

# SOBORNOST

## St. Thomas the Apostle Orthodox Church

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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**

**Children's Sunday School 9:30 AM**

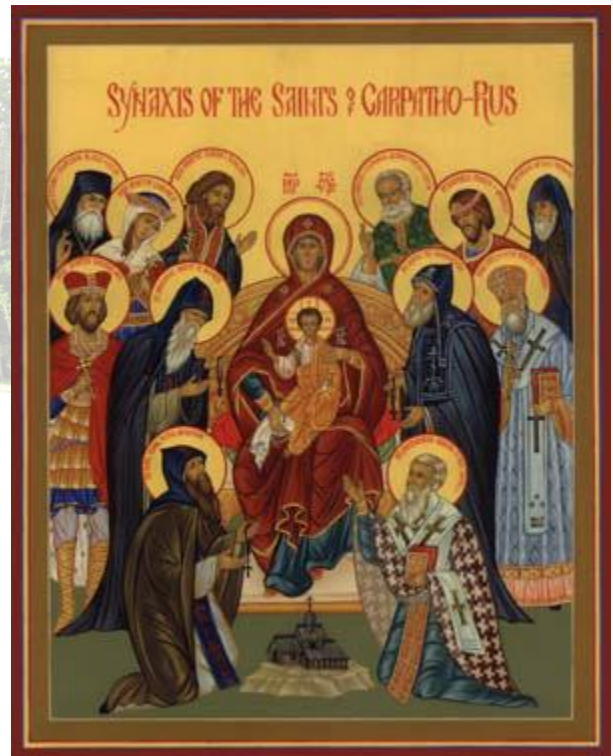
**Divine Liturgy 10:00 AM.**

**June 10, 2017 – 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday After Pentecost**

## Commemoration of the Saints of Carpatho-Rus

On the second Sunday after Pentecost, each region in world Orthodoxy commemorates those Saints who are associated in some way with either its geographic home, or that of its roots. The Saints among the forbearers of our Diocese are primarily identified with the eastern European lands of Carpatho-Rus, especially areas of the present-day Czech and Slovak Republics, Ukraine and Poland. The icon above portrays twelve of these Saints surrounding the young Christ child and the Theotokos. Orthodoxy is relatively new to North America, and although there are already a small number of canonized Saints of North America, we were called by our Metropolitan Nicholas of thrice-blessed memory to specifically remember the Saints of Carpatho-Rus on this day.

One among these is the Holy Martyr Ludmila (second from left, top row in the icon). Blessed Ludmila was from Serbia, the daughter of a Serbian prince. Being of royal lineage, her family decided that she should marry the Czech Prince, Borivoj, who had been baptized by St. Methodius in the mid 870's. The prince had supported the missionary work of Saints Cyril and Methodius, especially in the education of his people in their own language, Slavonic. In 873, Ludmila and



Borivoj were joined in marriage, and in honor of this blessed event they ordered the construction of the first church in Prague, dedicated to the Theotokos. Her husband died at an early age, so her son, Vratislav, ascended the throne. At this point in her life, Holy Ludmila put her trust in the Lord and distributed all her goods to the poor. For 30 years her son ruled Bohemia and Moravia building numerous churches as well as encouraging the use of Slavonic, the language of the people, over that of Latin in liturgical use.

Following Vratislav's death, Wenceslas, Ludmila's grandson, assumed power and continued to support the construction of churches and encouraged the use of Slavonic in the church. Her daughter-in-law, Drahomira, an avowed pagan and extremely jealous over Ludmila's piety, began to plot against her. Without any warning, the peace and tranquility in Blessed Ludmila's life was under attack. Having discovered her daughter-in-law's evil plan, Blessed Ludmila fled to a nearby town, but two boyars, hired by Drahomira, secretly followed her. One night, they broke into the blessed one's house, threw a rope around her neck and strangled her. When Wenceslas learned about the crime a few days later, he hurried to the village, and with great solemnity, transported her holy body to the Church of St. George in Prague. Christ's holy martyr had breathed her last in 926. Her piety spread throughout the Orthodox World, and her saintly life holds a place of prominence in the vast choir of martyrs.

