

SOBORNOST

St. Thomas the Apostle Orthodox Church

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American Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Diocese

*ECUMENICAL PATRIARCHATE
OF CONSTANTINOPLE*

SERVICES

Fridays:

Moleben to the Theotokos 6:00 AM

Saturdays: Confession 5:00 PM,
Great Vespers 5:30 PM

Sundays: Matins (Orthros) 8:45 AM
Divine Liturgy 10:00 AM.

**July 24, 2016 – 5th Sunday After Pentecost | Martyr
Christina of Tyre | Heiromartyr Maximus Sandovich**

The Martyr Christina lived during the third century. She was born into a rich family, and her father was governor of Tyre. By the age of 11 the girl was exceptionally beautiful, and many wanted to marry her. Christina's father, however, envisioned that his daughter should become a pagan priestess. To this end he placed her in a special dwelling where he had set up many gold and silver idols, and he commanded his daughter to burn incense before them. Two servants attended Christina.

In her solitude, Christina began to wonder who had created this beautiful world. From her room she was delighted by the stars of the heavens and she constantly came back to the thought about the Creator of all the world. She was convinced, that the voiceless and inanimate idols in her room could not create anything, since they themselves were created by human hands. She began to pray to the One God with tears, entreating Him to reveal Himself. Her soul blazed with love for the Unknown God, and she intensified her prayer all the more, and combined it with fasting.



One time Christina was visited by an angel, who instructed her in the true faith in Christ, the Savior of the world. The angel called her a bride of Christ and told her about her future suffering. The holy virgin smashed all the idols standing in her room and threw them out the window. In visiting his daughter Christina's father, Urban, asked her where all the idols had disappeared. Christina was silent. Then, having summoned the servants, Urban learned the truth from them.

In a rage the father began to slap his daughter's face. At first, the holy virgin remained quiet, but then she told her father about her faith in the One True God, and that she had destroyed the idols with her own hands. Urban gave orders to kill all the servants in attendance upon his daughter, and he gave Christina a fierce beating and threw her in prison. Having learned about what had happened, St Christina's mother came in tears, imploring her to renounce Christ and to return to her ancestral beliefs. But Christina remained unyielding. On another day, Urban brought his daughter to trial and urged her to offer worship to the gods, and to ask forgiveness for her misdeeds. Instead, he saw her firm and steadfast confession of faith in Christ.

The torturers tied her to an iron wheel, beneath which they lit a fire. The body of the martyr, turning round on the wheel, was scorched on all sides. They then threw her into prison.

An angel of God appeared at night, healing her wounds and strengthening her with food. Her father, seeing her unharmed, gave orders to drown her in the sea. An angel sustained the saint while the stone sank down, and Christina miraculously came out of the water and reappeared before her father. In terror, the torturer imputed this to sorcery and he decided to execute her in the morning. That night he himself suddenly died. Another governor, Dion, was sent in his place. He summoned the holy martyr and also tried to persuade her to renounce Christ, but seeing her unyielding firmness, he again subjected her to cruel tortures. The holy martyr was for a long while in prison. People began to flock to her, and she converted them to the true faith in Christ. Thus about 300 were converted.

In place of Dion, a new governor Julian arrived and resumed the torture of the saint. After various torments, Julian gave orders to throw her into a red-hot furnace and lock her in it. After five days they opened the furnace and found the martyr alive and unharmed. Seeing this miracle take place, many believed in Christ the Savior, and the torturers executed St Christina with a sword. (*from oca.org*)

Today's Epistle Lesson – St. Paul's Letter to the Romans 10:1-10

BRETHREN, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved. For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to

establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God. For Christ *is* the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes. For Moses writes about the righteousness which is of the law, “The man who does those things shall live by them.” But the righteousness of faith speaks in this way, “Do not say in your heart, ‘Who will ascend into heaven?’” (that is, to bring Christ down *from above*) or, “‘Who will descend into the abyss?’” (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). But what does it say? “The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart” (that is, the word of faith which we preach): that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

Today’s Gospel Lesson – Saint Matthew 8:28-9:1

At that time, when Jesus had come to the other side, to the country of the Gergesenes, there met Him two demon-possessed *men*, coming out of the tombs, exceedingly fierce, so that no one could pass that way. And suddenly they cried out, saying, “What have we to do with You, Jesus, You Son of God? Have You come here to torment us before the time?” Now a good way off from them there was a herd of many swine feeding. So the demons begged Him, saying, “If You cast us out, permit us to go away into the herd of swine.” And He said to them, “Go.” So when they had come out, they went into the herd of swine. And suddenly the whole herd of swine ran violently down the steep place into the sea, and perished in the water. Then those who kept *them* fled; and they went away into the city and told everything, including what *had happened* to the demon-possessed *men*. And behold, the whole city came out to meet Jesus. And when they saw Him, they begged *Him* to depart from their region. So He got into a boat, crossed over, and came to His own city.

