

# SOBORNOST

## St. Thomas the Apostle Orthodox Church

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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.**



## May 13, 2018 – Sunday of the Blind Man (6<sup>th</sup> Sun. of Pascha)

This Sunday commemorates the gift of sight to the man born blind by Jesus Christ. The miracle of the healing of the man born blind is very closely connected to the days of Pentecost by Christians: similar to others, it is commemorated by the Holy Church in this period, and by its occurrence this miracle announces the Divine power and glory of the risen Lord (John 9:31-33, 38).

According to the explanation in the Synaxarion, the miracle of the healing of the man born blind is commemorated on this Sunday because it was accomplished in Pentecost. In the example of the man born blind, who was healed by Jesus Christ the Holy Church presents an image of any sinner, who is blind from birth, "because all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom 3:23), but by the spiritual and physical gift of the wonderful light the eyes of the blind man teaches that the Enlightener is truly the Lord alone, and only in His light is it possible to behold the true and saving light. Therefore the Holy Church in the hymns for this day also appeals to us to cry out: "O Christ God, the Sun of righteousness, Who by your most pure touch enlightened all, now give sight to our spiritual eyes and show us to be the sons of the day", and "our sight of sincere feeling;" "Since You were born from the Virgin, filling all with light, fill me with light for You are compassionate;" "On my wretched soul which battles at night with the darkness of passions, hasten and have compassion, and shine in me, O mental Sun, the rays of

the bright star by which you took out the night from the light;" "Enlighten my mental eyes which are blind, O Lord, from the darkness of sin, and enlighten, O Compassionate One, my closed eyes being washed by tears of humility and repentance;" "Grant me, O Christ, a stream of inscrutable wisdom and knowledge from on high, O existing Light of those in darkness and Guide of all those gone astray" (*from Handbook for Church Servers, 2nd ed., by S. V. Bulgakov (Trans. Archpriest Eugene D. Tarris)*)

### **Today's Epistle Lesson – The Acts of the Apostles 16:16-34**

In those days, as we went to prayer, a certain slave girl possessed with a spirit of divination met us, who brought her masters much profit by fortune-telling. This girl followed Paul and us, and cried out, saying, "These men are the servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to us the way of salvation." And this she did for many days. But Paul, greatly annoyed, turned and said to the spirit, "I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her." And he came out that very hour. But when her masters saw that their hope of profit was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged *them* into the marketplace to the authorities. And they brought them to the magistrates, and said, "These men, being Jews, exceedingly trouble our city; and they teach customs which are not lawful for us, being Romans, to receive or observe." Then the multitude rose up together against them; and the magistrates tore off their clothes and commanded *them* to be beaten with rods. And when they had laid many stripes on them, they threw *them* into prison, commanding the jailer to keep them securely. Having received such a charge, he put them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks.

But at midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them. Suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone's chains were loosed. And the keeper of the prison, awaking from sleep and seeing the prison doors open, supposing the prisoners had fled, drew his sword and was about to kill himself. But Paul called with a loud voice, saying, "Do yourself no harm, for we are all here." Then he called for a light, ran in, and fell down trembling before Paul and Silas. And he brought them out and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" So they said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household." Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night and washed *their* stripes. And immediately he and all his *family* were baptized. Now when he had brought them into his house, he set food before them; and he rejoiced, having believed in God with all his household.

## Today's Gospel Lesson – Saint John 9:1-38

At that time, as *Jesus* passed by, He saw a man who was blind from birth. And His disciples asked Him, saying, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?” Jesus answered, “Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but that the works of God should be revealed in him. I must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day; *the* night is coming when no one can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.” When He had said these things, He spat on the ground and made clay with the saliva; and He anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay. And He said to him, “Go, wash in the pool of Siloam” (which is translated, Sent). So he went and washed, and came back seeing. Therefore the neighbors and those who previously had seen that he was blind said, “Is not this he who sat and begged?” Some said, “This is he.” Others *said*, “He is like him.” He said, “I am *he*.” Therefore they said to him, “How were your eyes opened?” He answered and said, “A Man called Jesus made clay and anointed my eyes and said to me, ‘Go to the pool of Siloam and wash.’ So I went and washed, and I received sight.” Then they said to him, “Where is He?” He said, “I do not know.”

