

SOBORNOST

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American Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Diocese

*ECUMENICAL PATRIARCHATE
OF CONSTANTINOPLE*

SERVICES

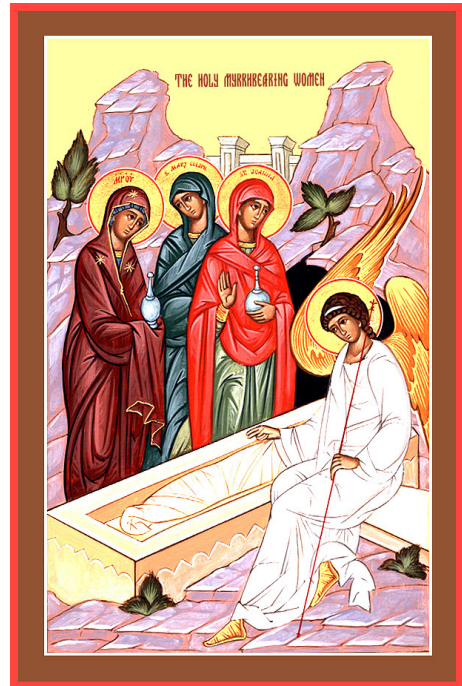
Saturday: Confession 5:00 PM

Great Vespers 5:30 PM

Sunday: Matins (Orthros) 8:45 AM

Children's Sunday School 9:30 AM

Divine Liturgy 10:00 AM.



April 22, 2018 – Sunday of the Myrrh-bearing Women

The diligence of the Holy Myrrhbearing Women is truly great and their fervent love for the Lord is constant. Free from every earthly predilection their hearts lived and breathed only for the Lord: all their thoughts, desires and hope were concentrated in Him and all their blessings and treasure consisted in Him. For the sake of their beloved Teacher they willingly leave their homes, their close and known relatives, forget the weakness of their gender, are not frightened by the cruelty of the numerous enemies of the Lord, steadily follow Him everywhere, long-sufferingly pass through the cities and villages with Him and minister to Him from their means. They do not abandon their beloved Teacher during His suffering and His death. Trailing behind with love, they accompany the Lord also to Golgotha and they look upon the Crucified One, taking measure of the compassionate feeling of His extreme suffering. Having disdained all the dangers of the frantic enemies of Christ, they finally come nearer, to His very cross, and by their participation ease the unquenchable grief and illness of His All-pure Mother. Having fervently served the Lord with their means during His lifetime, they do not stop serving Him even after His death. According to their internal burning love of their Divine Teacher they will zealously render Him the final burial honor: the anointing of His body with aromatic spices. In a holy impulse to see and to visit the tomb of the Lord they forget about themselves, about their need for rest, do not

remember the obstacles and dangers, and even the weakness of their gender does not stop them. Such is the true love of the holy women for the Lord. It is continual, pure and simple, deep and strong. The burning continual love, the sincerest unquenched diligence of the holy women was worthily rewarded by the Lord Himself. The Holy Myrrhbearing Women, who preceded everyone to the tomb of the Lord, also went before everyone in the joy of the Resurrection. From this time the holy women have become true witnesses equally with Holy Apostles to the resurrection of Christ for all the people.

The ardor and continual love of the Holy Myrrhbearers for the Lord also serves as an example for our love for Him. By the example of the holy women, we also should strengthen in our hearts the true self-denying love for our Savior. Even the strength of our love for Him should be like those, as the holy Apostle says, that nothing could separate us from Him, neither things present nor things to come, neither life nor death, neither angels nor men (Rom. 8:38-39). Besides this, in the example of the Holy Myrrhbearing Women the Holy Church presents a spiritual healing for all Christians tempted with sorrows, leading to depression. Like the holy women, wounded with fierce grief during the scene of their Lord and Savior, crucified on the cross and buried in a tomb, however searched for unique comfort in that tomb where all their happiness and life were hidden and found this desired comfort, so it is that each Christian soul should seek consolation in the sorrows and grief at the tomb and cross of the Savior.