A Word From the Holy Fathers

We have been taught by the Holy Scriptures that neither ought we ever to despair in view of the multitude of our sins, nor ought we to be emboldened by the safeguard of the penances given us, so that neither he who stands firm should be emboldened, nor he who has fallen abandon hope. Instead, both he who has sinned much must be emboldened by his repentance, and he who has erred, but not excessively, must not think simply through works to obtain forgiveness for his wrongdoing. Rather, he must display repentance and penitence, not displayed by his words or through abstaining from food, drinking only water, having his pallet on the floor, and practices of this kind, but that which is created by a disposition of the soul, and which blessed David demonstrated, encompassed as he was by the world and the cares of this life. For he always remembered and weighed up within

himself how good and compassionate a Master he had provoked to anger, because he had been a transgressor of his commandments, and was revealed as unmindful of his many countless gifts and graces and ungrateful. So – as he himself wrote – he always “went mourning and with a sad countenance” (Ps. 37:7 LXX), nor was he ill-treated by another person, but he himself very greatly afflicted and humbled himself, “roaring by reason of the lamentation of his heart” (Ps. 37:9 LXX), and everything else, as the psalms sung each day teach us. Moreover David acted thus, even though he was a king and responsible for taking thought for his people, while caring for his wife and his children and his house.

And what of Manasseh? And what of those of a later date, of whom you, I think, are not ignorant? I mean Peter the chief of the apostles, the publican, the thief, the prostitute, and – why speak at length? – the prodigal son who squandered his father’s property with prostitutes and publicans. By what kind of works did these people gain pardon for their wrongdoings? Consider! Was it by fasting, keeping vigil, sleeping on the floor, ridding themselves of their possessions to benefit the needy, or by some other laborious activity which is performed by means of the body? Certainly not, but it was simply by repentance, and heart-felt tears, and by being condemned by their conscience. For each of them having come to a perception of their own sins, and having condemned themselves and lamented with all their heart, they gained pardon for their faults, and now too this is effectuated in all of us who genuinely and fervently come, by means of repentance and tears, to Christ our Master. And the good Lord, who loves mankind, does not shut up against us his undefiled heart full of his benevolence, nor would he ever do so, for it is not by means of works of the Law – lest any man should boast – but by God’s love for mankind and his grace, that the forgiveness of sins is given.

But what is being sought is not just this, but that we may no more fall into the same wickednesses, nor like a dog return to our own vomit (2 Pet. 2:22). It is impossible to guard against this, unless, by all means and with all earnestness, we provide ourselves with guards and helpers, while we ourselves put on spiritual armor, by which we shall be enabled to withstand our enemies and opponents. For we have been captured by the Enemy, enslaved to our pleasures, and through our passions have become both subject to tribute, and bound by treaty to the Foe. Of absolute necessity then we are hauled and dragged around by suchlike passions, pleasures, and desires, and as bondsmen, subjected to force and in a pitiable state, we are led away into the service of, and enslavement to, our Adversary and Enemy, and we fall away from our enslavement to Christ our Master, and reveal ourselves as people who have transgressed his commandments and broken our pledges to him. That this may not be our experience, let us acquire for ourselves a helper and fellow-combatant against each of the enemies assaulting us, as we are instructed by

the divinely inspired Scripture, “For this reason I ordered my life by all your commandments; I hated every unjust way” (Ps. 118:128 LXX). And against the remembrance of shameful thoughts let us set the remembrance of god and of the awe-inspiring judgment and of those unendurable torments; against sluggishness, zeal and earnestness; against gluttony, fasting; against love of pleasure, self-control; against much drinking, drinking only a little; against the kindling of the lusts of the flesh, remembrance of the eternal flames and persistency in entreating God, together with vigil and thirst. For if we act thus against each passion – not to be prolix through wishing to enumerate all of them – and if we set against each single passion the opposite virtue, we shall by such actions be guarded on all sides as by soldiers, and shall keep ourselves unhurt and unwounded, because the mere extirpation of evil habits and of improper deeds and actions (supposing it were possible to achieve it without hardships and toil!) suffices for the salvation of those who repent.

