



SYNAXARIA OF THE PENTECOSTARION

by Nikephoros Kallistos Xanthopoulos

SUNDAY of SAINT THOMAS

On this day, the second Sunday of Pascha, we inaugurate the celebration of the Feast of Christ's Resurrection, which revolves in a weekly cycle, and also the saving confession of the Apostle Thomas when he saw the hands and side of the Risen Lord.

Verses

If the seals of the Virgin's womb and of the grave did not hinder Thee,
How could the seals of the doors hinder Thy might, O Lord?

Synaxarion

It was an ancient custom among the Hebrews to celebrate the inauguration of a solemn observance. For, since time is cyclical and brings round again the same day on which such and such an event occurred, they would commemorate that event annually, lest God's mighty deeds should be forgotten. And so it was that the Hebrews first celebrated the Passover in Galgala, inaugurating the celebration of the crossing of the Red Sea; thereafter, they consecrated the Tabernacle of Witness, and at great expense; after that, they began to celebrate the reign of King David, and the other events—not to mention them individually. Now, since the Resurrection of the Lord is by far the greatest event ever to have occurred in the life of mankind and surpasses all comprehension, we celebrate it anew not only every year, but always and every eight days. The first celebration of the Resurrection is the present Sunday, which could, strictly speaking, be called both the eighth and the first day: the eighth, counting from Pascha; and the first, as being the source of the others; and, again, the eighth, because it is regarded as an Icon of that unending day of the age to come, which will always be both the

first day and one single day, uninterrupted by night. So much for the inauguration of the celebration of Pascha.

The events involving St. Thomas happened as follows. When Christ appeared to the Disciples in the evening of the day on which He arose, Thomas was absent, not yet having assembled with the others, for fear of the Jews. When he returned after a short while and heard about Christ's appearance, he did not just disbelieve the Disciples, when they said that they had seen Him risen, but he did not believe that He had risen at all, even though he was one of the twelve. In His ingenuity and mighty Providence, God, Who showed such concern for this one individual, in order to give even greater assurance of the Resurrection to future generations, after an interval of eight days, came again to the Disciples, so that St. Thomas' desire might be stimulated to the utmost, especially in view of his unbelief, and so as to bestow on all a more precise belief in the Resurrection. With the doors being closed as before, and Thomas being present, Christ entered and, greeting them, as usual, with "Peace be unto you," He turned towards Thomas and said: "Reach hither thy finger, and behold My hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into My side, and be not faithless, but believing. For, since thou didst need to be convinced not only through sight, but, because of the grossness of the flesh, thou didst also mention thy desire to touch (He showed hereby that when Thomas said these things to the Disciples, He was present to hear them), thrust thy hand into My side." This indicates that the wound in His side was wide enough for a hand to go inside it. Thomas investigated carefully, and, receiving faith through touch (for he was permitted to see and do those things, even though Christ's body was incorruptible and completely deified, so that he might be convinced), he cried out: "My Lord and my God." He said the first with reference to Christ's flesh, and the second with reference to His Divinity. And Christ said to him: "Because thou hast seen Me, thou hast believed; blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed."

Thomas was called "Didymos," either because he had a twin brother, or because he was doubtful about the Resurrection; or because the two fingers of his right hand were naturally joined together, that is, the middle finger and the forefinger; one might perhaps say that he was inclined to doubt and to touch the Lord's side with these fingers. Others say, with greater accuracy, that the name "Thomas" means Didymos. This was the second appearance of Christ.

The third appearance took place at the Sea of Tiberias, at the catching of the fish, when He partook of food, which was consumed by the fire of His Divinity, as He Himself knew, giving further confirmation of the Resurrection. The fourth appearance was at Emmaus, and the fifth in Galilee.

He is said to have appeared after the Resurrection eleven times, until the Ascension, performing many wondrous miracles before the Disciples (for these events were not made known to most people). The Evangelists did not record all of these miracles, because it was not possible for the majority of people, who were living in the world, to understand them, given that they were so very preternatural.

By the intercessions of Thine Apostle Thomas, O Christ our God, have mercy on us. Amen.

