

April 26, 2020: Second Sunday after Easter (Of St. Thomas)

Epistle: The Acts 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."

Gospel: 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.

Following His third-day Resurrection, Christ appeared first to the myrrh-bearing women with the greeting "Hail," and then to His disciples with the greeting "Peace be to you."

Having seen the tragic ending of their Master's life, the Apostles were afraid for their own lives. They needed to have their inner peace restored because their mandate (which they would receive 40 days later) to evangelize the world was a difficult one. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit (who would descend upon them 50 days later), they were supposed to continue the work begun by their Master.

Having established the Church (spiritually, theologically and dogmatically speaking) on the Cross, which the Lord turned into a sacrificial Altar, now He prepares/equips His disciple to continue the work of teaching, sanctifying and leading the new chosen people (Christians) to salvation.

While He was with them, Christ used to forgive the sins of the people ("your sins are forgiven, go in peace"). Now, the disciples receive this great gift: ***If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.*** These words constitute the moment when the risen Lord and Savior Jesus Christ instituted the Sacrament of Confession, giving His disciples (and their properly ordained successors) the same authority/power to forgive sins and, therefore, to restore the spiritual and physical wellbeing of the people. This mandate has been carried out by the clergy (bishops and priests) for over two thousand years and will continue until Christ shall come again.

May the risen Lord give us also His peace and forgiveness of our sins!

Fr. George Bazgan

SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT

Due to the coronavirus pandemic and, in accordance with the measures taken by our Hierarchs, for the time being, the following changes will go into effect:

- 1. The Divine Liturgy is to be attended only by the clergy, the chanter and those who help with the church service.**
- 2. Our Sunday fellowships are being suspended until further notice.**
- 3. All Sunday School classes are suspended.**
- 4. We ask all of you to observe the recommendations made by the health experts, such as: stay home if you are not feeling well, wash your hands, keep the social distance, etc.**

Don't forget to read our weekly electronic Bulletin, which comes out every Thursday, for other details and updates.

We apologize for the inconvenience and thank you for the understanding!

May God keep all of us safe!

MEMBERSHIP

The Board of Directors extends a warm appeal to all supporters of our parish, asking them **to pay their membership as soon as possible.**

This way we can ensure that we have the necessary funds to fulfill our financial obligations during the Summer months and for the rest of the year as well.

THANK YOU VERY MUCH!

LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR!

During these trying times, we expect some of families (individuals) of our community to experience a higher degree of hardship, in terms of paying the rent, groceries, etc.

In order to help them cope with such difficulties, we are announcing the creation of a Humanitarian Fund, called "LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR."

Fr. George is committing \$500 per month for this cause until the current situation is resolved.

Those who want to contribute, with any amount, please call Mrs. Corina Sasu (780 – 200 – 1171) to make arrangements for payment.

Thank You and God Bless!

A Message for the Season

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

We hope that you are healthy and that the news from your loved ones, from near or far, continues to be good!

We live in trying times in every respect: medical, economic, social, familial and, not in the least, spiritual-religious. I don't think there is anyone who disagrees that these times of concern for us and our families, insecurity, heightened stress and anxiety, will live forever in the memory of this generation and in the history of the whole world.

One thing is clear from all this situation: man is a fragile being.

As you already know, this pandemic also had and continues to have a very negative impact on the places of worship around the world. Religious services continue, but the believers who make up the living, militant and dynamic Church cannot be present. I miss every one of you, and sorrow fills my heart when I don't see the children with the candle in their innocent hands and the timid steps approaching the Holy Chalice for communion with Christ.

I urge you, especially now, not to forget those who are in much more difficult situations and to be the good Samaritans, pouring oil and wine, multiplied by prayer, over their wounds and troubles!

In the same context, I urge you not to forget our Church where some of you have married and/or baptized your children. The Church, as you know, does not receive any financial aid from any government or organization. Times are tough, but Church expenses are the same as before. In the words of St. Paul, *"Each one should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not with regret or compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to multiply all grace in you, so that in all things, at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work..."* (II Corinthians 9:7-8). Memberships, donations and pledges can be sent by regular mail, over the internet or directly at the Church.

Don't forget to pray more diligently and thank God for all the gifts and blessings!

For now, the services will be broadcast live via the Internet, and I urge you to take part, so that the church at home may be in communion of prayer and love with the Church, the house of our salvation and comfort.

May the good and merciful God bless you with health, peace, the joy of salvation and a good heart, and may the light of Christ's Resurrection be your true guide along your earthly pilgrimage

CHRIST IS RISEN!

With much love, thanks and gratitude,

Fr. George Bazgan

CHURCH DIRECTORY PICK UP

The 2019 Church Directory is now available for those who participated in this project. If your family came to the Hall for a photography appointment or submitted your own family picture (for \$15), then you will receive a Directory. There is no rush to pick up your family directory.

Under the current unusual conditions, it is better to contact Fr. George (780-473-0029) to make arrangements for pick up.

We appologize for the delay and thank you for your patience and support for this Church project!

Have a happy and safe Spring!

Prayer at the time of pandemic

O Lord, our God, who are rich in mercy and, with Your wise care, guard our lives, listen to our prayer, receive our repentance for our sins, stop this pandemic, as You have ceased the punishment of the people in the days of King David. You who are the Physician of our souls and our bodies, give healing to those contaminated with this disease, hastily raising them from their bed of suffering, to glorify You, the Most Merciful Savior, and protect those who are healthy from any disease.

Bless, strengthen and shield, O Lord, with Your grace, all those who, with love of people and sacrifice, care for the sick at their homes or in hospitals. Remove all disease and suffering from the people and teach us to value life and health as gifts coming from You.

Grant us, O God, Your peace, and fill our hearts with unwavering faith in Your protection, with hope in Your help, and with love towards You and our neighbor.

For Yours is to show mercy and to save us, O our God, and to You we give glory: Father and Son and Holy Spirit, now and forever. Amen!