

SOBORNOST

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American Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Diocese

*ECUMENICAL PATRIARCHATE
OF CONSTANTINOPLE*

SERVICES

Wed: Moleben to the Theotokos 6:00 AM

Friday: Moleben to the Cross 6:00 AM

Saturday: Confession 5:00 PM

Great Vespers 5:30 PM

**Sunday: Matins (Orthros) 8:45 AM | Divine
Liturgy 10:00 AM.**



July 2, 2017 – 4th Sunday After Pentecost | The Placing of the Honorable Robe of the Most Holy Mother of God at Blachernae

During the reign of the Byzantine Emperor Leo the Great (457-474), the brothers Galbuis and Candidus, associates of the emperor, set out from Constantinople to Palestine to venerate the holy places. In a small settlement near Nazareth they stayed in the home of a certain old Jewish woman. In her house they noticed a room where many lamps were lit, incense burned, and sick people were gathered. When they asked her what the room contained, the pious woman did not want to give an answer for a long time. After persistent requests, she said that she had a very precious sacred item: the Robe of the Mother of God, which performed many miracles and healings. Before Her Dormition the Most Holy Virgin bequeathed one of her garments to a pious Jewish maiden, an ancestor of the old woman, instructing her to leave it to another virgin after her death. Thus, the Robe of the Mother of God was preserved in this family from generation to generation.

The jewelled chest, containing the sacred Robe, was transferred to Constantinople. Saint Gennadius, Patriarch of Constantinople (August 31), and the emperor Leo, having learned of the sacred treasure, were convinced of the incorrupt state of the holy Robe, and they certified its authenticity. At Blachernae, near the seacoast, a

new church in honor of the Mother of God was constructed. On June 2, 458 Saint Gennadius transferred the sacred Robe into the Blachernae church with appropriate solemnity, placing it within a new reliquary.

Afterwards, the maphorion (i.e., the outer robe) of the Mother of God, and part of Her belt were also put into the reliquary with Her Robe. This circumstance also influenced the Orthodox iconography of the Feast, in connecting the two events: the Placing of the Robe, and the Placing of the Belt of the Mother of God in Blachernae. The Russian pilgrim Stephen of Novgorod, visiting Constantinople in about the year 1350, testifies: “We arrived at Blachernae, where the Robe lies upon an altar in a sealed reliquary.”

More than once, during the invasion of enemies, the Most Holy Theotokos saved the city to which She had given Her holy Robe. Thus it happened during the time of a siege of Constantinople by the Avars in 626, by the Persians in 677, and by the Arabs in the year 717. Especially relevant for us are events of the year 860, intimately connected with the history of the Russian Church.

On June 18, 860 the Russian fleet of Prince Askold, a force comprising more than 200 ships, laid waste the coastal regions of the Black Sea and the Bosphorus, then entered into the Golden Horn and threatened Constantinople. The Russian ships sailed within sight of the city, setting ashore troops who “proceeded before the city, stretching forth their swords.” The emperor Michael III (842-867), interrupted his campaign against the Arabs and returned to the capital. All night he prayed prostrated upon the stone tiles of the church of the Mother of God at Blachernae. The holy Patriarch Photius spoke to his flock, calling for tears of repentance to wash away sins, and to seek the intercession of the Most Holy Theotokos with fervent prayer.

The danger grew with each passing hour. “The city was barely able to stand against a spear,” says Patriarch Photius in another of his homilies. Under these conditions the decision was made to save the church’s sacred objects, especially the holy Robe of the Mother of God, which was kept in the Blachernae church, not far from the shore.

After serving an all-night Vigil, and taking it out from the Blachernae church, they carried the sacred Robe of the Mother of God in a procession around the city walls. They dipped its edge into the waters of the Bosphorus, and then they transported it to the center of Constantinople into the church of Hagia Sophia. The Mother of God protected the city and quelled the fury of the Russian warriors. An honorable truce was concluded, and Askold lifted the siege of Constantinople.

On June 25 the Russian army began to leave, taking with them a large tribute payment. A week afterwards, on July 2, the wonderworking Robe of the Mother of

God was solemnly returned to its place in the reliquary of the Blachernae church. In remembrance of these events an annual feastday of the Placing of the Robe of the Mother of God was established on July 2 by holy Patriarch Photius.