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Today we also commemorate the **Holy Martyr Gorazd, Bishop of Prague**, the rightmost figure, second row, wearing the bishop's mitre. Born in the village of Hrubá Vrbka in Moravia in 1879, Matej Pavlik (Bishop Gorazd) entered the Roman Catholic Seminary and was ordained a priest for the province of Sliezsko. During the First World War, he began to explore the early Byzantine influence of Christianity, especially the missionary activity of Saints Cyril and Methodius. Soon the priest realized the errors of the western church, and desired to return to the Orthodox faith. Following World War I, the Serbian Orthodox Church assisted in re-establishing the Orthodox Church in Czechoslovakia. In 1921, the Serbian Patriarch received the priest, Matej Pavlik, bestowed upon him the name Gorazd, and consecrated him bishop of Moravia and Sliezsko. Throughout the 1920's and 1930's, Bishop Gorazd labored tirelessly to rebuild the Orthodox Church in Czechoslovakia writing catechetical and spiritual manuals for the faithful.

With the advent of World War II, Bishop Gorazd continued to labor for Orthodoxy in German-occupied Czechoslovakia. Life became unbearable for the Slavic population as the process of Germanization, a form of ethnic cleansing, was implemented and overseen by the German SS Obergruppenführer Reinhard

Heydrich. In an attempt to thwart the Nazi regime, the resistance movement planned the assassination of Heydrich. On May 27, 1942, the assassination took place, and Heydrich died one week later from injuries sustained in the attempt. With little time to escape, the brave men who carried out the assassination fled to the Orthodox Cathedral of Saints Cyril and Methodius. Fr. Vladimir Petrak, a priest of the Cathedral, decided to hide them in the crypt of the church.

On June 18, the Nazi's surrounded the Orthodox Cathedral, and with 360 members of the SS, they stormed the church and the crypt. Many were arrested that day including Fr. Vladimir Petrak. Immediately, Bishop Gorazd, who knew about the hiding place, went to the office of the Prague Reichprotector. In an attempt to end the terror, the saintly bishop said, "I surrender my person to the authorities, and I am ready to undergo any punishment, even death if necessary." The Nazi regime ignored his plea. Five days later, Bishop Gorazd was arrested and was tortured for several weeks. He was tried and convicted as a conspirator along with Fr. Vladimir Petrak. On September 4, 1942 the pious Bishop Gorazd was executed by a Nazi firing squad. The parishes of the Czech Orthodox Church were dissolved and their properties confiscated by the Third Reich. All Orthodox priests were taken away by the Gestapo and sent to labor camps in Germany. Thus the holy martyr Bishop Gorazd ended his life laboring 21 years for the Holy Orthodox Church.

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**St. Alexis (Kabaljuk) of Khust** was born in Carpatho-Rus' and entered the Russian Orthodox Monastery in Kholm. In 1913, Archimandrite Alexis and most of the village of Iza openly proclaimed themselves Orthodox. The Hungarian Government declared this as an act of treason against the state. In an official trial in the city of Marmarosh, St. Alexis was convicted of treason - instructing the faithful in the teachings of Orthodoxy - and was sentenced to prison. Many of the villagers who had proclaimed their Orthodox faith suffered brutal punishment including one woman who would later become the abbess of a convent in the village of Lipsha.

Following the end of World War I, St. Alexis continued to bring many of our people back to the Orthodox Faith. His efforts, along with the aid of the Serbian Patriarchate, brought forth fruit one hundred fold as dozens of formerly Greek Catholic villages renounced their "Uniate faith" and embraced Orthodoxy. Some 20 villages numbering 35,000 souls returned in the first years after the war. The Saint also built an academy and boarding school at the church in Khust where he served. When the Serbian Patriarch decided to revive the Orthodox Diocese of Mukachevo, it was the parish in Khust, under the pious leadership of Archimandrite Alexis that accepted the task as temporary administrative center of

the diocese. It was also at this time that St. Justin (Popovich) arrived to assist the newly reorganized diocese of Mukachevo.

With the advent of World War II, the Orthodox Church in the Carpathian Homeland again endured the heavy-handed persecution of the Hungarians. Having aligned themselves with Hitler's Nazi Germany, the Axis Army swept through the villages removing "suspicious" individuals. Our holy father and confessor, Alexis, old and frail, continued to endure the persecution and zealously assist and defend Orthodoxy throughout the war years. In 1947, he fell asleep in the Lord having brought many from darkness into the light of Christ.