Together with this, the life and labors of the Holy Myrrhbearing Women themselves represent an example of the true-Christian pursuit of the Christian woman. Her calling on earth is to privilege a life of the heart in all its lawful displays. An example of the Holy Myrrhbearers and the contemporary Christian woman is likewise called to serve the indigent from their means, to ease the situation of the disabled by their labor, comfort the sorrowful and the sick and, to care "not for the beauty of the body, not for the external braiding of the hair, not about gold finery and elegance in clothes, but about the secret heart of the person in the incorruptible beauty of the gentle and taciturn spirit, that is precious before God" (1 Pet. 3:3-4; 1 Tim. 2:9-12), i.e. about the development and improvement in the Christian spirit of internal spiritual qualities, especially of the good and loving heart. (*from the Bulgakov Handbook, translated by Archpriest Eugene D. Tarris*)

Today's Epistle Lesson – The Acts of the Apostles 6:1-7

In those days, when *the number of* the disciples was multiplying, there arose a complaint against the Hebrews by the Hellenists, because their widows were neglected in the daily distribution. Then the twelve summoned the multitude of the disciples and said, "It is not desirable that we should leave the word of God and

serve tables. Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of *good* reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business; but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word.” And the saying pleased the whole multitude. And they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit, and Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas, a proselyte from Antioch, whom they set before the apostles; and when they had prayed, they laid hands on them. Then the word of God spread, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith.

Today’s Gospel Lesson – Saint Mark 15:43-16:8

At that time, Joseph of Arimathea, a prominent council member, who was himself waiting for the kingdom of God, coming and taking courage, went in to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Pilate marveled that He was already dead; and summoning the centurion, he asked him if He had been dead for some time. So when he found out from the centurion, he granted the body to Joseph. Then he bought fine linen, took Him down, and wrapped Him in the linen. And he laid Him in a tomb which had been hewn out of the rock, and rolled a stone against the door of the tomb. And Mary Magdalene and Mary *the mother* of Joses observed where He was laid.

Now when the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, Mary *the mother* of James, and Salome bought spices, that they might come and anoint Him. Very early in the morning, on the first *day* of the week, they came to the tomb when the sun had risen. And they said among themselves, “Who will roll away the stone from the door of the tomb for us?” But when they looked up, they saw that the stone had been rolled away—for it was very large. And entering the tomb, they saw a young man clothed in a long white robe sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed. But he said to them, “Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He is risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid Him. But go, tell His disciples—and Peter—that He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him, as He said to you.” So they went out and fled from the tomb, for they trembled and were amazed. And they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.

A Word From the Holy Fathers

Love the Word of God, that is the Scriptures, handed down to us by the prophets and apostles, as God Himself. For the word of God is the word of God's mouth. If you love God, then without fail you will love the word of God also. For the word of God is God's epistle or letter to us unworthy ones, and is His supreme gift to us

for the sake of our salvation. If you love the Sender, then also love the letter which is sent from Him to you. For the word of God is given by God to me, to you, and to everyone, so that everyone who desires to be saved may receive salvation through it. You love it when an earthly king writes you a letter, and you read it with love and joy. How much more must we read the letter of the Heavenly King with love and joy?

The word of God was not given to you so that it should lay written only on paper, but so that we may use it spiritually, that we may be enlightened and guided in the true way and salvation, that our morals may be corrected, and that we may live according to its rule in this world, and that we may please God. If you wish, therefore, to be a true Christian, then without fail you must take care to live by its rule. For the word of God is a heavenly seed. It must, then, yield fruit in us after its kind - that is, a holy and heavenly life - otherwise it will accuse us on the day of the fearful Judgment of Christ. Live, therefore, as the word of God teaches, and then correct yourself. Do not pry idly into the mysteries.

Of the mystery of the All-Holy Trinity, the Most-Holy Eucharist, and other such things that are not revealed to us in the holy word of God, do not inquire idly, lest you fall into the snare of the devil and be tangled in it, and not be able to escape from thence, and so perish. For that which requires faith alone transcends our reasoning, and it is very dangerous to pry into these things. Keep yourself, then, from prying into things which are above you. Believe in all things as the Holy Scriptures teach, and as the Holy Church believes and establishes in accordance with it.

– St. Tikhon of Zadonsk

Also Commemorated Today: St. Theodore the Sykeote the Bishop of Anastasiopolis

Saint Theodore was born in the mid-sixth century in the village of Sykeon, not far from the city of Anastasiopolis (in Galatia, Asia Minor), into a pious family. When his mother Maria conceived the saint, she had a vision of a bright star overshadowing her womb. A clairvoyant Elder, whom she consulted, explained that this was the grace of God being poured forth on the infant in her womb.