They brought him who formerly was blind to the Pharisees. Now it was a Sabbath when Jesus made the clay and opened his eyes. Then the Pharisees also asked him again how he had received his sight. He said to them, “He put clay on my eyes, and I washed, and I see.” Therefore some of the Pharisees said, “This Man is not from God, because He does not keep the Sabbath.” Others said, “How can a man who is a sinner do such signs?” And there was a division among them. They said to the blind man again, “What do you say about Him because He opened your eyes?” He said, “He is a prophet.” But the Jews did not believe concerning him, that he had been blind and received his sight, until they called the parents of him who had received his sight. And they asked them, saying, “Is this your son, who you say was born blind? How then does he now see?” His parents answered them and said, “We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind; but by what means he now sees we do not know, or who opened his eyes we do not know. He is of age; ask him. He will speak for himself.” His parents said these *things* because they feared the Jews, for the Jews had agreed already that if anyone confessed *that* He *was* Christ, he would be put out of the synagogue. Therefore his parents said, “He is of age; ask him.” So they again called the man who was blind, and said to him, “Give God the glory! We know that this Man is a sinner.” He answered and said, “Whether He is a sinner *or not* I do not know. One thing I know: that though I was blind, now I see.” Then they said to him again, “What did He do to you? How did He open your eyes?” He answered them, “I told you already, and you did not listen. Why do you want to hear *it* again? Do you also

want to become His disciples?” Then they reviled him and said, “You are His disciple, but we are Moses’ disciples. We know that God spoke to Moses; *as for this fellow*, we do not know where He is from.” The man answered and said to them, “Why, this is a marvelous thing, that you do not know where He is from; yet He has opened my eyes! Now we know that God does not hear sinners; but if anyone is a worshiper of God and does His will, He hears him. Since the world began it has been unheard of that anyone opened the eyes of one who was born blind. If this Man were not from God, He could do nothing.” They answered and said to him, “You were completely born in sins, and are you teaching us?” And they cast him out.

Jesus heard that they had cast him out; and when He had found him, He said to him, “Do you believe in the Son of God?” He answered and said, “Who is He, Lord, that I may believe in Him?” And Jesus said to him, “You have both seen Him and it is He who is talking with you.” Then he said, “Lord, I believe!” And he worshiped Him.

## *A Word From the Holy Fathers*

26. Better poverty with knowledge  
than wealth with ignorance.
27. An ornament for the head: a crown;  
an ornament for the heart: knowledge of God.
28. Procure knowledge and not silver,  
and wisdom rather than much wealth.
29. The just will inherit the Lord;  
the holy ones will be fed by Him.
30. He who is merciful to the poor destroys irascibility,  
and he who cares for them will be filled with good things.
35. Irascibility scatters knowledge (of God);  
long-suffering gathers it.
37. He who prays unceasingly escapes temptations,  
but thoughts agitate the heart of the careless one.
44. Better a fast with a pure heart  
than a feast in impurity of soul.

53. Repentance and humility have set the soul up;  
compassion and gentleness have made it firm.
54. In all things remember your exodus (i.e., baptism),  
and do not forget the eternal judgment,  
and there will be no transgression in your soul.
57. Desiring riches, you will be divided by care;  
and cleaving to them, bitterly shall you mourn.

– Evagrius of Pontus, *Ad Monachos*

### Also Commemorated Today: **Virginmartyr Glyceria**



Saint Glyceria suffered as a martyr for her faith in Christ in the second century, during a persecution against Christians under the emperor Antoninus (138-161). She came from an illustrious family, and her father Macarius was a high-ranking Roman official. Later, the family moved to the Thracian city of Trajanopolis.

Saint Glyceria lost both her father and mother at an early age. Falling in with Christians, she converted to the true Faith, and she visited the church every day. Sabinus, the prefect of Trajanopolis, received the imperial edict ordering Christians to offer sacrifice to the idols, and so he designated a certain

day for the inhabitants of the city to worship the idol Zeus.

Saint Glyceria firmly resolved to suffer for Christ. She told the Christians of her intention, and she begged them to pray that the Lord would give her the strength to undergo the sufferings. On the appointed day Saint Glyceria made the Sign of the Cross on her forehead, and went into the pagan temple.

The saint stood on a raised spot in the rays of the sun, and removed the veil from her head, showing the holy Cross traced on her forehead. She prayed fervently to God to bring the pagans to their senses and destroy the stone idol of Zeus. Suddenly thunder was heard, and the statue of Zeus crashed to the floor and smashed into little pieces. In a rage, the prefect Sabinus and the pagan priests commanded the people to pelt Saint Glyceria with stones, but the stones did not touch the saint. They locked Saint Glyceria in prison, where the Christian priest Philocrates came to her and encouraged the martyr in the struggle before her.

