



GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF AUSTRALIA

PARISH OF THE ANNUNCIATION OF OUR LADY, “EVANGELISMOS”

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SUNDAY 26 APRIL 2020 – SUNDAY OF THOMAS

Today we honour the youngest of the Apostles of Christ, St Thomas. Although he first doubted that Christ was truly resurrected from the dead, he did believe and became one of our Lord's most devoted Apostles. He was martyred in India where he was run through with a lance. He did his missionary work among the Parthians and mostly in India.

EPISTLE: The Reading is from the Acts of the Apostles [5:12-20]
And through the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were done among the people. 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."

EXPLANATION: Life in the infant Church is characterized by unity, the power of God, and persecution. The Apostles carried out many miracles amongst the people with the power of God. Although the people saw these miracles and they did not have the courage to join the apostles for fear of persecution by the Jewish leaders. However, many who were of strong faith became Christians and brought their sick out into the streets hoping that even the shadow of St Peter passing by might heal them. **(5:12-16)** The High Priest of the Pharisees and the Sadducees saw that the people were converting to Christianity because of the miraculous deeds and teachings of the Apostles, and filled with indignation, they ordered the arrest and incarceration of the Apostles. But the angel of the Lord opened the prison doors and instructed them to go out into the temple and preach the Word of God. This was done both for the encouragement of the Apostles and for the benefit and instruction of others. However, the senseless Pharisees and Sadducees did not even question this miraculous event. They knew that the prison doors were locked and guards standing outside the doors as double security, yet did not think to say, "How did these men escape?" Instead they say, **"Did we not strictly command you not to teach in His name."** **(5:28)** See how they fought against God? Even today, men miss the purpose of God's dealings with them because of the hardness of their hearts.

GOSPEL: **The Reading is from the Gospel of St John [20:19-31]** Then, 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 to 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, “Thomas, 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.

EXPLANATION: After His Resurrection, Christ appeared to His disciples on a Sunday evening. The disciples still feared detection and arrest and so the doors were shut. The resurrected Christ was now no longer bound by the limitations of time and space, and so despite the locked doors, **“He came and stood in their midst.”** Similarly, we will also be resurrected with a “spiritual body” after the glorious Resurrection at the Second Coming of Christ. Jesus saw that their hearts were troubled with uncertainty and fear, so He bestowed His peace upon them – a peace which takes away all anxiety and warms the heart with faith and love. **“He shows them both His hands and side”** – scars of victory, trophies to be treasured, marks of glory, to prove that it was really He, that they may have no doubts about His Resurrection and to eliminate conjecture that He was a ghost. **“The disciples therefore rejoiced when they saw it was the Lord.” (20:19-20)** Jesus again bestows His

peace in a different form. That is, they are being given a mission and the gift of peace is the power with which that mission will be carried out. The disciples now share Christ's mission. As the Father sent Christ, so Christ also sends them. **(20:21)** He commissions the disciples to continue His mission on earth, granting them the Holy Spirit and the power to forgive sins. **"Breathed on them"** means that He breathed the breath of eternal life into His disciples, the power of the Spirit, so that they may come to true life, fearless and bold in order to face suffering and persecution in carrying out this mission. He also grants them the authority to forgive sins (Sacrament of Confession) and to appoint others to continue their apostolic mission (Sacrament of Ordination). **(20:22-23)** On the following Sunday Jesus again appeared to His disciples in the locked room, and bestowed His peace upon them and especially upon Thomas who was not present last Sunday and refused to believe that Christ had risen from the dead. Thomas' disbelief is difficult to explain. It shows either perplexity about the miracle or a certain stubbornness of character born from pain and disappointment and not from a hardened heart. **(20:24-26)** Thomas upon Jesus' invitation, does not actually touch Jesus for proof. His magnificent confession, **"My Lord and my God"**, testifies both to the lordship and deity of Christ. **(20:27-28)** Christ does not rebuke Thomas for his need to see, as He offers a blessing to future generations who believe and have faith in the risen Lord without proof, without having seen. **(20:29)** Jesus also showed many other signs of His Resurrection, when he ate and drank with His Apostles during the 40 days after His Resurrection. **(20:30)** However, not all were written in this Gospel. St John made only a small selection of **"convincing proofs"** in his Gospel (that is, signs of Christ's Resurrection) in the hope that the reader might believe that Christ is the Son of God, risen from the dead and that he may have life in His name. **(20:31)**