. – St. Symeon the New Theologian

HEIROMARTYR MAXIMUS SANDOVICH



Saint Maximus Sandovich was born in 1886 in the village of Zhdenia on the present frontier of Poland with Slovakia, in territory which was part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire at the time. His piety was evident from his early years. As a schoolboy, he would get up early to read the services and sing the canticles of the church in his room. He wanted to become a priest or monk and so, at the end of his secondary education, he entered a Uniate monastery of the region as a novice. But the life of this establishment soon disappointed him, and he left after three months for the Monastery of Pochaev in Ukraine (see 28 Oct.), as much renowned for the strictness of its typikon and for the spiritual life of the fathers, as for its witness to the Orthodox tradition. When Maximus was still a novice, Metropolitan Antony Khrapovitsky (1863-1936), visited the monastery and asked the Abbot to let him take a novice with him who could be put to study in his Seminary, with a view to ordination to serve the Ukrainian communities in the Carpathian region, that had returned to Orthodoxy from the Unia. Maximus was chosen so he had to give up his heart's desire for the monastic life and follow the Bishop. When he had finished his studies at the Seminary in Zhitomir, he married a Byelorussian wife and was ordained by the Metropolitan in 1911. His pastoral ministry began in the town of Grab, not far from his native village, where he

served the first Orthodox Liturgy since the Carpatho-Russians yielded to Uniatism in the eighteenth century. He was arrested on a visit to his family home, sentenced to eight days imprisonment and heavily fined. Father Maximus was unshaken by this and continued to serve the divine Liturgy in the surrounding villages, despite the penalties imposed by the courts upon himself and those who assisted him.

In March 1912, he was remanded in custody at Lvov, charged with being Orthodox, using Church books written in Russia and of collaboration with the enemy, for so Russia was regarded by the Austro-Hungarian authorities. Despite the lying accusations heaped up against him, and the ill-treatment and harassment of all kinds that he endured, when he and his companions came to trial in June 1914, they were acquitted. In poor health, he was able to return to Zhdenia. But, on the outbreak of the First World War in August, he was again arrested, together with his pregnant wife, his father and the Orthodox of his village. They were imprisoned at Gorlice, the country town. On September 6, 1914, Father Maximus was brought out of his cell before a judge who summarily informed him that he was condemned to death. He was shot in the prison yard before the eyes of the assembled Orthodox prisoners. As he fell, Christ's valiant Martyr cried out, "Long live holy Orthodoxy!" whereupon, of one of the executioners, seized with anger, rushed forward and stabbed him. It was not until 1922 that his body could be taken to Zhdenia, where it was laid to rest near the church. From then on, pilgrims flocked to his tomb. Veneration of Saint Maximus, as the very image of their ethnic and religious identity, grew among the Carpatho-Russian Orthodox, especially during the years of their deportation. Through the prayers of Thy Saints, Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on us. Amen (*from The Synaxarion of the Monastery of Simono Petra, Mt. Athos*)

Martyrs and Passion-Bearers Boris and Gleb



Saint Boris was one of the sons of St Vladimir (July 15), and was named Romanus at his Baptism. After their father's death the eldest son Sviatopolk planned to kill his brothers Boris, Gleb, and Yaroslav in order to seize power. He sent a message to Boris, pretending that he wished to live in peace with him, and to increase Boris's land holdings inherited from their father.

Some of Vladimir's advisers told Boris that he should take the army and establish himself as ruler of Kiev. St Boris, however, said that he could never lift his hand against his own

brother. Unfortunately, Sviatopolk was not so scrupulous. He came to the town of Vyshegorod to ask its leaders if they were loyal to him. They assured him that they were ready to die for him.

Sviatopolk sent assassins to the Alta to kill Boris, who already knew that his brother wanted him dead. When they arrived they heard him chanting psalms and praying before an icon of Christ. He asked the Lord to strengthen him for the suffering he was about to endure. He also prayed for Sviatopolk, asking God not to count this against him as sin.