Soon, in October-November of the year 860, a Russian delegation arrived in Constantinople to conclude a treaty “in love and peace.” Some of the conditions of the peace treaty included articles concerning the Baptism of Kievan Rus, the payment of an annual tribute by the Byzantines to the Russians, permission for them to serve with the Byzantine army, an agreement to trade in the territory of the Empire (primarily in Constantinople), and to send a diplomatic mission to Byzantium.

Most important was the point about the Baptism of Rus. The continuator of the Byzantine “Theophanes Chronicles” relates that “their delegation arrived in Constantinople with a request for them to receive holy Baptism, which also was fulfilled.” An Orthodox mission was sent to Kiev to fulfill this mutual wish of the Russians and the Greeks. Not very long before this (in 855) Saint Cyril the Philosopher (February 14 and May 11) had created a Slavonic alphabet and translated the Gospel. Saint Cyril was sent with his brother, Saint Methodius (April 6 and May 11), on a mission to Kiev with books translated into Slavonic. This was at the initiative of Saint Photius, whose student Saint Cyril was. The brothers spent the winter of 860/861 at Cherson, and in the spring of 861 they were at the River Dniepr, with Prince Askold.

Prince Askold was faced with a difficult choice, just as holy Prince Vladimir faced: both the Jews on the one hand, and the Moslems on the other, wanted him to accept their faith. But under the influence of Saint Cyril, the prince chose Orthodoxy. At the end of the year 861, Saints Cyril and Methodius returned to Constantinople and carried letters with them from Prince Askold to Emperor Michael III. Askold thanked the emperor for sending him “such men, who showed by both word and by example, that the Christian Faith is holy.” “Persuaded that this is the true Faith,” Askold further wrote, “we bid them to baptize in the hope that we may also attain sanctity. We are all friends of the Kingdom and prepared to be of service to you, as requested.”

Askold accepted holy Baptism with the name Nicholas, and many of his retinue were also baptized. Directly from Constantinople, the capital of Orthodoxy, through the efforts of the holy Apostles to the Slavs both the Slavonic divine services and the Slavonic written language arrived in Rus.

Saint Photius appointed Metropolitan Michael to Kiev, and the Russian metropolitan district was entered into the lists of dioceses of the Patriarchate of Constantinople. Patriarch Photius in an encyclical of the year 867 called the

Baptism of the Bulgarians and the Russians as among the chief accomplishments of his archpastoral service. “The Russians, who lifted their hand against the Roman might,” he wrote, almost quoting literally from the missive of Askold, “have now replaced the impious teaching which they held to formerly, with the pure and genuine Christian Faith, and with love having established themselves in the array of our friends and subjects.” (The Byzantines counted as “subjects” all accepting Baptism from Constantinople and entering into military alliance with the Empire.) “The desire and zeal of faith has flared up within them to such an extent, that they have accepted bishops and pastors, and they embrace Christian sanctity with great zeal and fervor.”

The Feast of the Placing of the Robe of the Most Holy Theotokos in Blachernae also marks the canonical establishment of the Russian Orthodox metropolitanate in Kiev. By the blessing of the Mother of God and by the miracle from Her holy Robe not only was the deliverance of Constantinople from the most terrible siege in all its history accomplished, but also the liberation of the Russians from the darkness of pagan superstition to life eternal. Together with this, the year 860 brought recognition to Kievan Rus from Byzantium, and signified the emergence of the young Russian realm into the arena of history.

The attempt of Prince Askold to renew the Christian evangelization begun by the holy Apostle Andrew the First-Called, which he intended as a religious and state reform, ended unsuccessfully. The time for the spread of Christianity in the Russian Land had not yet come. The adherents of the old paganism were too strong, and the princely power was too weak. In the clash of Askold with the pagan Oleg in 882 the Kievans betrayed their prince. Askold, lured into the camp of his enemies for talks, received a martyr’s death at the hand of hired killers.

But the deed of Blessed Askold (the Ioakimov Chronicle calls him such) was not extinguished in the Russian Church. Oleg the Sage, who killed Askold, occupied the Kiev principedom after him, and called Kiev the “Mother of Russian Cities.”

The most ancient chronicles of Kiev preserved the grateful memory of the first Kievan Christian prince: the church of the Prophet of God Elias, built by Askold and later mentioned in Igor’s Treaty with the Greeks (in 944), is on the site where the present church of this name now stands, and there is also the church of Saint Nicholas the Wonderworker, built in the 950s by Saint Olga over Askold’s grave.

