

On the Path of Faith (Thomas' Sunday) (Metropolitan Meletios of Nikopolis)

[Ξένες γλώσσες / In English](#)



1. How we react

Every time we have any feast in our Church, we celebrate the mystery of our salvation.

The purpose of the feast is to glorify God for His boundless mercy, His goodness and His interest in us.

We see this love of His from a different point of view at every feast. But all the feasts are aimed at opening our minds and hearts so that we can understand the great mystery of veneration and of our salvation.

Today the event which we're celebrating and observing is something that makes us people really angry and annoyed. Why?

Because usually we don't feel like showing understanding (not to say care, goodness and kindness, but not even understanding) when we hear people objecting to our opinions, our will or our views.



The touch of Thomas. Ivory from Magdeburg, Germany, 10th Century

Today we have the feast of the holy, glorious and all-praised apostle Thomas. After the Resurrection, Thomas behaved in a manner which enraged the other apostles, to such an extent that they said to him:

‘For goodness’ sake. You’re unbearable. Leave us alone!’

For seven or eight days they’d been telling him: ‘We’ve seen Christ’.

‘I don’t believe you’.

‘Would we lie to you?’

‘I don’t believe you’.

‘We saw that he’d risen’.

‘Unless I put my finger there to see his wounds for myself, I won’t believe it. Did you see him properly? Were you paying attention? Is it him? Are you telling the truth or making it up?’

It’s a good thing that Peter and the other apostles were reasonable people and

simply felt sorry about his attitude. Because if they'd been like us they'd no doubt have taken their feelings out on him.

2. How Christ arranges things for us

Christ showed great mercy and love to Thomas. But he does so to us, too, when we find ourselves in the same position as that apostle. Despite the fact that we don't behave towards others with kindness, understanding and affection in similar circumstances.

Let's look at the hymns for the feast to see how the Church, that is we Orthodox Christians, in worshipping Christ, thanks Him and glorifies Him for His attitude and position towards us when we behave like the apostle.

Did Thomas not believe? He didn't! We grind our teeth when we think about the Person he didn't believe in. How many miracles had he seen? How much had he heard? Yet he still didn't believe.

But the hymn tells us: 'Don't be upset. Thomas' unbelief was a good thing. It turned out for the best. Good can come even out of bad things'. We just need a sound mind, the right outlook and eyes open to see properly.

But what good came from 'disbelief'?

What came was 'confident faith'. A faith that was now tangible and which people could feel more easily. They could rely on it more fully and more firmly.

This is why another hymn, while not speaking ill of Thomas, says: 'What good disbelief for Thomas!' What riches were produced by the outlook he expressed at that time. What benefits have accrued to us because of it. What a blessing it was for us that Thomas did what he did. We should always be grateful to Christ that He had Thomas with Him and that he involved him in these matters, so that we would have double the benefit.

Why is it such a great blessing?

3. Understanding diversity

As people, we're of different heights, shapes, eyes, and facial characteristics. By the same token, we have different ways of looking at things, a different mental makeup. Nobody's outlook and makeup is the best and nobody else's is the worst.

We're all made by God and have our own identity, in which we have to walk the

path leading to Him, though each slightly differently from the others. We can't change our nature nor can we doubt the gifts, greater or lesser, that the good Lord, our God and Creator has given to us.

Thomas said: 'Unless I see, I won't believe'. He wouldn't listen to words; he wanted to see with his own eyes. He told the other apostles that he wanted to see the wounds in His hands, His feet and His side. If this person was somebody else, he wouldn't have those wounds. Thomas wanted to see then, not because he was ill-disposed, but because he wanted the truth. Without the truth, where would he turn? Should we put our faith in things just like that?

Eight days went by and the other apostles tried on each one of them to persuade Thomas, to bring him round. But to no avail.

What does this teach us?

We've got an acquaintance who doesn't want to listen. That doesn't mean that he or she needs a good punching. They need analysis, guidance and help.

What help?

Understanding, as well as constant reminders that they should be actively seeking the truth. They should seek the truth without any preconceived ideas. They shouldn't just write off the truth. It's not right for people to be indifferent to the question 'What is Christ?'

