

Thomas Sunday

In the East, we call the second Pascal Sunday (the seventh day after Easter) Thomas Sunday. Little is recorded of St. Thomas the Apostle. Thomas was probably born in Galilee but there is no indication of his occupation. He was a Jew, but there is no account of how he became an apostle. Thanks to the fourth Gospel, his personality is clearer to us than some of the other twelve. It is in the Gospel of John that he plays a particularly distinctive part. Thomas is often associated with doubting, but Thomas was courageous, willing to stand by Jesus in dangerous times. He sought the truth, like an inquisitive child he constantly asked questions. His wonderful expression, "My Lord and my God" is the clearest declaration of Jesus' divinity in Holy Scripture.

Thomas, Loyal Follower

In Chapter 11 of John's Gospel Jesus receives news that Lazarus is sick. He says to his disciples, "Let us go to Judea again." The disciples respond to Jesus, "Rabbi, the Jews were just now trying to stone you and are you going there again ...?" Then Jesus told them plainly, "Lazarus is dead. For your sakes I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him. Thomas who was called the Twin said to his fellow disciples, "Let us also go so that we may die with him." John 11:16. When the worried disciples wanted to keep Jesus from going for fear he would be stoned, Thomas, in a moment of bravery, rallied the others to stay by their master.

Thomas, Inquisitive Student

Later, in John 14:1-5, it was Thomas who raised an objection prior to the Last Supper: As Jesus said, "Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. In my Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also. And you know the way where I am going."

Thomas said to Him, "Lord, we do not know where You are going, how do we know the way?" Thomas misunderstands Jesus' reference to his death and resurrection. Thomas' question provides Jesus an opportunity to teach one of the most profound and difficult truths of His ministry. Jesus said to Thomas (John 14:6), "I am the way and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me."

Thomas, Doubting Apostle

Lastly, St. Thomas is remembered for being absent from the Upper Room the first time Jesus appeared to the disciples after his Resurrection.

Jesus was crucified and died on Good Friday and his body was placed into the tomb on Friday night. Saturday was the Sabbath and according to Jewish Law manual labor was not allowed and He could not be anointed on Saturday. The apostles had gone into hiding because they feared the Jews. On Sunday morning, Mary Magdalen went to the tomb of Jesus and found it empty. She returned to tell the apostles. Peter and John ran to the tomb and finding the tomb empty they return home. Mary remained at the tomb weeping and Jesus appeared to her. She did not recognize him until he spoke her name. He told her to go and tell the disciples that He had risen and she went and told the disciples all he had said.

That evening the doors were shut at the dwelling where the disciples were gathered for fear of the Jews. It was evening of Sunday after the Passover. Jesus entered the locked room and stood in their midst. He greeted him, "Peace be to you." He showed them His hands and feet and side; in their presence, He took some fish and a honeycomb and ate before them to assure them of his bodily resurrection. Thomas, who was not present with the others, did not believe them about Christ's Resurrection. "Unless I see in his hands the print of the nails and thrust my hand into His side."

After eight days, the disciples were again gathered together and Thomas was with them. Jesus came while the doors were locked. Standing in their midst, He said, "Peace be unto you." He said to Thomas, "Bring forth your finger and behold my hands; bring forth your hand, and thrust it into my side; and be not be unbelieving but believing."

Thomas seeing the hands and the side of the Master, cried out, "My Lord and my God!" Thomas proclaimed the two natures – human and divine – (Luke 24:36-49; John 20:19-10:29).

In the Gospel Reading, Thomas moves from doubt to total trust and belief in God. This reading calls us to place our total trust in God.

Icons of the meeting between Jesus and Thomas after the Resurrection are called "The Touching of Thomas" or "The Belief of Thomas."



Thomas Sunday Kontakion

"With his probing right hand, Thomas searched your life-giving side, O Christ our God. When you entered, although the doors were locked, he cried out to you with the other apostles: You are my Lord and my God."

Thomas Spreads the Gospel

Tradition says that after Pentecost Thomas was sent to evangelize the Parthians, the Medes, and Persians. He ultimately reached India carrying the faith to the Malabar coast where the population calls themselves Christians of St. Thomas. St. Thomas was martyred at a place called Calamine.