The most important achievement of Askold, entering forever into the Church inheritance not only of Rus, but of also all Orthodox Slavs, is the Slavonic Gospel and Slavonic services, translated by Saints Cyril and Methodius. Their apostolic activity among the Slavs began in Kiev at the court of Askold in 861, and continued afterwards in Moravia and Bulgaria. Following Blessed Askold, in the

words of the ancient Alphabetic Prayers, “the Slavonic tribe now soars in flight, all striving toward Baptism.”

Several outstanding works of Byzantine Church hymnology and homiletics are connected with the miracle of the Robe of the Most Holy Theotokos at Blachernae. There are two homilies of Saint Photius, one of which he preached within days of the siege of Constantinople, and the other (reproduced in part beginning on page 2) soon after the departure of the Russian forces. Also associated with the campaign of Askold against Constantinople is the composition of a remarkable “Akathist to the Most Holy Theotokos,” which certain Church histories ascribe also to holy Patriarch Photius. This Akathist forms an integral part of the services of Praise to the Most Holy Theotokos (i.e., the “Saturday of the Akathist,” Fifth Saturday of Great Lent).

It is not only Byzantine sources that relate the events of the year 860, but also Russian historical chronicles. Saint Nestor the Chronicler, stressing the significance of the Russian campaign against Constantinople, notes that from this time “it was begun to be called the Russian Land.” Certain of the chronicles, among them the Ioakimov and Nikonov, preserved accounts of the Baptism of Prince Askold and Kievan Rus after the campaign against Constantinople. The popular commemoration of this event is firmly associated with the names of the Kievan princes Askold and Dir, although in the opinion of historians, Dir was prince of Kiev somewhat earlier than Askold. The veneration of the feast of the Placing of the Robe was long known in the Russian Church. Saint Andrew Bogoliubsky (July 4) built a church in honor of this feastday in the city of Vladimir at the Golden Gates. At the end of the fourteenth century, part of the Robe of the Mother of God was transferred from Constantinople to Rus by Saint Dionysius, Archbishop of Suzdal (June 26).

The holy Robe of the Mother of God, which previously saved Constantinople, later saved Moscow from hostilities. Tatars of the Horde of the princeling Mazovshi approached the walls of Moscow in the summer of 1451. Saint Jonah, Metropolitan of Moscow, with constant prayer and church services, encouraged the defenders of the capital. On the night of July 2, the Chronicle relates, great confusion occurred within the Tatar camp. The enemy abandoned their plundered goods and speedily departed in disarray. In memory of the miraculous deliverance of Moscow, Saint Jonah built the church of the Placing of the Robe in the Kremlin, making it his primary church. It burned, but in its place in the years 1484-1486 a new church, also dedicated to the Feast of the Placing of the Robe of the Mother of God, was built thirty years later. This temple, standing at present, continued to serve as the primary church of Russian metropolitans and patriarchs until the cathedral of the Twelve Apostles was built under Patriarch Nikon. (*from oca.org*)

Today's Epistle Lesson – St. Paul's Letter to the Romans 6:18-23

Brethren, having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness. I speak in human *terms* because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members *as* slaves of uncleanness, and of lawlessness *leading to more* lawlessness, so now present your members *as* slaves of righteousness for holiness. For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. What fruit did you have then in the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things *is* death. But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life. For the wages of sin *is* death, but the gift of God *is* eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Today's Gospel Lesson – Saint Matthew 8:5-13

At that time, when Jesus had entered Capernaum, a centurion came to Him, pleading with Him, saying, "Lord, my servant is lying at home paralyzed, dreadfully tormented." And Jesus said to him, "I will come and heal him." The centurion answered and said, "Lord, I am not worthy that You should come under my roof. But only speak a word, and my servant will be healed. For I also am a man under authority, having soldiers under me. And I say to this *one*, 'Go,' and he goes; and to another, 'Come,' and he comes; and to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does *it*." When Jesus heard *it*, He marveled, and said to those who followed, "Amen, I say to you, I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel! And I say to you that many will come from east and west, and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. But the sons of the kingdom will be cast out into outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." Then Jesus said to the centurion, "Go your way; and as you have believed, *so* let it be done for you." And his servant was healed that same hour.

