imviat! Christos Vaskrese! Christ is risen! Ha kakum! Alithos Anesti! Voistene Vaskrese! Adverat Imviat! Truly He is risen! The Sunday of Thomas is also known as Antepascha. Today, the feast of Pascha draws to a close. However, we will continue to sing joyous paschal hymns until the feast of our Lord's Holy Ascension. This past week which followed Pascha was known as "Bright Week," which was derived from the Latin "Dominica in Albis." for in ancient years the newly baptized wore white robes from the day of their baptism, from Holy Saturday until the Sunday of Antepascha. Today we commemorate the incident which occurred eight days after Christ's first appearance to His disciples. Thomas was not present at that event. He refused to believe, Christ appeared to all of the disciples. The Lord said to Thomas, "reach here with thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach here with thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and do not be faithless, but believing" (John 20:27). Let no one be turned away from the Paschal feast. Christ died for us and now is risen in triumphant glory. For those who fasted and those who did not, the darkness has past and God's glory now shines!

The Lord does not force us to believe in Him. Instead, He invites all to follow Him. Many follow Him freely. The Lord respects the freedom of will with which we were created. Unfortunately, many continue to reject Him. Unbelievers will continue to formulate plans to contradict the Lord's teachings. Scholars and some scientists may run the words of our Lord through their man-made computers in vain attempts to prove that those words are not authentic. Conventions will organize in an attempt to refute Christ and challenge the Lord's teachings. The unbelievers, will continue to hear the voice of Thomas crying, "My Lord and my God."

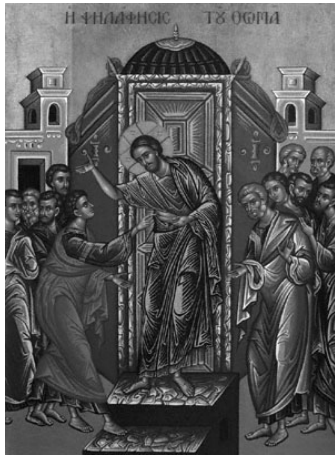
Thomas' initial disbelief when he stated, "unless I see I will not believe" is motivated by faithlessness. We must possess an attitude of faithfulness. How could schools of higher learning function with an attitude of faithlessness? How could teachers or professors prove to their students that Napoleon, Socrates, Plato, Eisenhower, and Lincoln actually lived? We live and are moved by the confidence that others have in us and the confidence we have in them. Ten fellow apostles of Thomas, whom he had known for at least three years, assured him that they had seen the Lord. Their testimony was true. There was a general consensus amongst them. There was an agreement amongst them as to what they witnessed. These men were quite rational. However, Thomas refused to believe without seeing. Many people today repeat the words of Thomas, especially those who would destroy the major doctrines of the Christian faith.

If people are going to take this attitude of "I won't believe it unless I see it," one would think that they would at least bother to investigate more carefully. Let us not be as a *doubting Thomas*. He began to comment upon the "writings" of Socrates, noting that Christ wrote nothing. At a hotel in New York City a person was complaining about business. Someone said, "Don't worry; the rich will die just as we will, and their wealth won't do them any good in the future life." For truly they can not take such wealth with them. On the Sunday of Thomas, we hear how our Lord has concern even for one soul in that He condescends to the doubting Thomas, permitting him to see and touch Him, thus verifying the truth of the resurrection. "Be not faithless," He says, "but believing."

St. John Chrysostom wrote "In beholding the infidelity of the disciples, we see and understand the great love of our Lord, who lowered Himself to the test of a faithless disciple." When Thomas saw the Lord, he instantly believed, crying out, "My Lord and my God!" The reply of our Lord was intended for each of us: "Blessed are they who have not seen, and yet have believed" (John 20:29). "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved" (Acts 16:31). May we transcend to great spiritual heights through our belief in our risen Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. God has given me a wonderful spiritual flock, you, my beloved brothers and sisters. Thank you for attending church today and thank you for having attended the Holy Week services! May God bless you for this!

