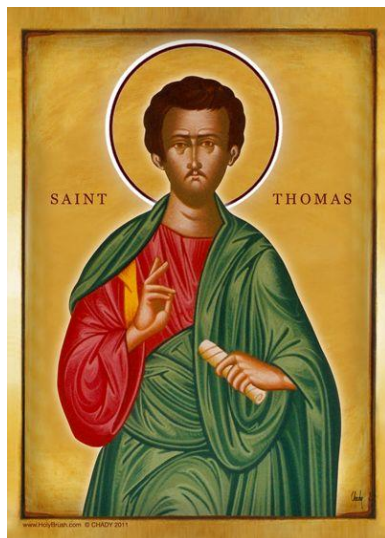


WEEKLY BULLETIN

April 23, 2023 • Vol. 40, No. 15
Saint Thomas Sunday



SAINT ELIA ORTHODOX CHURCH A Parish of the Orthodox Church in America

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His Eminence Alexander, Archbishop of Toledo, Bulgarian Diocese, OCA
Very Rev. Mitred Archpriest Father Don Anthony Freude, Parish Rector
Rev. Protodeacon James M. Gresh, Attached

SAINT ELIA THE PROPHET PARISH

2023 Parish Council

President: Veronica Bilas

V. President: Sandy Graham

Secretary: Subdeacon Aaron Gray

Treasurer: Reader Joshua Wherley

Members: Subdeacon Terrence Bilas,
Bud Graham, Sarah Kostadinova,
COCA Representative: Mary Marcin

Choir Director: Subdeacon Terrence A. Bilas

Assistant Directors: Anastasia Bohush

Deaconisa Heidi Gresh, Reader Michael Luc

Church School: Anastasia Bohush

Sisterhood of St. Juliana:

President: Anastasia Bohush,

V. President: Sandy Graham

Secretary: Katherine Hodge

Treasurer: Mary Magensky

Workers of St. Elizabeth the New Martyr:

Coordinators: Subdeacon Aaron Gray, Veronica Bilas

Scheduled Readers - 2023

Sunday, April 23 Reader Michael Luc

Sunday, April 30 Reader Joshua Wherley

Sunday, May 7 Deaconisa Heidi Gresh

Sunday, May 14 Hours: Subdeacon Terrence Bilas
Epistle: Anastasia Bohush

SCHEDULE OF DIVINE SERVICES

2nd SUNDAY OF PASCHA – Tone 1-

**St. Thomas Sunday. Holy Glorious Greatmartyr
George Saturday, April 22**

5:00 pm Great Vespers and Confessions

Sunday, April 23

9:10 am 3rd and 6th Hours: Reader Michael Luc

9:30 am Divine Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom

Epistle Reader: Reader Michael Luc

Epistle: Acts: 5:12-20

Gospel: John 20:19-31

BREAKING OF THE ARTOS

3RD SUNDAY OF PASCHA – Tone 2

**Holy Myrrhbearing Women Holy Apostle James,
the brother of Saint John the Theologian**

Saturday, April 29

5:00 pm Great Vespers and Confessions

Sunday, April 30

9:10 am 3rd and 6th Hours: Reader Joshua Wherley

9:30 am Divine Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom

Epistle Reader: Reader Joshua Wherley

Epistle: Acts: 6:1-7

Gospel: Mark 15:43-16:8

Al Masseh Qam! Hristos a Inviat! Krishti U Ngjail!

Christus ist auferstanden! Cristo e' risorto!

Hristos vaskrse! Krisztus feltamadt!

Le Christ est ressucite! Christus resurrexit!

CHRIST IS RISEN! INDEED, HE IS RISEN

BREAKING OF THE ARTOS

Following the Midnight Service of Pascha, the **ARTOS** was blessed. Artos is a Paschal Bread and bears on it the Icon of the Resurrection.

In the Old Covenant the Jews commemorated the Passover from bondage in Egypt by sacrificing a Passover Lamb.

Christ is our Passover Who has freed us from the bondage of sin and death. The Artos Bread is offered and blessed on Holy Pascha and symbolizes the Angelic Bread, the Bread of Eternal Life – our Lord Jesus Christ.

Why all this? According to one version, this custom dates back to the apostolic tradition: when the disciples of Christ gathered after His Resurrection for a meal, according to legend, they put part of the bread on the table for Him, as they always did during His earthly life.

The Fathers of the Church carried on this tradition, and on the feast of feasts, on Pascha, to remind us that Jesus is Himself the True Bread of Life and is always invisibly present with His Church, *even to the end of the age!* (as He promised!)

The Artos today symbolizes the invisible presence of Jesus Christ with us. But this is the symbol of eternal life: ***I am the bread of life; he who comes to me will not hunger*** (John 6:35), as the Savior said of himself.