A Word From the Holy Fathers

When sudden calamity came upon us, truly there was mourning then, and lamentation and woe. Then each man became the unbiased judge of his own sins, not railing at the "slander" of his accusers to escape the accusation, not demanding external proofs, not pretending to call in witnesses in order to "triumph over the knavish trick," but each man, placing the wrath of God before his eyes, admitted his own transgression, and on account of what he had foolishly done against the commandments, considered himself within the pale of danger; and, being torn away from pleasures by the experience of misfortune, he was converted and reformed to a temperate life, and to confessing to the Lord with sighs, confessing with tears, with prayers and appeals. For a common misfortune and the

expectation of death are able - indeed able - to make men aware of their sins, and bring them to their senses, and improve them by their actions.

When we made such amends, when we set up our reason as the inflexible arbiter of our sins, and we, the accused, pronounced the verdict against us to be valid, when we invoked God in litanies and hymns, when we offered our repentance with affliction of the heart, when, extending our hands to God all night long, we implored His compassion, and placed all our hopes in Him – then we were delivered from the calamity, then we received liberation from the ills that surrounded us, then we saw the danger being crushed, and the Lord's wrath was seen lifted away from us. For we beheld our enemies retiring, and the city that had been threatened with capture being freed from pillage; at the time when, denuded of all help, and deprived of human alliance, we were spiritually led on by holding fast to our hopes in the Mother of the Word, our God, urging her to implore her Son, invoking her for the expiation of our sins, her intercession for our salvation, her protection as an impregnable wall for us, begging her to break the boldness of the barbarians, her to crush their insolence, her to defend the despairing people and fight for her own flock. When, moreover, as the whole city was carrying with me her raiment for the repulse of the besiegers and the protection of the besieged, we offered freely our prayers and performed the litany, with ineffable compassion she spoke out in motherly intercession: God was moved, His anger was averted, and the Lord took pity on His inheritance. Truly this most-holy garment is the raiment of God's Mother! It embraced the walls, and the foes inexplicably showed their backs; the city put it around itself, and the camp of the enemy was broken up as at a signal; the city bedecked itself with it, and the enemy were deprived of the hopes which bore them on. For immediately as the Virgin's garment went around the walls, the barbarians gave up the siege and broke camp, while we were delivered from impending capture and were granted unexpected salvation. For the Lord looked not on our sins but on our repentance, nor did He remember our iniquities, but He looked on the affliction of our hearts, and inclined His ear to the confession of our lips. The enemy's invasion was unexpected, while their departure appeared unhopd-for; God's irritation was extreme, but His mercy inexpressible; the fear they inspired was unspeakable, but they became contemptible in flight; God's wrath accompanied them in the attack against us, but we have found God's compassion, routing them and checking their onset.

Let us not, therefore, make God's love of man an excuse for negligence, nor consider His compassion an incitement to indifference, nor make the beginning of salvation an open gate to our perdition, nor let us be softened by His mercy, so that the end may not be worse than the beginning, and we draw upon ourselves the curse of the Jews: "Ah sinful nation, a people full of sins, why should you be

smitten any more, adding to your iniquities," as Isaiah says, "and it is not possible to apply a plaster, nor oil, nor bandages." (Is. 1:4-6) Let us not, therefore, beloved ones, render ourselves guilty of so great evils, nor become oblivious of the compact we pledged to God when we were seeing that terrible danger pressed hard against our face. For you know - you surely know - each man being taught anew by his own conscience, how at that time whoever had done an unjust act pledged himself to God never to do it again, whoever had abandoned his body to fornication was seen, out of loathing for that passion, to make free profession of temperance, indeed, the habitual drunkard was sober and promised to remain sober in the future; another, who was hard and inhuman of heart, gave himself entirely over to charity, begging God's mercy as a pledge of his charity towards his neighbors; while he who was malicious to his friends and the ruin of his rivals, an executioner to slaves and a tyrant to free men, seized with weeping and lamenting, tamed and amended the savagery of his character. One could see the haughty humble and gluttons fasting; those whose life had been spent in laughter and play moistened their cheeks with torrents of tears; those who had devoted themselves to the acquisition of money shared with the poor, rejecting the disease of avarice, and, to sum up, after close examination of their own defects, they cast them off with much zeal and did away with them. And each man who had lived in negligence and indifference professed himself with hand and foot and every effort to embrace virtue, and they all prayed and pledged themselves to walk thereafter in all purity and without turning back along the path of their promises. So let none of us be forgetful of these things; let no one ruin these promises with oblivion, for oblivion of them can kindle God's wrath. Moreover, we have also taken the Mother of the Word, our God, as surety for these our pledges to Him, and the mercy that thereby came upon us has delivered us from captivity. Having with these pledges cleansed and tilled our hearts, we have reaped the fruit of repentance; having in this wise reformed our minds, we have been rid of our misfortunes. Having established these foundations for our future life, let us not heap up wood, hay or stubble, the inflammable material of sin which destroys those who are laden with it, but let us build with gold and silver, the sincerest and purest of deeds, into which the poison of wickedness is hot injected, so that we may have an indestructible bulwark for refuge and an undefiled sanctuary when temptations rear their heads (see 1 Cor. 3:12). Nor let us turn back, that we may not be convicted of being unfit for the kingdom of heaven, that we may not cause by our deeds the past ills to repeat themselves and remain with us. Let each man turn away from his evil deeds with all his heart, scrutinizing and searching himself as to which of his acts has so vexed God as to have drawn on such great wrath, which is so excessively wicked as to cause so great a danger; for which of our deeds has His anger been kindled, and which have contributed to our being overshadowed by the cloud of His mercy; why