In the morning, when the tortures had started, suddenly an angel appeared in the midst of the torturers, and they fell to the ground, overcome with terror. When the vision vanished, Sabinus, who was hardly able to speak, ordered them to throw the saint into prison. They shut the door securely and sealed it with the prefect's own ring, so that no one could get in to her. While she was in prison, angels of God brought Saint Glyceria food and drink. Many days afterwards, Sabinus came to the prison and he himself removed the seal. Going in to the saint, he was shaken when he saw her alive and well.

Setting off for the city of Heraclea in Thrace, Sabinus gave orders to bring Saint Glyceria there also. The Christians of Heraclea came out to meet her with Bishop Dometius at their head, and he prayed that the Lord would strengthen the saint to endure martyrdom. At Heraclea they cast Saint Glyceria into a red-hot furnace, but the fire was extinguished at once. Then the prefect, in a mindless fury, gave orders to rip the skin from Saint Glyceria's head. Then they threw the martyr into prison onto sharp stones. She prayed incessantly, and at midnight an angel appeared in the prison and healed her of her wounds.

When the jailer Laodicius came for the saint in the morning, he did not recognize her. Thinking that the martyr had been taken away, he feared he would be punished for letting her escape. He wanted to kill himself, but Saint Glyceria stopped him. Shaken by the miracle, Laodicius believed in the true God, and he entreated the saint to pray that he might suffer and die for Christ with her. "Follow Christ and you will be saved," the holy martyr replied. Laodicius placed upon himself the chains with which the saint was bound, and at the trial he told the prefect and everyone present about the miraculous healing of Saint Glyceria by an angel, then he confessed himself a Christian.

The newly chosen one of God was beheaded by the sword. Christians secretly took up his remains, and reverently buried them. Saint Glyceria was sentenced to be eaten by wild beasts. She went to execution with great joy, but the lioness set loose upon the saint meekly crawled up to her and lay at her feet.

Finally, the saint prayed to the Lord, imploring that He take her unto Himself. In answer she heard a Voice from Heaven, summoning her to heavenly bliss. At that moment, another lioness was set loose upon the saint. It pounced upon the martyr and killed her, but did not tear her apart. Bishop Dometius and the Christians of Heraclea reverently buried the holy martyr Glyceria. She suffered for Christ around the year 177. Her holy relics were glorified with a flow of healing myrrh. Saint Glyceria, whose name means "sweetness," now rejoices in the unending sweetness of the heavenly Kingdom. (*from oca.org*)

## **Who Else Will Raise the Next Generation of Orthodox Christians?**

A Reflection for Mother's Day *By Fr. George H. Shalhoub*

This Sunday, people throughout the United States and many places around the world will gather to honor their mothers. Many mothers will receive flowers, breakfast in bed, dinners and other acts of affection. For those who may be away from their children, they will have to be content with a phone call or a card in the mail. But, no matter how admirable this day has become for us in today's society, honoring one's mother should not be reduced to a one day activity, because mothers provide the foundation upon which we build our lives.

God gives every created human being a mother here on earth because He loves us. And even after our earthy mother precede us to Heaven, we still have our eternal mother (the Virgin Mary) who always keeps us in the shelter of her wings. As the late Mikhail Naimy stated, "Love is the law of God. You live that you may learn to love. You love that you may learn to live. No other lesson is required of Man."

It is a well-known fact that Christian scripture states that the role of instructing children belongs to their father. (Eph. 6:4) However, for many of us, especially those of us who come from the Middle East, this duty belongs to the mother.

What do mothers contribute to their children? Since God is the founder of the first family and every family on the face of this earth, the family is obligated to worship, praise and honor Him and keep His commandments. Therefore, the mother and father are an image of God to their children, and each has a different function, role and duty within the life of the family.

St. Paul stated in Ephesians, Chapter 5, that women are to be like the Holy Church: blameless and without reproach; and husbands are to be the image of Christ: serving and giving of his life to the Church. We do not enter into a debate of who is more important, more educated or makes more money. No one is greater than the other. Both were crowned, in the Sacrament of Marriage, with glory and honor and are, in God's eyes, equal in creation.

Women of faith, in Holy Scripture, are considered to be "pillars of support" (Proverbs 9:1) and "faithful". (I Tim 3:11) This equality is well put in the mouth of St. Paul, when he said, "Nevertheless, in the Lord woman is not independent of man, nor is man independent of woman. For as woman came from man, so also man is born of woman. But everything comes from God." (I Cor. 11:11-12) Since St. Paul gives this profound image of husbands and wives to be like Christ and the Church and the wife is to be like the Holy Church without distinction, Blessed Augustine once wrote, "He who does not have the church as his mother, does not have God as his father."

