

24/04/2023

Archbishop Elpidophoros of America - Feast of Saint George and Saint Thomas



My Beloved Christians of the Cathedral of Saint George,

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in the Risen Christ,

Χριστὸς Ἀνέστη!

Christ is Risen!

Χριστὸς Ἀνέστη!

Today is a great confluence of feasts – those of your Holy Patron, the Holy Great-Martyr and Trophy-Bearer George, and Apostle who was a twin, Thomas, called “Doubting”.

The juxtaposition of Saint George with Saint Thomas today is a rarity, because Saint George’s Day often comes on the Monday of Bright Week, if April 23rd has occurred before Pascha. In this case today, these two Saints – one of the original Twelve Disciples, and the most famous military Great-Martyr in the world – they come together to teach us something that exceeds their individual feasts and accomplishments. Thomas traveled the farthest of the Apostles, and George suffered so publicly. What are they telling us today?

We get a clue from the admixture of the Scriptural texts for the Divine Liturgy. The Epistle Reading was from the Feast of Saint George and the Gospel Reading is from the feast of Saint Thomas.

In the former, we heard of the martyrdom of the first of the Apostles – Saint Iakovos, or James – the older brother of John the Evangelist, who was beheaded by Herod. As was Saint George at the apex of his martyrdom.

In the famous Gospel reading, we see how Thomas is brought to faith after the Resurrection, by seeing with his own eyes and touching with his own hands the Risen Body of the Lord. As you know, he had refused to believe the Women or the other Disciples.

We see in Saint George, and in the witness he gave to His Lord Jesus Christ, the blessedness that the Lord spoke of to Thomas:

“Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe.”

Saint George – your Heavenly Patron – becomes a fulfillment of the blessing of the Lord.

And Saint Thomas – the one who doubted? He becomes an icon for all time of the struggle to believe, to come to faith in the power of God and the possibilities that the Life Divine can give. Thomas needed a concrete experience, and the Lord invited him by saying:

“Put your finger here, and see My hands; and put out your hand, and place it in My side; do not be faithless, but believing.”

My beloved Christians:

Very few of us will ever be called upon follow in the footsteps of the Great-Martyr George. He was an example for the ages of faith, trust, perseverance, and courage. And his martyrdom has had an impact around the whole world – beyond even the borders of Christianity. For in the Islamic world, Saint George is held in the highest regard.

But all of us are called to the faith, that the Apostle Thomas had such difficulty to find. We are invited by the Lord to experience Him in “spirit and in truth,” as He said to the Samaritan Woman, whose Gospel we shall read not many days hence. We are summoned to encounter the Lord through living our faith, which will translate words and concepts into deeds and actions.

This is how we become the heart-children of God. This is how we become capable of facing the most insurmountable challenges, as Saint George did in the arena. This is how we arrive at that sublime moment when Thomas cries out:

ὁ Κύριός μου καὶ ὁ Θεός μου! – My Lord and my God!

May the happy coincidence of the feasts of the Trophy-Bearer and the Doubter

today bring us all into a more profound realization of God's presence in our midst - through their holy intercessions. Amen.

Χριστὸς Ἄνέστη!

Photos: GOARCH/Dimitrios Panagos

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