the punishment was inflicted, and how the blow was averted; wherefore we were wounded, and with what medicines we were healed. If we seek after these things, and busy ourselves in such wise, and make them a matter of concern, then I know that the Lord will shed his mercy more abundantly, for He is near to all who call upon Him in truth, and will perform the desire of those who fear Him, and will hear their supplication and save them, and He is the protector of all who hope in Him.....

But since we have been delivered from the threat, and have escaped the sword, and the destroyer has passed us by, who have been covered and marked out with the garment of the Mother of the Word, let us all in common with her send up songs of thanksgiving to Christ our God Who was born of her - every house that has escaped the sword, persons of every age, women, children, youths and old men. Indeed, those to whom a common destruction was impending ought to consecrate and offer to God and His Mother a common hymn. We have enjoyed a common deliverance; let us offer common thanks. Let us say to the Mother of the Word with rectitude of mind and purity of soul, "We unhesitatingly keep our faith and love for you. Save your city, as you know how and desire. We put you forward as our arms, our rampart, our shield, our general; fight for your people. We shall take heed to the best of our strength to make our hearts pure before you, having torn ourselves away from filth and passions. Dispel the plots of those who rise up arrogantly against us. For even if we are amiss in the commandments made to us, it is yours to set us straight, it is yours to proffer a hand to us who are kneeling down, and to raise us up from our fall." Let us thus address the Virgin, and let us not speak falsely, that we may not be belied in our fair hopes, that we may not be balked of our expectation, so that having overcome the tossing of the waves and storms of life's evils, we may come to anchor in the harbor of salvation, and be deemed worthy of the heavenly glory, by the grace and mercy of Christ our true God, to Whom is due all glory, honor and veneration, together with the Father and the Holy Spirit, the consubstantial and life-giving Trinity, now and ever and forever. Amen.

– St. Photius the Great, Patriarch of Constantinople, *Homily 4*

**Also Commemorated Today: St. John [Maximovitch],
Archbishop of Shanghai and San Francisco**

Our Father among the Saints John (Maximovitch), Archbishop of Shanghai and San Francisco (1896-1966), was a diocesan bishop of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia (ROCOR) who served widely from China to France to the United States.



Saint John departed this life on June 19 (O.S.) / July 2 (N.S.), 1966, and was officially glorified by the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad on July 2, 1994. His glorification was later recognized for universal veneration by the Patriarchate of Moscow on July 2, 2008.

The future Saint John was born on June 4, 1896, in the village of Adamovka in Kharkiv province to pious aristocrats, Boris and Glafira Maximovitch. He was given the baptismal name of Michael, after the Holy Archangel Michael. In his youth, Michael was sickly and had a poor appetite, but he displayed an intense religious interest. He was educated at the Poltava Military School (1907-14); Kharkiv

Imperial University, from which he received a law degree (in 1918); and the University of Belgrade (where he completed his theological education in 1925).