Then he lay down upon his couch, and the assassins stabbed him with their lances, and also killed some of Boris's servants. Wrapping Boris in a cloth, they threw him onto a wagon and drove off with him. When Sviatopolk saw that he was still breathing, he sent some men to finish him off with swords.

St Boris received the crown of martyrdom in 1015. After Sviatopolk had killed Boris, he wondered, "Now how can I kill Gleb?" He sent him a message saying that their father was ill and wished to see him. As he was on his way, he received word from Yaroslav that their father had died and that Sviatopolk had murdered Boris.

St Gleb wept for his father and brother, and was lamenting them when the assassins arrived. They seized his boat and drew their weapons, but it was Gleb's cook Torchin who stabbed him with a knife. The martyr's body was thrown onto the shore between two trees. Later, he was buried beside St Boris in the church of St Basil. Boris and his brother Gleb became known as Passion-Bearers, since they did not resist evil with violence. (from oca.org)

On Stewardship and the Orthodox Life –

Part 79: The Big Deception



“No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.” (Luke 16:19 RSV)

It is perhaps the first goal of Satan to make the world attractive. After all, the name “Satan” means “the deceiver.” Satan is so deceptive that he is able to gain the friendliness of even the most devout of Christians. For example, there are many who call themselves Christian who will make any sacrifice to gain money or other riches. And, the more successful they are in getting what they want, the less they care for the Christian Truth and for anyone or anything else in the world. Thus is

love for God lost: the more the material wealth, the less invested in Christ and His Church.

It is a disturbing fact that so many are deceived by Satan. So attractive does Satan make money and riches that individuals become enchanted with the prospect of happiness forever, provided the money holds out. It is the greatest deception when Satan lays before us the vision of power and wealth, saying that we might use such power and wealth for the good of the poor and powerless of this world. Yet when and if such wealth and power is gained, those who gain it find little further connection with the needs of the world. The deception is complete when, seeing their wealth and newly gained buying power, they now feel the compelling need to protect it. The whole idea of self-denial, self-sacrifice, and humility is gone. They have no desire to part with their dear earthly treasure. Thus, they are no longer servants of Christ, but are now in the service of money, representing Satan himself. Satan has so deceived them that now they are in the service of what Jesus calls “*mammon*” – earthly riches.

The change in individuals from godliness to worldliness is so often a subtle, unnoticeable thing. Satan is truly the deceiver when he can cause such a change and the target doesn’t even know or realize it is happening. But the result is true: such a person who has been deceived is no longer in the company of Christ, but has a new master.

Can anyone change back? Can anyone put off the deception and return to the company and service of Christ? Yes, of course. But it takes more than just realizing that one has been deceived. He or she must reject the deception. He or she must renounce Satan again just as it was done at Holy Baptism. He or she must put this rejection and renunciation into practice by faithful support of Christ, His Church, and His people. Actions, in this case, speak louder than words. “*Do not be deceived....*” (Galatians 6:7 RSV). (*from acrod.org*)

Request from Johnstown

JOHNSTOWN, PA -- For the past four years, a weekly on-line scripture study has been broadcast live from St. Nicholas Orthodox Church in Warren, Ohio. Taught by the Very Rev. Protopresbyter Kenneth Bachofsky, Professor of Scripture at Christ the Saviour Seminary, the participants have studied the Gospels of St. Matthew and St. John and the book of Revelation.

These weekly lectures, which are delivered in a clear and concise manner, drawing on the patristic voice of the Fathers of the Church, have provided an opportunity for hundreds of viewers, world-wide to deepen their understanding of Sacred Scripture from the Orthodox Christian perspective. Some of the archived videos have been viewed over 3000 times! Many Diocesan parishes are using the

archived class videos as springboards for discussion within their own Scripture Study classes.

The study of the Book of Revelation will come to a close shortly. While it has been suggested by members of the current study group that the Book of Genesis be the next topic of discussion, Fr. Kenneth Bachofsky is offering the opportunity for on-line viewers to offer their suggestions as to what the next book of the Bible to study should be.

Those who wish to offer their input are kindly asked to contact Fr. Ken Bachofsky at otecken@yahoo.com by July 31, 2016.

The Orthodox Scripture Study takes place on Saturday Evenings at 5:00 pm.

You can find the live feed, as well as archived study sessions, at

<http://www.acrod.org/ministries/religiously/onlinelearning/onlineclassroommoodle>

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