We will break the Bread and partake of it today. the eighth day of Pascha, St. Thomas Sunday.

TODAY'S SCRIPTURE READINGS

SAINT THOMAS SUNDAY

Epistle: Acts 5:12-20

Continuing Power in the Church

¹² 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. ¹³ Yet none of the rest dared join them, but the people esteemed them highly. ¹⁴ And believers were increasingly added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women, ¹⁵ 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. ¹⁶ 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.

Imprisoned Apostles Freed

¹⁷ 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 ¹⁸ indignation, and laid their hands on the apostles and put them in the common prison. ¹⁹ But at night an angel of the Lord opened the prison doors and brought them out, and said, ²⁰ **"Go, stand in the temple and speak to the people all the words of this life."**

Gospel: John 20:19-31

19 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."

20 When He had said this, He showed them His hands and His side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord.

21 So Jesus said to them again, "Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you."

22 And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit.

23 If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained."

24 Now Thomas, called the Twin, one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came.

25 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."

26 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!"

27 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."

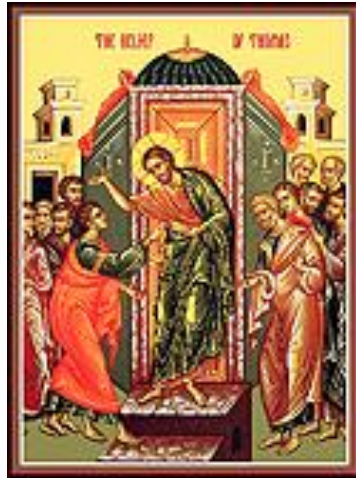
28 And Thomas answered and said to Him, "My Lord and my God!"

29 Jesus said to him, "Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

30 And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book.

31 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.

Antipascha: Saint Thomas Sunday



Some icons depicting this event are inscribed “The Doubting Thomas.” This is incorrect. In Greek, the inscription reads, “The Touching of Thomas.” The Slavonic inscription is, “The Belief of Thomas.” When Saint Thomas touched the Life-giving side of the Lord, he no longer had any doubts.

This day is also known as “Antipascha.” This does not mean “opposed to Pascha,” but “in place of Pascha.” Beginning with this first Sunday after Pascha, the Church dedicates every Sunday of the year to the Lord’s Resurrection. Sunday is called “Resurrection” in Russian, and “the Lord’s Day” in Greek.

Greatmartyr, Victory-bearer, and Wonderworker George



The Holy Great Martyr George the Victory-Bearer was a native of Cappadocia (a district in Asia Minor), and he grew up in a deeply believing Christian family. His father was martyred for Christ when George was still a child. His mother, owning lands in Palestine, moved there with her son and raised him in strict piety.

When he became a man, Saint George entered into the service of the Roman army. He was handsome, brave and valiant in battle, and he came to the notice of the emperor Diocletian (284-305) and joined the imperial guard with the rank of military commander.

The pagan emperor, who did much for the restoration of Roman might, was clearly concerned with the danger presented to pagan civilization by the triumph of the Crucified Savior and intensified his persecution against the Christians in the final years of his reign. Following the advice of the Senate at Nicomedia, Diocletian gave all his governors full freedom in

their court proceedings against Christians, and he promised them his full support.

Saint George, when he heard the decision of the emperor, distributed all his wealth to the poor, freed his servants, and then appeared in the Senate. The brave soldier of Christ spoke out openly against the emperor's designs. He confessed himself a Christian and appealed to all to acknowledge Christ: "I am a servant of Christ, my God, and trusting in Him, I have come among you voluntarily, to bear witness concerning the Truth." "What is Truth?" one of the dignitaries asked, echoing the question of Pontius Pilate. The saint replied, "Christ Himself, whom you persecuted, is Truth."

Stunned by the bold speech of the valiant warrior, the emperor, who had loved and promoted George, attempted to persuade him not to throw away his youth and glory and honors, but rather to offer sacrifice to the gods as was the Roman custom. The confessor replied, "Nothing in this inconstant life can weaken my resolve to serve God."

Then by order of the enraged emperor the armed guards began to push Saint George out of the assembly hall with their spears, and they then led him off to prison. But the deadly steel became soft and it bent, just as the spears touched the saint's body, and it caused him no harm. In prison they put the martyr's feet in stocks and placed a heavy stone on his chest.

The next day at the interrogation, powerless but firm of spirit, Saint George again answered the emperor, "You will grow tired of tormenting me sooner than I will tire of being tormented by you." Then the Diocletian gave orders to subject Saint George to some very intense tortures. They tied the Great Martyr to a wheel, beneath which were boards pierced with sharp pieces of iron. As the wheel turned, the sharp edges slashed the saint's naked body.