When the boy reached the age of six, his mother presented him with a golden belt, since she intended that her son should become a soldier. That night the Holy Great Martyr George (April 23) appeared to her in a dream, and he told her not to consider military service for her son, because the boy was destined to serve God. The saint's father, Cosmas, had served as a messenger of the emperor Justinian the Great (527-565), and he died at an early age. The boy remained in the care of his

mother, and his grandmother Elpis, his aunt Dispenia and his little sister Vlatta also lived with them. In school, Saint Theodore displayed great aptitude in his studies, chief of which was an uncommon ability for reasoning and wisdom. He was quiet, mild, he always knew how to calm his comrades, and he did not permit fights or quarrels among them.

The pious Elder Stephen also lived at his mother's house. Imitating him, Saint Theodore at the age of eight began to eat only a small morsel of bread in the evening during Great Lent. So that his mother should not force him to take supper with everyone, the boy returned home from school only toward evening, after he had partaken of the Holy Mysteries with Elder Stephen. At the request of his mother, the teacher began to send him home to supper at the end of his lessons. Saint Theodore, however, ran to the church of the Great Martyr George, where the saint appeared to him in the form of a youth, and ushered him into the church.

When Saint Theodore turned ten, he fell deathly ill. They brought him to the church of Saint John the Baptist and placed him in front of the altar. The boy was healed by two drops of water that fell from the face of the Savior in the dome of the temple. At this time the Great Martyr George began appearing to the boy at night, and also leading him to his own temple to pray until morning. His mother, fearing the dangers of the forest at night, urged her son not to go at night. Once, when the boy had already gone, she angrily followed him to the church, and she dragged him out by the hair and tied him to his bed. But that very night the Great Martyr George appeared to her in a dream, and commanded her not to hinder the child from going to church. Both Elpis and Dispenia had the same vision. The women then understood Saint Theodore's special calling, and they no longer hindered him. Even his little sister Vlatta began to imitate him.

At twelve years of age, the saint had a dream in which he saw Christ on the Throne of Glory, Who said to him, "Struggle, Theodore, so that you may obtain a perfect reward in the Kingdom of Heaven." From that time, Saint Theodore began to intensify his labors. He spent both the First Week of Great Lent and the Week of the Veneration of the Cross in complete silence.

The devil considered how to destroy him. He appeared to the saint in the form of his classmate Gerontius, and urged him to jump off a precipice, but the Great Martyr George saved the boy. Another time, the boy went into the desert to obtain the blessing of the Elder Glycerius. Then there was a terrible drought throughout the land, and the Elder said, "Child, let us pray to the Lord on bended knee, asking Him to send rain. Then we shall learn whether our prayers are pleasing to the Lord." The old man and the boy began to pray, and immediately it began to rain.

Then the Elder said to Saint Theodore, that the grace of God was upon him, and he blessed him to become a monk when the time came.

When he was fourteen, Saint Theodore left home and lived near the church of the Great Martyr George. His mother brought him food, but Saint Theodore left everything on the stones by the church, and he ate only a single prosphora each day. Even at such a young age, Saint Theodore was granted the gift of healing. Through his prayers a demon-possessed youth was restored to health.

Saint Theodore then fled human glory and he withdrew into complete solitude. Under a large boulder not far from the church of Saint George, he dug a cave and persuaded a certain deacon to cover over the entrance with earth, leaving only a small opening for air. The deacon brought him bread and water and he told no one, where the monk had hidden himself. For two years Saint Theodore lived in this seclusion and complete quiet. His relatives mourned for the saint, thinking that he had been devoured by wild beasts.

The deacon finally revealed the secret, since he was afraid that Saint Theodore would perish in the narrow cave, and moreover he pitied the weeping mother. They took Saint Theodore out of the cave barely alive. His mother wanted to take her son home and nurse him back to health, but the saint remained near the church of Saint George, and after several days he was completely well.

News of the youth's exploits reached the local bishop Theodosius, who ordained him to the diaconate, and later to the holy priesthood, although the saint was only seventeen years old at the time. After a certain while Saint Theodore went to venerate the holy places in Jerusalem, and there at the Chozeba Lavra near Jordan, he received monastic tonsure. When he returned to his native land, he again continued to live near the church of Saint George. His grandmother Elpis, his sister Vlatta and his mother entered a women's monastery on the saint's advice, and his aunt died in a good confession.

