

THOMAS SUNDAY

The Byzantine Catholic Church observes the Sunday of Saint Thomas one week following the celebration of the Sunday of Holy Pascha. The day commemorates the appearance of Christ to His disciples on the evening of the Sunday following Passover. It also commemorates the appearance of the Lord to His disciples eight days later when Thomas was present and proclaimed "My Lord and my God" upon seeing the hands and side of Christ.

The events commemorated on the Sunday of Saint Thomas are recorded in the Gospel of Saint John 20:19-29. Following the crucifixion and burial of Christ, the disciples were gathered in a room with the doors closed and locked for fear of the Jews. On the evening of the Sunday after Passover, Jesus Christ entered the room and stood in their midst, greeting them with the words, "Peace be with you." (v. 19) He showed the disciples his hands, feet, and side. (v. 20)

Thomas was not present with the disciples when Jesus appeared, and he did not accept the testimony of the other disciples concerning Christ's Resurrection. He stated, "Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe." (vs. 24-25)

Eight days later, the disciples were gathered together again with Thomas present, and the Lord appeared in the same manner. Standing in their midst he said, "Peace be with you." He then spoke directly to Thomas and said, "Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe." (vs. 26-27) Thomas answered, "My Lord and my God!" Jesus replied by saying, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe." (v. 29)

The icon of the Sunday of Thomas depicts Christ standing in the midst of the disciples. He has appeared to the eleven in the upper room, and he is inviting Thomas to come and examine his hands and his side. Thomas is reaching out to touch the side of Jesus. He is also looking to Jesus in a manner that indicates his faith and the proclamation recorded in Scripture.

The Sunday of Saint Thomas is celebrated with the Divine Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom. On this Sunday and throughout the Paschal period until the Apodosis or leave-taking of Pascha, the day before the Feast of the Ascension, the services begin with the chanting of the troparion of Pascha, "Christ is risen..."