



JULY 2013

St. Thomas the Apostle

LIFE IN BRIEF

St. Thomas was born in Galilee Israel Circa in the 1st century. When he first heard of Jesus' resurrection, he questioned it, earning him the nickname "Doubting Thomas." He spent the following years travelling and spreading the gospel. **St. Thomas died on December 21, AD 72 in Mylapore, India, and Catholic Church celebrates his feast on July 3rd, every year.**

He was born into a Jewish family and probably lived in Galilee, as did most of the other disciples of Jesus. Nothing is known of his background or his profession, although he is claimed as the patron saint of architects. He seems to be similar to Peter, in having an impetuous character. For example, when Jesus said He was returning to Judea to visit His sick friend Lazarus, Thomas immediately pipes up and **exhorts the others to accompany Him, even though this trip involved danger because of the mounting hostility of the authorities- He said-"Let us also go, that we may die with him."** (John 11:7- 16)

And at the last Supper, when Jesus told His apostles that he was going away to prepare a place for them and that they knew the place and the way, it was **Thomas who pleaded that they did not know where Jesus was going- Thomas said to him, "Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?"** (John 14:5) And Jesus, in reply, gives him the comforting assurance: **"I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life."** Post resurrection, Jesus first rebuked him for his lack of faith, and then offered him the proof he needed, showing Thomas





the wounds in His hands and side. Thomas' response is also his testimony to the divinity of Jesus. He said **-My Lord and my God (John 20:27-28)**. These words, the words of a skeptic, are probably the best 'proof' of our Lord's Resurrection. The personality of this great figure, with his own characteristic traits, emerges in the **Gospel of St John (John 11:16; 14:5; 20: 24-29)**. Together with the other Apostles, he formed an intimate community with Jesus of Nazareth and shared all the joys and trials that accompanied him as he moved around the countryside to preach his message of love and unity. Thomas was an impulsive type of man, zealous in reaching out to others, not afraid to ask questions and seek clarifications when required, who battled with his own resistance and doubts surrounding the extraordinary events of Christ's death and resurrection in Jerusalem.

He was perhaps the only apostle who went outside the Roman Empire to preach the Gospel. The Catholic Church in India traces its origin to the preaching of St Thomas the Apostle, who, according to tradition, came to India in 52 A.D., nearly 2000 years ago, and was martyred in Mylapore, where his tomb is venerated ever since. Thomas understood his own mission as that of sharing this experience, as in the words of Jesus, **"go out to the whole world and proclaim the Good news to all creation"**-is to proclaim the message and reality of God's unconditional love to all peoples, regardless of creed or colour, nationality or race. Each of the Apostles set out on the mission assigned to them by the Lord: **"...You will be my witnesses, not only in Jerusalem, but throughout Judea and Samaria, and indeed to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8)**. According to tradition, St Thomas worked for 20 years in Kerala, spreading the Good News and establishing different communities. The St Thomas Christians faithfully preserved the Gospel message throughout the centuries, fully integrating the faith into the local culture. Because of their inculturation, the Christians of St Thomas were not considered as followers of a foreign Religion; after all, Jesus was an Asian. They were fully Christians in faith and Indian in culture.

St. Thomas is the Patron Saint of people struggling with doubt, blind people, architects, builders, carpenters, construction workers, geometricians, stone masons, surveyors, theologians; and countries such as Italy, India, Indonesia, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka.

The Feast of St. Thomas the Apostle calls on us to embark upon a deep faith, exploring the ultimate truths that look beyond externals, and thus to grapple with the more complex issues of our world. Furthermore, it calls on us also to present the faith as an ultimate answer to the obstacles of disbelief. As **Pope St. Gregory the Great** tells us in a reflection on St. Thomas, in the Office of Readings-*'The true believer practices what he or she believes. Often, in our world today, objections to true faith are based on a misunderstanding of what faith is. Believers must be more than unreflective followers; they must be more than ideologues, and they must be more than fideistic and fanatic adherents to religion'*. In our times the obstacles to believing seem to multiply daily. For anyone who has ever been troubled by unbelief or doubt, the feast day of St Thomas the Apostle serves to call to mind the blessedness of the faith that believes without having seen. Moreover it reminds us, in our day and age, of the blessedness of believing when faced with claims against truth.





WEEK I

PRAYER TO THE SAINT

*We thank you Lord
For the gift of St. Thomas the Apostle
For proclaiming the Good News that
Jesus is our Lord and Saviour
For dying as a martyr for faith
For the favours and graces we receive through his
powerful intercession. Amen*

WEEK II

PRAYER TO THE SAINT

*O Lord God! We thank and praise you for sending St.
Thomas the Apostle, in your divine providence, for
proclaiming the good news that Jesus is our Lord and
Saviour.
As the patron saint against doubt, I ask him to pray for
me when I question the direction in which You are
leading me. Forgive me for mistrusting You, Lord, and
help me to grow from the experience. He not only
confessed Jesus as his Lord and Saviour, he also sealed
his faith with his blood, and became the first martyr of
the Indian Church. We glorify you Lord, for inspiring us
through the courageous witness of St. Thomas. Amen*

WEEK III

PRAYER TO THE SAINT

*O Glorious Saint Thomas, your grief for Jesus was such
that it would not let you believe he had risen unless you
actually saw him and touched his wounds. But your love
for Jesus was equally great and it led you to give up
your life for him. Pray for us that we may grieve for our
sins which were the cause of Christ's sufferings. Help us*

*to spend ourselves in His service and so earn the title of
"blessed" which Jesus applied to those who would
believe in him without seeing him. Amen.*

WEEK IV

PRAYER TO THE SAINT

*May St. Thomas, our patron, obtain for us, through his
powerful intercession, the grace to bear witness to you
in the challenges of our daily life. May his constant
intercession fulfill the needs of all those who are
gathered here in faith and devotion.
We pray through the powerful intercession of St.
Thomas the Apostle, that all of us may be filled with the
gifts of the Spirit to proclaim the Good News and to
experience a new Pentecost in our lives. We make this
prayer in the precious name of Jesus who lives and
reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God forever and
ever. Amen*

WEEK V

PRAYER TO THE SAINT

*Father, look kindly on your people who have come into
your presence with their pain and suffering. We have
come to you with trust and confidence in your mercy.
Through the powerful intercession of St. Thomas our
apostle, grant us the inner courage to face the realities
of life.
Give us a new hope and courage to carry our daily
crosses, and be aware that they are fruitful for our life
and salvation. We make this prayer through our Lord
Jesus Christ your son who lives and reigns with you and
the Holy Spirit, one God forever and ever. Amen*