The ascetic life of the young hieromonk attracted to him people seeking salvation. The saint tonsured the youth Epiphanius, and later on a pious woman, healed by the saint from her sickness, brought him her son Philoumenus. Then the virtuous youth John also came to him. Thus brethren gradually gathered around the monk.

Saint Theodore continued in his harsh labors. At his request a blacksmith made him an iron cage without a roof, and so narrow that it was scarcely possible to stand. In this cage the monk stood in heavy chains from Holy Pascha until the Nativity of Christ. From the Baptism of the Lord until Holy Pascha he secluded himself in his cave, from which he emerged only for church services on Saturdays and Sundays. Throughout the whole of the forty-day Fast the saint ate only greens, and bread on Saturdays and Sundays.

Living in such manner, he received from the Lord the power over wild animals. Bears and wolves came up to him and took food from his hand. Through the saint's prayers, those afflicted with leprosy were healed, and demons were cast out from whole districts. In the nearby village of Magatia, when locusts threatened the crops, people turned to Saint Theodore for help. He sent them to church. After Divine Liturgy, which he served, the villagers returned home and learned that during the service all the locusts had died.

When the military commander Mauricius was returning to Constantinople by way of Galatia after a Persian war, the monk predicted that he would become emperor. The prediction came true, and the emperor Mauricius (582-602) fulfilled the saint's request: he sent bread to the monastery each year for the multitude of people being fed there.

The small temple of Saint George could not accommodate all those who wanted to pray in it. Then through the efforts of the saint a beautiful new church was built. During this while the Bishop of Anastasiopolis happened to die. The people of the city requested Metropolitan Paul of Ancyra to install Saint Theodore as their bishop. So that the saint would not resist, the messengers of the Metropolitan and the people of Anastasiopolis dragged him out of his cell by force and carried him into the city.

As bishop, Saint Theodore toiled much for the welfare of the Church, but his soul yearned for solitary communion with God. After several years he went to venerate the holy places in Jerusalem. And there, concealing his identity, he settled at the Lavra of Saint Sava, where he lived in solitude from the Nativity of Christ until Pascha. Then the Great Martyr George led him to return to Anastasiopolis.

Secret enemies tried to poison the saint, but the Mother of God gave him three small pieces of grain. The saint ate them and remained unharmed. Saint Theodore felt weighed down with the burden of being a bishop and he asked Patriarch Cyriacus of Constantinople (595-606) for a release to return to his own monastery and celebrate the services there.

Theodore's sanctity was so evident that when he celebrated the Eucharist, the grace of the Holy Spirit appeared as a radiant purple light, overshadowed the Holy Gifts. One time, when the saint elevated the discus with the holy Lamb and proclaimed "Holy things are for the holy," the holy Lamb floated up in the air, and then settled again upon the discus.

The Orthodox Church venerated Saint Theodore as a saint, even while he was still alive. In one of the cities of Galatia, a terrible event occurred: during a church procession the wooden crosses being carried began to strike each other by themselves, with the result that Patriarch Thomas (607-610, March 21) summoned

Saint Theodore, asking him the meaning of this terrible portent. Having the gift of foresight, Saint Theodore explained that this indicated coming misfortunes for the Church of God (he was prophetically indicating the future heresy of the Iconoclasts). In his grief the holy Patriarch Thomas begged the saint to pray that he would soon die, so that he would not witness the coming woe. In the year 610 the holy Patriarch Thomas reposed, having asked the blessing of Saint Theodore. Saint Theodore also departed to the Lord. (*from oca.org*)

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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, Presbytera 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, Mary Diane David, Ron Dominiacki, Linda A. Georgiev, Heather Himler, John Homick, Cameron Houk, Helen Janowiak, John M. Janowiak, Tucker Karl and family, Robert & Pam Karpin, Andrew Kinn, Kopan family, Brian, Helen, and Luke Mahony, Valentina Makowelski, Susan Matula, Anna Meinhold, Dn. Henry Middleton, 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. Nectarios and Ia, the Syrian Christians displaced by war, Mother Virginia Marie and the Carmelite Nuns of Port Tobacco, and all those in need of our prayers. (Please advise Fr. Joseph of changes.)