

## July 3 - St. Thomas the Apostle

Poor Thomas! He made one remark and has been branded as “Doubting Thomas” ever since. But if he doubted, he also believed. He made what is certainly the most explicit statement of faith in the New Testament: “My Lord and My God!” (see John 20:24-28) and, in so expressing his faith, gave Christians a prayer that will be said till the end of time. He also occasioned a compliment from Jesus to all later Christians: “Have you come to believe because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and have believed” (John 20:29).

Thomas should be equally well known for his courage. Perhaps what he said was impetuous—since he ran, like the rest, at the showdown—but he can scarcely have been insincere when he expressed his willingness to die with Jesus. The occasion was when Jesus proposed to go to Bethany after Lazarus had died. Since Bethany was near Jerusalem, this meant walking into the very midst of his enemies and to almost certain death. Realizing this, Thomas said to the other apostles, “Let us also go to die with him” (John 11:16b).

Thomas shares the lot of Peter the impetuous, James and John, the “sons of thunder,” Philip and his foolish request to see the Father—indeed all the apostles in their weakness and lack of understanding. We must not exaggerate these facts, however, for Christ did not pick worthless men. But their human weakness again points up the fact that holiness is a gift of God, not a human creation; it is given to ordinary men and women with weaknesses; it is God who gradually transforms the weaknesses into the image of Christ, the courageous, trusting and loving one.

There is a legend that St Thomas was the first Christian missionary to visit India; the Cathedral in Madras is dedicated to him, and there is a vivid ‘diorama’ there depicting the scene where he encountered the risen Christ. We were able to visit this shrine, in the footsteps of Pope John Paul II, on a visit to India in 2006, and to witness the devotion in which he is held there.

JULY 2020

## Prayer from Taizé

God of goodness, you are among us. And even if you are beyond anything we can imagine, through the Holy Spirit you gather us together. Be praised for this communion, it renews the joy of living.

## Prayers of Intercession for our parish

- We pray that the Holy Spirit will inspire us all to bring people closer to Jesus Christ in hope and joy.
- Let us pray for the grace to know that God has forgiven us, so that we can forgive ourselves.
- Let us pray, as our churches re-open, that the Holy Spirit will guide each of us to find what He is calling us to do, to bring people closer to Jesus Christ, whether we are able to attend church, or whether we must continue to stay at home

## Some tweets by Pope Francis

- When we can see God reflected in all that exists, our hearts are moved to praise the Lord for all his creatures and to worship him in union with them.
- Receiving the joy of the Spirit is a grace. Moreover, it is the only force that enables us to preach the Gospel and to confess our faith in the Lord. Faith means bearing witness to the joy that the Lord gives to us. A joy such as this cannot be the result of our own efforts.
- The Holy Spirit makes us take flight, opens up the wonderful destiny for which we were born, and nourishes us with living hope. Let us ask Him to come to us, and He will draw near.
- Dear Doctors and Nurses, the world saw how much good you did in a very difficult situation. Even when you were exhausted, you continued dedicating yourselves with professionalism and self-sacrifice. This generates hope. My esteem and sincere thanks go to you!

## July 5: St. Anthony Zaccaria (1502-1539)

At the same time that Martin Luther was attacking abuses in the Church, a reformation within the Church was already being attempted. Among the early movers of the Counter-Reformation was Anthony Zaccaria. His mother became a widow at 18 and devoted herself to the spiritual education of her son. He received a medical doctorate at 22 and, while working among the poor of his native Cremona in Italy, was attracted to the religious apostolate. He renounced his rights to any future inheritance, worked as a catechist and was ordained a priest at the age of 26. Called to Milan in a few years, he laid the foundations of three religious congregations, one for men and one for women, plus an association of married couples. Their aim was the reform of the decadent society of their day, beginning with the clergy, religious and lay people.

Greatly inspired by St. Paul (his congregation is named the Barnabites, after the companion of that saint), Anthony preached with great vigour in church and street, conducted popular missions and was not ashamed of doing public penance.

He encouraged such innovations as the collaboration of the laity in the apostolate, frequent Communion, the Forty Hours devotion and the ringing of church bells at 3:00 p.m. on Fridays.

His holiness moved many to reform their lives but, as with all saints, it also moved many to oppose him. Twice his community had to undergo official religious investigation, and twice it was exonerated.

While on a mission of peace, he became seriously ill and was brought home for a visit to his mother. He died at Cremona at the age of 36.

**Lord God**, I want to be your missionary to all the world.  
Bless me with the gift of simplicity  
so that what I have in abundance  
I will be happy to share.  
Bless me with the gift of generosity  
so that I may think first of others  
who need to hear your Good News.  
Bless me with the gift of such deep faith  
that it is no longer I who live,  
but Christ in me.  
Then use me to extend your love  
around the world so that no corner  
of the earth may be without  
your Good News of salvation.  
I ask this through Jesus Christ, your Son,  
Amen (APF prayer, America)

I will both lie down and sleep in peace; for you alone, O Lord,  
make me lie down in safety. (Ps 4:8)

“Read unwearyingly the precepts of the Lord and you will know  
what to avoid and what to pursue.” (St Bernard of Clairvaux)

And now a relevant reflection on rain in summer:

### **EILIXIR** - *Ann Lewin*

It's not bad weather, only rain.  
Philosophers once thought  
Drops cupped in Lady's Mantle\*  
Would become pure gold.  
So our imagination can transform  
Grey to a shade of silver, and see  
Rainbow colours caught up in the sun.

*\*Some of you may know Our Lady's Mantle as Alchemilla*