He and his family fled their country as the Bolshevik revolutionaries descended on the country, emigrating to Yugoslavia. There, he enrolled in the Department of Theology of the University of Belgrade. He was tonsured a monk in 1926 by Metropolitan Anthony (Khrapovitsky) of Kharkov (later the first primate of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia). Metropolitan Anthony later in 1926 ordained him hierodeacon. Bishop Gabriel of Chelyabinsk ordained him hieromonk on November 21, 1926. Subsequent to his ordination he began an active life of teaching in a Serbian high school and serving, at the request of local Greeks and Macedonians, in the Greek language. With the growth of his popularity, the bishops of the Russian Church Aboard resolved to elevate him to the episcopate.

Hieromonk John was consecrated bishop on May 28, 1934, with Metropolitan Anthony serving as principal consecrator, after which he was assigned to the Diocese of Shanghai. Twelve years later he was named Archbishop of China. Upon his arrival in Shanghai, Bishop John began working to restore unity among the various Orthodox nationalities. In time, he worked to build a large cathedral church that was dedicated to Surety of Sinners Icon to the Mother of God, with a bell tower and large parish house. Additionally, he inspired many activities: building of churches, hospitals, and orphanages among the Orthodox and Russians of Shanghai. He was intensely active, constantly praying and serving the daily cycle of services, while also visiting the sick with the Holy Gifts. He often would

walk barefooted even in the coldest days. Yet to avoid the appearance of secular glory, he would pretend to act the fool.

With the end of World War II and the coming to power of the communists in China, Bishop John led the exodus of his community from Shanghai in 1949. Initially, he helped some 5,000 refugees to a camp on the island of Tubabao in the Philippines, while he travelled successfully to Washington, D.C., to lobby to amend the law to allow these refugees to enter the United States. It was while on this trip that Bishop John took time to establish a parish in Washington dedicated to Saint John the Forerunner.

In 1951, Archbishop John was assigned to the Archdiocese of Western Europe with his cathedra in Paris. During his time there, he also served as archpastor of the Orthodox Church of France, whose restored Gallican liturgy he studied and then celebrated. He was the principal consecrator of the Orthodox Church of France's first modern bishop, Jean-Nectaire (Kovalevsky) of Saint-Denis, and ordained to the priesthood the man who would become its second bishop, Germain (Bertrand-Hardy) of Saint-Denis.

In 1962, Archbishop John was assigned to the Diocese of San Francisco, succeeding his long time friend Archbishop Tikhon. Archbishop John's days in San Francisco were to prove sorrowful as he attempted to heal the great disunity in his community. He was able to bring peace such that the new cathedral, dedicated to the Joy of all Who Sorrow Icon of the Mother of God, was completed. Deeply revering Saint John of Kronstadt, Archbishop John played an active role in preparation of his canonization.

He reposed during a visit to Seattle on July 2, 1966, while accompanying a tour of the Kursk-Root Icon of the Mother of God. He was laid to rest in a crypt chapel under the main altar of the new cathedral. (*from oca.org*)

On Stewardship and the Orthodox Life – 140: Clericalism



“...and the rain came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell; and great was the fall of it.” (Matthew 7:27 RSV)

Last week we talked about the foundation of our Church crumbling and that we have lost our direction, our purpose. Let's look at why this is happening, the **impediments** to fulfilling Christ's commandment to go forth and make disciples. Why are we using the time, talent and treasure that God has given us for everything but what He had commanded us to do?

There are two impediments, maybe more, but two that I believe jump out at an unbiased observer. The first is **Clericalism**. Most of us would say, “What in the world is that; never heard of it!” Before I define it, let me say that the Orthodox Church is not the only one struggling with this, the Catholic Church has a big problem with it also. Interesting that we are both suffering and declining and both have like impediments. The dictionary definition is, “the policy of maintaining or increasing the power of the hierarchy.” The problem is best described by Pope Francis, “in the majority of cases, it has to do with sinful complicity; the priest clericalizes the lay person, and the lay person kindly asks to be clericalized.” What in the world are you talking about you ask?

The answer is relatively simple. The laity has given over our **baptismal identity** to the clergy, deacons and where appropriate, the nuns making them “super-Christians” as stated by Fr. James Mallon, *Divine Renovation*. This brought about two issues; the isolation of the clergy and the immaturity of the baptized. In other words, we leave the priests to be holy and do the work proper to the members of the Church, the body of Christ. We trap our clergy in this vale of being super-Christian, weighing them down with every task imaginable in the Church such that it is impossible for success or at least very challenging. We relinquish our duties as disciples to the clergy. We prop up our priest and deacons and other “religious” types in the Church and applaud them from a safe distance.