I can only speak to what my own mother contributed to my life and the lives of my siblings. I vividly recall that by the age of two, any time the church bells rang to signal a service, my mother would take me to church with her. I confess that being so young, I didn't understand what the worship was all about, and despite being disruptive during the service, as young children are apt to be, I still felt secure and happy within the boundaries of the church. This experience left a longstanding impression on me that caused me to learn a lifetime of lessons as a son, a young man, a husband, a father, a grandfather and of course as a priest.

The lessons instilled by a mother are those emphasized in 2 Peter that says that the seeds which are implanted in our hearts, minds and souls can produce virtues or thorns. A mother's words can either heal or scar her children. They can encourage or defeat. They can raise up, or put down. These virtues, whether good or bad determine what a child will be like as an adult, as unique individuals. We are a reflection of our parents' attitudes, yet we bear on ourselves God's image and likeness. Though we inherit genetics from our parents, we are original and individual in God's eyes. All the schooling we acquire and the careers we undertake hinge on the lessons we received from our mother. She is the scale which balances life's experiences. We either love or hate, are generous or greedy based on lessons we learn as children. Even though my mother was illiterate, she taught me the prayers of the Church which she knew by heart. I could summarize what the gospel teaches, what St. Peter insists makes a good life, and about being dedicated as a Christian based on things I learned from my mother, not through her words, but through her actions. She personified this idea from 2 Peter 1:5 "But also, for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, godliness to brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love."

The calling of mothers is of self-giving for the sake of the family. St. John Chrysostom states, "A mother experiences more than one death, even though she herself will only die once. She fears for her husband; she fears for her children; again she fears for the women and children who belong to her children....For each of these, whether for loss of possessions, bodily illness or undesired misfortune, she mourns and grieves no less than those who suffer." Our image of mothers in the Holy Church is the Virgin Mary. John of Damascus describes her calling to motherhood, "O Mother of God! If I place my confidence in thee, I shall be saved; if I am under thy protection, I have nothing to fear; for the fact of being thy client is a possession of a certainty of salvation which God grants only to those whom He intends to save." This should be the mission of every mother.

The Bible, and especially Proverbs 6:20-23, advises us in this way, "My child, keep your father's command and do not forsake your mother's teaching. Bind them always on your heart; fasten them around your neck. When you walk, they will guide you; when you sleep, they will watch over you; when you awake, they will speak to you. For this command is a lamp, this teaching is a light and correction and instruction are the way to life." An old Arab proverb says that "Heaven bows before a mother's feet. The Book of Proverbs 31:1 also states, "Who can find a virtuous mother, she is more precious than jewels." As Henry Ward Beecher stated, "The mother's heart is the child's first school room."

Today, we are in need of the Church to raise women of faith. Who would take a bullet for you? Or catch a hand grenade? Or step in front of a train for you? Or pray that God will take her instead of her child, but a mother? "A mother's love is something that no one can explain. It is made of deep devotion and of sacrifice and pain. It is endless and unselfish and enduring come what may, for nothing can destroy it or take that love away." (Helen Steiner Rice)

As an adult, a man learns how to love his wife and children through the way he loves his mother and the way his mother loves him. A woman learns from the sacrifices of her mother. No one can teach decency, character and dignity but a mother. As children, our bodies are nourished through our mother's milk and as we grow, our souls are nourished in the same way through the kindness, compassion and generosity she feeds us.

We are dealing with a new reality of moms and dads both working to meet life's demands and needs. The question to be asked, "Who can teach decency and respect, form character and dignity, but a mother?"

A virtuous mother is so needed to instill in her children the faith we received from the saints. As Gibran Kahlil Gibran wrote, "The mother is everything - she is our consolation in sorrow, our hope in misery, and our strength in weakness. She is the source of love, mercy, sympathy, and forgiveness. He who loses his mother loses a pure soul who blesses and guards him constantly."

On this Mother's Day, we salute all mothers and those who are in heaven, we ask for their intercession. For those still on earth, we pray that God gives them a long and healthy life. If your mother has blessed you much, thank her. And if your mother has failed you, the best Mother's Day gift you can give is to forgive her.



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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, Mary Diane David, Ron Dominiecki, 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, Bernie Takabayashi & family, 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.)