### **Today's Epistle Lesson – St. Paul's Letter to the Romans 2:10-16**

BRETHREN, glory and honor and peace for every one who does good, the Jew first and also the Greek. For God shows no partiality. All who have sinned without the law will also perish without the law, and all who have sinned under the law will be judged by the law. For it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous before God, but the doers of the law who will be justified. When Gentiles who have not the law do by nature what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law. They show that what the law requires is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness and their conflicting thoughts accuse or perhaps excuse them on that day when, according to my gospel, God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus.

### **Today's Gospel Lesson – Saint Matthew 4:18-23**

At that time, as Jesus walked by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon who is called Peter and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen. And he said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." Immediately they left their nets and followed him. And going on from there he saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets, and he called them. Immediately they left their boat and their father, and followed him. And he went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and preaching the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every infirmity among the people."

## *A Word From the Holy Fathers*

Holy Baptism is like a door by which those who are baptized enter into the holy Church and become *fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God* (Eph. 2:19). And not just so, but before Baptism there are renunciations and vows:

1. We renounce Satan and all his evil works. Satan is a wicked and evil spirit. He was created good by God, but he and those of like mind with him apostasized from Him, and so from light they became dark, and from good they became evil and wicked. His works are idolatry, pride, adultery, prodigality, all uncleanness, slander, blasphemy and every sin; for he is the inventor of sin, and he beguiled our ancestors in paradise and led them into sin and apostasy from God. We renounce this wicked spirit and all his evil works before Baptism.

2. We renounce every vanity, pride and pomp of this world, as ones called to and renewed for everlasting life.

3. We promise to serve Christ the Son of God in faith and in truth together with the Father and the Holy Spirit, and to follow in His footsteps.

4. Thus we establish a covenant between God and us. We, who have renounced Satan, promise to serve God and be faithful to him. God accepts us in His supreme mercy and promises us an inheritance in everlasting life and the Kingdom, and washes us who are defiled by sin in the laver of Baptism. He sanctifies and justifies us, as the priest says over everyone who is baptized, "You are washed, You are sanctified, You are justified" (cf. I Cor. 6:11).

Beloved Christians, let us remember these renunciations and vows, and consider whether we keep them, for it is a grave thing to lie to God, and it is very dangerous to be found false before Him. Let us consider, then, whether any of us have not gone back to Satan, whether we have not renounced Christ and abandoned Him? Let us consider on whose side we find ourselves, on Satan's or on Christ's. One serves and belongs to him whose will he performs. He renounces Christ not only he who renounces His holy name and does not confess Him to be the Son of God and his Savior, but also he who sins against conscience and recklessly breaks His holy commandments. This is the teaching of the Apostles. For the Apostle says, "They profess that they know God; but in works they deny Him," and the rest (Tit. 1:16).

Do you see that people reject God in works too, and not just with their lips? Is anyone a prodigal, and does he commit adultery? He rejects Christ. Does anyone hate his neighbor and seek him out to harm him? He has apostasized from Christ. Does anyone steal; does he rob and take away his neighbor's goods? He has departed from Christ. Does anyone deceive and flatter his neighbor? He is no longer with Christ, but in all these things he submits to the enemy of salvation, and so he does not stand in the promises which he made to God, and so he has lied to God. Let us examine then, beloved, our conscience and our life.

To which side do we belong, to Christ's or to His enemy's? To the good, or to the evil? To the lot of the saved or to that of the lost? He who is not with Christ is the

enemy of Christ. For Christ Himself said, "He who is not with Me is against Me" (Matt. 12:30).

Beloved, let us watch ourselves and let us be with Christ here in this world, as we have vowed at Baptism: let us be with Christ here that we may be with Christ in the age to come, according to His promise who cannot lie, "Where I am, there shall also My servant be" (John 12:26). Let us serve Him here as our King and God, that on the Day of Judgment He will acknowledge us as His laborers and number us with His faithful servants and open unto us the doors of everlasting joy. Remember the vows made at Baptism.

So that you may act on the aforementioned points, you must remember the vows you made at holy Baptism. For even if not you yourself but your sponsor made those vows before God on your behalf, you promised then, spitting on Satan, and on his pride, and on his service, and on his evil works-you promised, I say-and vowed to serve Jesus Christ your Lord and Redeemer in faith and in truth, together with the Father and the Holy Spirit.