At first the sufferer loudly cried out to the Lord, but soon he quieted down, and did not utter even a single groan. Diocletian decided that the tortured one was already dead, and he gave orders to remove the battered body from the wheel, and then went to a pagan temple to offer thanks.

At this very moment it got dark, thunder boomed, and a voice was heard: "Fear not, George, for I am with you." Then a wondrous light shone, and at the wheel an angel of the Lord appeared in the form of a radiant youth. He placed his hand upon the martyr, saying to him, "Rejoice!" Saint George stood up healed.

When the soldiers led him to the pagan temple where the emperor was, the emperor could not believe his own eyes and he thought that he saw before him some other man or even a ghost. In confusion and in terror the pagans looked Saint George over carefully, and they became convinced that a miracle had occurred. Many then came to believe in the Life-Creating God of the Christians.

Two illustrious officials, Saints Anatolius and Protoleon, who were secretly Christians, openly confessed Christ. Immediately, without a trial, they were beheaded with the sword by order of the emperor. Also present in the pagan temple was Empress Alexandra, the wife of Diocletian, and she also knew the truth. She was on the point of glorifying Christ, but one of the servants of the emperor took her and led her off to the palace. The emperor became even more furious. He had not lost all hope of influencing Saint George, so he gave him over to new and fierce torments. After throwing him into a deep pit, they covered it with lime. Three days later they dug him out but found him cheerful and unharmed. They shod the saint in iron sandals with red-hot nails, and then drove him back to the prison with whips. In the morning, they led him back to the interrogation, cheerful and with healed feet, and the emperor asked if he liked his shoes. The saint said that the sandals had been just his size. Then they beat him with ox thongs until pieces of his flesh came off and his blood soaked the ground, but the brave sufferer, strengthened by the power of God, remained unyielding.

The emperor concluded that the saint was being helped by magic, so he summoned the sorcerer Athanasius to deprive the saint of his miraculous powers, or else poison him. The sorcerer gave Saint George two goblets containing drugs. One of them would have quieted him, and the other would kill him. The

drugs had no effect, and the saint continued to denounce the pagan superstitions and glorify God as before.

When the emperor asked what sort of power was helping him, Saint George said, “Do not imagine that it is any human learning which keeps me from being harmed by these torments. I am saved only by calling upon Christ and His Power.

Whoever believes in Him has no regard for tortures and is able to do the things that Christ did” (John 14:12). Diocletian asked what sort of things Christ had done. The Martyr replied, “He gave sight to the blind, cleansed the lepers, healed the lame, gave hearing to the deaf, cast out demons, and raised the dead.” Knowing that they had never been able to resurrect the dead through sorcery, nor by any of the gods known to him, and wanting to test the saint, the emperor commanded him to raise up a dead person before his eyes. The saint retorted, “You wish to tempt me, but my God will work this sign for the salvation of the people who shall see the power of Christ.”

When they led Saint George down to the graveyard, he cried out, “O Lord! Show to those here present, that You are the only God in all the world. Let them know You as the Almighty Lord.” Then the earth quaked, a grave opened, the dead one emerged from it alive. Having seen with their own eyes the Power of Christ, the people wept and glorified the true God. The sorcerer Athanasius, falling at the feet of Saint George, confessed Christ as the All-Powerful God and asked forgiveness for his sins, committed in ignorance. The obdurate emperor in his impiety thought otherwise. In a rage, he commanded both Athanasius and the man raised from the dead to be beheaded, and he had Saint George again locked up in prison.

The people, weighed down with their infirmities, began to visit the prison and they there received healing and help from the saint. A certain farmer named Glycerius, whose ox had collapsed, also visited him. The saint consoled him and assured him that God would restore his ox to life. When he saw the ox alive, the farmer began to glorify the God of the Christians throughout all the city. By order of the emperor, Saint Glycerius was arrested and beheaded.

The exploits and the miracles of the Great Martyr George had increased the number of the Christians; therefore Diocletian made a final attempt to compel the saint to offer sacrifice to the idols. They set up a court at the pagan temple of Apollo. On the final night the holy martyr prayed fervently, and as he slept, he saw the Lord, Who raised him up with His hand, and embraced him. The Savior placed a crown on Saint George's head and said, "Fear not, but have courage, and you will soon come to Me and receive what has been prepared for you."

In the morning, the emperor offered to make Saint George his co-administrator, second only to himself. The holy martyr with a feigned willingness answered, "Caesar, you should have shown me this mercy from the very beginning, instead of torturing me. Let us go now to the temple and see the gods you worship."

Diocletian believed that the martyr was accepting his offer, and he followed him to the pagan temple with his retinue and all the people. Everyone was certain that Saint George would offer sacrifice to the gods. The saint went up to the idol, made the Sign of the Cross and addressed it as if it were alive: "Are you the one who wants to receive from me sacrifice befitting God?" The demon inhabiting the idol cried out, "I am not a god and none of those like me is a god, either. The only God is He Whom you preach. We are fallen angels, and we deceive people because we are jealous."