Believing in Him, I remain in His service, prayerfully,  
Your fervent supplicant,

+Fr. Michael



## Thomas Sunday

Though the doors were shut at the dwelling where the disciples were gathered for fear of the Jews on the evening of the Sunday after the Passover, our Saviour wondrously entered and stood in their midst, and greeted them with His customary words, "Peace be unto you." Then He showed unto them His hands and feet and side; furthermore, in their presence, He took some fish and a honeycomb and ate before them, and thus assured them of His bodily

Resurrection. But Thomas, who was not then present with the others, did not believe their testimony concerning Christ's Resurrection, but said in a decisive manner, "Except I shall see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into His side, I will not believe." Wherefore after eight days, that is, on this day, when the disciples were again gathered together and Thomas was with them, the Lord Jesus came while the doors were shut, as He did formerly. Standing in their midst, He said, "Peace be unto you"; then He said to Thomas, "Bring hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and bring hither thy hand, and thrust it into My side: and be not unbelieving, but believing."

And Thomas, beholding and examining carefully the hands and side of the Master, cried out with faith, "My Lord and my God." Thus he clearly proclaimed the two natures - human and divine - of the God-man (Luke 24:36-49; John 20:19-29). This day is called Antipascha (meaning "in the stead of Pascha," not "in opposition to Pascha") because with this day, the first Sunday after Pascha, the Church consecrates every Sunday of the year to the commemoration of Pascha, that is, the Resurrection.



## John the Apostle, Evangelist, & Theologian

The feast today in honour of the holy Apostle John commemorates the miracle taking place each year in Ephesus, in which a certain dust or powder, called manna, suddenly poured forth from his tomb and was used by the faithful for deliverance from maladies of both soul and body. For an account of his life, see September 26.

**FATHER MICHAEL REQUESTS**...that we, as a faithful community keep the following individuals in our prayers: Michalena (Skiadas) Sukenik, Suzanne Vaishnani, daughter of Ted Simon, Presbytera Magdalena Michalopoulos, Helen Economides, Henry Nussbaum, and Sam Kashou. Please notify Fr. Michael if you have anyone else who should be included for special prayers. May they be under the grace and tender watch of our Lord.

At the conclusion of Divine Services today, we will have the **40 Day Memorial Service** for **Melissa (Anne) Pappas**, beloved wife of **Nick Pappas** and wonderful mother to her children: **Andrea, Nadine, Alicia, and Nicholas**. May her memory be eternal! Our prayers and best wishes go out to the entire Pappas family! May God bless them.

We would like honor our **SUNY Binghamton College Students** today. A few will be graduating this year while others will be with us for at least another year or 2-3 years. We congratulate them for their academic achievements and scholarly work. May God bless them.

A big THANK YOU goes out to goes out to Yannula Alikakos, Athena Anagnostakos, and all the young mothers and ladies who helped with our recent annual Palm Sunday fish dinner! It was wonderful! Thank you also to everyone who supported this event!

### **Grecian Festival News**

Your assistance is needed with preparing Diples on Saturday, May 14<sup>th</sup> at 10 am. Also, the following week on May 17<sup>th</sup> with the Kolouraki. Please see or call Mrs. Rina Koutsaris at (607) 754-1179.

Also, volunteers are again needed this year to assist with the cash registers. Please see Steve Anastos or Pam Yacalis to volunteer. Thank you.

Whether you are an Orthodox Christian, or this is your first visit to an Orthodox Church, we are pleased to have you with us. Although Holy Communion is reserved for baptized and chrismated (confirmed) Orthodox Christians, all are invited to receive the "ANTIDORON" (blessed bread) which is not a sacrament, but is a reminder of the "agape feast" that followed worship in the early Church. After the Divine Liturgy this morning, please join us in the Church Hall for fellowship and refreshments. We hope that you will return often to worship with us, to grow in Christ and in our Orthodox Faith. For any spiritual, religious, or sacramental matters, please contact Fr. Michael (607) 795-1474. For any building, facility or church property issues, please contact Parish Council President Steve Anastos, (607) 296-9799. Deadline for suggestions for the bulletin is 12:00 noon on Thursday.