Consider, Christian, what vows you made and to Whom. It is a grievous thing to lie to a man; how incomparably more grievous it is to lie to God. "God is not mocked" (Gal. 6:7). When a Christian does not stand on his promises and does not keep them, what mercy, then, should he expect from God, to Whom he lied? He who keeps his promises shall find himself in God's mercy and in His Kingdom. He remains faithful to God, and God will hold him in mercy and in His protection as His own. And this is what the prophet sings to God, "With the holy man You will be holy, and with the innocent man You will be innocent. And with the elect man You will be elect, and with the perverse You will be perverse" (Ps. 17:26-27).

Christians! All those who commit iniquity and act against their conscience do not keep their vows. These include fornicators, adulterers, and all defilers, robbers, thieves, brigands, the sly, and crafty, deceivers and the guileful, revilers and men of evil speech, drunkards, fault finders, the hateful, and the malicious; those who live in the pride and pomp of this world, and all who do not fear God. They have all lied to God and have not kept their vows, and are outside of the holy Church, though they may even go to churches and pray and receive the Mysteries and build churches and adorn them and display other signs of a Christian. Since they shall be powerfully put to the test at the Judgment of Christ and tormented more there than Turks and idolaters, avoid these deeds, Christian and do not imitate the aforementioned doers of iniquity, lest you be condemned with them to eternal fire by the just judgment of God, "where their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched" (Mark 9:44), but by all means endeavor so to live and act as the word of God teaches, as was said above. Keep in mind those vows of yours, and this will

guide you toward the Christian life and restrain you from every evil and do you good. If you notice that you do not keep those vows, then repent and begin the Christian life anew, lest you appear before God in a lie, and perish with liars.

“The fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone: which is the second death” (Apoc. 21:8).  
– St. Tikhon of Zandonsk

## **Also Commemorated Today: Hieromartyr Timothy, Bishop of Prusa**

The Hieromartyr Therapon, Bishop of Prusa (Bithynia), received from the Lord the gift of wonderworking because of his purity and sanctity of life. At Prusa he converted many pagans to the faith in Christ. The emperor Julian the Apostate (361-363), upon hearing about Saint Timothy had him locked up in prison, but even there also the saint continued to preach the Gospel. Julian forbade him to teach about Jesus Christ, but the saint continued to spread the Christian Faith. Finally, the emperor gave orders to behead the saint. His holy relics were afterwards transferred to Constantinople. (*from oca.org*)

## **Holy New Martyr Savvas the Stageiritis**

Saint Savvas was born in Stageira towards the end of the eighteenth century. Out of love for the monastic way of life, he departed for Konstamonitou Monastery in Mount Athos, where he lived in asceticism as a monk. The reasoning behind going to this Monastery most likely had to do with its close relationship to Stageira in Halkidiki.

In this Monastery, which is dedicated to the Protomartyr and Archdeacon Stephen, Saint Savvas dedicated his life devoting himself to virtue and piety, thus preparing himself for the crown of martyrdom. Saint Savvas lived during the time of the revolution of Halkidiki in 1821, when he was called to follow the path of martyrdom. The only source of his martyrdom is Monk Dositheos from Konstamonitou whose origins were in Lesvos, in his book titled "New Memorial of the Newly-Appeared Hieromartyrs and Venerable Martyrs, the Brilliant Athonite Venerable Fathers, Who Were Killed During the Greek Revolution Under the Ottomans."

Let us see how Dositheos describes the martyric end of Saint Savvas:

"And now brethren, let us proceed to the simple Savvas the Stageiritis, who foreknew his blessed death and the way it would take place, because having

departed the Coenobium, and was sent out to Ierissos by the Fathers, and he said to a brother of the Coenobium who was his friend what would take place in the future. He saw, in a vision of the night, that persecuted by enemies they killed him. And it appeared to the blessed one, that his soul flew to the heavens, while his body was on earth. He became convicted of this truth of his foreknowledge and foresight after the vision. Therefore passing by the revered Zographou Monastery, the blessed one was killed by the impious together with another secular man, a servant of the Monastery, both also being from Stageira. And in this way came about their blessed repose."

This is how the Holy Venerable Martyr Savvas the Stageiritis was martyred and received the unfading crown of the glory of God. The first icon of the Saint was painted by the iconographer Christos Karapalis, and his service was composed by the hymnographer Haralambos Bousias. The first feast in his honor took place in 1988 when a parish received the first icon of the Saint, and it was attended by Metropolitan Nikodemos of Ierissos. *(from johnsanidopoulos.com)*

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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 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. Nectaros 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.)