Here is where the second impediment comes in. **Minimalism** allows us to do the above and fosters the sense of “**leave me alone**” I pay my dues, I come to Liturgy, and I go to confession. **I have done what is required of me to be a parishioner in good standing!** You do not want to be challenged and/or accept responsibilities needed for salvation. Unfortunately, this may have become the norm in the Orthodox Church. So the perception of the “good” Orthodox is to be **passive** in carrying out the mission of the Church beyond the temporal. We have given up our baptismal rite to be disciples.

Spiritual Education, spiritual knowledge, knowledge and familiarity with scriptures, for the most part, is foreign to most Orthodox. Ask a parishioner to say the opening prayer at a dinner, event or function and watch the beads of sweat form on the forehead! We need to **re-evaluate the priorities** of our time, talents and treasure to use them for the true mission of the Church, to make disciples. We need to rejuvenate the discipleship culture. How are you using the gifts God has given you? Are you using them as He has commanded you? (*from acrod.org*)

Gazebo – Your Input Requested



Glory to Jesus Christ! A donor has recently offered to pay for a gazebo (*left*) to be erected over the concrete patio beside the house. It is approximately 12'x12' and is made out of cedar with an aluminum roof. The intent is to provide a covered, outdoor space for fellowship and child play. Please let Father Joseph know by July 16th if you have any objections to this, or if you're willing to help erect it (on a Saturday this month).

COMMUNION ETIQUETTE – SOME IMPORTANT THINGS TO KNOW

For cradle orthodox and converts alike, it's good to review from time to time the mechanics of how we are to worship – especially when approaching the Holy Gifts. All Diocesan priests recently received some formal guidance from the Bishop regarding how services are conducted in parishes throughout the Diocese. One of the items noted is how parishioners are to approach the chalice for communion.

Please approach the chalice with your arms folded across your chest, right over left – do not make the sign of the cross as you stand before the chalice or after you receive the precious Body and Blood. Open your mouth wide and allow the priest to place the Eucharist in your mouth; do not close your mouth on the spoon.

After receiving the Holy Gifts, please do not kiss either the chalice or Father's hand. The purpose of these restrictions is to reduce any possibility of the chalice being spilled or dropped.

Secondly, when we leave our seats and form a line for communion, please do not extend along the perimeter of the sanctuary. Rather, form the line in front of the tetrapod featuring the Icon of the day. Once you've venerated the icon, you may proceed to the right of the stand and wait for the person in front of you to take communion, then move forward. This announcement will be repeated for the next several weeks until everyone has heard it.

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In Your Prayers – Please Remember... His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch BARTHOLOMEW, His Grace Bishop GREGORY, Fr. Joseph & Family, Greek Orthodox Archbishop Paul Yazigi of Aleppo, Syriac Orthodox Archbishop Yohanna Ibrahim of Aleppo, His Grace Bishop Neofitos of Nyeri and Mt. Kenya, Fr. John & Pani Betty Jean Baranik, Fr. Vincent Saverino, Presbyteria Katie Baker and family, Santiago Alzugaray, Alicia Barosio and family, Jeffrey Carey, Tatyana and Slava Chumak & family, Xenia Chilkowich, Jon Church, Ramius Connour, Curtis Cooper, Luke Cooper, Tina Crull, Ron Dominiecki, Linda A. Georgiev, Heather Himler, John Homick, Cameron Houk, Helen Janowiak, John M. Janowiak, Deanna Jarrett, Tucker Karl and family, Robert Karpin, Andrew Kinn, Kopan family, Brian, Helen, and Luke Mahony, Valentina Makowelski, Susan Matula, Anna Meinhold, Dn. Henry Middleton, Josh Moore, David & Kathryn Newman, Bobby Nutter & Family, Henry & Lisa Osborne, Westin Perry & Parents, John Reece, Mary Reed, Chris & Kaitlin Rixey, Jerry Von Ronne, Anne Rosario, James, Theodore and Christina Ristas, Samson Family, Sharon Sheptak, Dawn & Faith Ulmschneider, Lydia Vita, Christine, Marshall, Nathaniel, Subdcn. Nectaros and Ia, the Syrian Christians displaced by war, Mother Virginia Marie and the Carmelite Nuns of Port Tobacco, the newly departed servant of God Gordon Dewey, and all those in need of our prayers. (Please advise Fr. Joseph of changes.)