Saint George cried out, "How dare you remain here, when I, the servant of the true God, have entered?" Then noises and wailing were heard from the idols, and they fell to the ground and were shattered.

There was general confusion. In a frenzy, pagan priests and many of the crowd seized the holy martyr, tied him up, and began to beat him. They also called for his immediate execution.

The holy empress Alexandra tried to reach him. Pushing her way through the crowd, she cried out, "O God of George, help me, for You Alone are All-Powerful." At the feet of the Great Martyr the holy empress confessed Christ, Who had humiliated the idols and those who worshipped them.

Diocletian immediately pronounced the death sentence on the Great Martyr George and the holy Empress Alexandra, who followed Saint George to execution without resisting. Along the way she felt faint and slumped against a wall. There she surrendered her soul to God.

Saint George gave thanks to God and prayed that he would also end his life in a worthy manner. At the place of execution, the saint prayed that the Lord would forgive the torturers who acted in ignorance, and that He would lead them to the knowledge of Truth. Calmly and bravely, the holy Great Martyr George bent his neck beneath the sword, receiving the crown of martyrdom on April 23, 303.

The pagan era was coming to an end, and Christianity was about to triumph. Within ten years, Saint Constantine (May 21) would issue the Edict of Milan, granting religious freedom to Christians.

Of the many miracles worked by the holy Great Martyr George, the most famous are depicted in iconography. In the saint's native city of Beirut were many idol-worshippers. Outside the city, near Mount Lebanon, was a large lake, inhabited by an enormous dragon-like serpent. Coming out of the lake, it devoured people, and there was nothing anyone could do, since the breath from its nostrils poisoned the very air.

On the advice of the demons inhabiting the idols, the local ruler came to a decision. Each day the people would draw lots to feed their own children to the serpent, and he promised to sacrifice his only daughter when his turn came. That time did come, and the ruler dressed her in her finest attire, then sent her off to the lake. The girl wept bitterly, awaiting her death. Unexpectedly for her, Saint George rode up on his horse with spear in hand. The girl implored him not to leave her, lest she perish.

The saint signed himself with the Sign of the Cross. He rushed at the serpent saying, "In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." Saint George pierced the throat of the serpent with his spear and trampled it with his horse. Then he told the girl to bind the serpent with her sash, and lead it into the city like a dog on a leash.

The people fled in terror, but the saint halted them with the words: “Don’t be afraid, but trust in the Lord Jesus Christ and believe in Him, since it is He Who sent me to save you.” Then the saint killed the serpent with a sword, and the people burned it outside the city. Twenty-five thousand men, not counting women and children, were then baptized. Later, a church was built and dedicated to the Most Holy Theotokos and the Great Martyr George.

Saint George went on to become a talented officer and to amaze the world by his military exploits. He died before he was thirty years old. He is known as Victory Bearer, not only for his military achievements, but for successfully enduring martyrdom. As we know, the martyrs are commemorated in the dismissal at the end of Church services as “the holy, right victorious martyr....”

PARISH COUNCIL MEETING
Tuesday, April 25 at 7:00 pm

OUR STEWARDHIP – April 16, 2023
Holy Pascha

| | |
|--------------------------------|----------------------|
| Candles: | \$ 92.00 |
| Flower Fund: | 125.00 |
| <u>Sunday Offering:</u> | <u>750.00</u> |
| TOTAL: | \$967.00 |

Tithely Donations: \$296.20

TOTAL OFFERINGS: \$1,263.20

**REMEMBERING THOSE SERVING IN THE
ARMED FORCES**

Subdeacon Anthony Freude, son of Fr Don and
Popadia Donna Freude

Egor Cravcenco, son of Serghei and Ludmila
Cravcenco

REMEMBERING OUR SICK AND SHUTINS

Archbishop Benjamin

Archbishop Nathaniel

Joseph Boyle (brother of Kathy Gray)

Phyllis (sister of Rose Marie Vronick)

Florence Lambo

Martin Vronick

Nicoletta (Nikki) Bober

Pani Dolores Zuder

Matushka Myra Kovalak

Mitered Archpriest Daniel Kovalak

Matushka Christine Zebren

Matushka Laryssa Hutnyan

Subdeacon Martin Paluch

Barbara (sister of Veronica Bilas)

Ted Theodore

Sarah Costadinova

Melissa Trace

Gerald Gray (father of Subdeacon Aaron Gray)

MEMORY ETERNAL

In blessed repose grant eternal rest, O Lord, to Thy
handmaid **Rose Marie Vronick** and make her
Memory Eternal. Vecnaja Pamjat!