If people say: 'I'm not interested, I'm not looking, leave me alone!', obviously they don't have much of a brain. Or if they have they're not using it very well. If a child doesn't use its brain, we don't beat it, we advise it, we guide it, and that's what we should do with grown-ups as well. We don't raise our hands to them but try to talk sense into them and guide them. And we pray that God will intervene.

4. My Lord and my God

Obviously, the other apostles prayed for Thomas.

One day, Christ returned. He stood among them and said to Thomas: 'Come on, bring your finger here and put it in my side'.

Thomas stretched out his hand. He saw the wounds to Christ's body, as we shall all see them, as will all those who are unwilling to investigate and believe, on the day of the Second Coming.

Friends and foes, believers and non-believers, angels and demons, we'll all see the wounds on Christ's body on the day of the Second Coming. And then we'll understand!

Thomas saw and began to **theologize**. What does 'theologize' mean? He immediately plumbed the depths of faith and said: 'My Lord and my God'. In other words, the Creator of the world. That's Who our God is. He Himself, Who was with us and taught us, and we thought a great deal less of Him than we should have done.

When we start our quest for Christ, we initially have little idea about what the Gospel says. We accept it as a good book with beautiful words.

But this isn't really very much.

The Gospel isn't a manual of morals. It contains 'words of eternal life'. This is why we should be looking to find in it the meaning of the death of Christ and His resurrection. What's the significance of the sacrament of the Divine Eucharist, which was handed down to us at the Last Supper? What's the significance of His spotless Body and His precious Blood? Because His Body and Blood, which we take as communion, give us 'eternal life'. This is what the priest says when he gives communion: 'The servant of God receives the Body and Blood of our Lord, God and Saviour, Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins and life everlasting'.

In this saving quest we have to show not only our good intentions, but we also have to labour generously and with zeal and with a sense of responsibility- particularly against ourselves- because it concerns the matter of eternal life. The most important question for us is: 'How shall I defeat death? How shall I live for ever? How shall I be with God forever? Where will I end up eternally? Will I go to paradise or somewhere else?' Where else? Better not to say where. It's so terrible.

Another hymn tells us that, because Thomas' intentions were good and he was genuinely seeking the truth, the 'scepticism' which characterized him was transformed into 'persuasion'.

'Persuasion' here doesn't mean that he was easily convinced and therefore to be fooled and led by the nose by any charlatan, but that he acquired good faith, a good outlook. He entered a better, more blessed state than the one he'd been in before.

5. I came to be cut according to your cloth

Every feast is a feast of God's loving-kindness. Of His goodness. A feast of His love and affection towards us. Of His concern for our salvation. For our good on this earth and for all eternity.

When Christ stood before Thomas, he said: 'Do what you like, Thomas. You can see that you're not bound by My standards and My intentions. But I'm doing you a favour. Let's go with what you want, Thomas. I came for you. I didn't come for myself. I came to be cut according to your cloth, in order to help you all'.

This is the great and boundless humility of the God of Glory. He came and 'was cut' according to our own cloth, so that He could take us by the hand and lead us to our salvation. So, 'feel wherever you want to, Thomas', put your hand in the wounds if you want to. Investigate as much as you want. But after that, know and understand.

This is what Christ asks of us. This is why today's feast has been adopted by the Church. It's so great and beautiful and it's right after Easter.

In order to say to us: 'Seek. Don't stand by a position you took once upon a time. Don't say "That's the way I am, I won't change"'.

Every day, people have to change for the better. Just as they develop bodily, over time, so, in the same way, or even quicker, even more so, that have to mature spiritually. Even if this is every day, if they have to change their attitude for the better. Their attitude that'll lead them towards something better.

How do we look after and direct our health?

How do we manage and direct our finances?

How do we deal with all the issues in our lives?

We take care that they'll always turn out for our benefit. In the same way, we need to direct our minds, our disposition, our will, our questioning and our decisions towards the holy will of God. To our salvation. To an understanding of God's loving-kindness.

So that we can finally understand the mystery of the Divine Dispensation: that Christ, the God of Glory, came into the world for our sakes, became a human person, was humbled, served us and opened our eyes. And He gave Himself in order to bring us close to Him, with His power, with His grace and loving-kindness.

To bring us into His kingdom!

May this be a reason for us to love Christ all the more. Amen.

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