

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.

July 1, 2018 – 5th Sunday After Pentecost

Holy Unmercenary Healers Cosmas and Damian

The Holy Martyrs, Wonderworkers and Unmercenary Physicians Cosmas and Damian were born at Rome, brothers by birth, and physicians by profession. They suffered at Rome in the reign of the emperor Carinus (283-284). Brought up by their parents in the rules of piety, they led strict and chaste lives, and they were granted by God the gift of healing the sick. By their generosity and exceptional kindness to all, the brothers converted many to Christ. The brothers told the sick, "It is not by our own power that we treat you, but by the power of Christ, the true God. Believe in Him and be healed." Since they accepted no payment for their treatment of the infirm, the holy brothers were called "unmercenary physicians."

Their life of active service and their great spiritual influence on the people around them led many into the Church, attracting the attention of the Roman authorities. Soldiers were sent after the brothers. Hearing about this, local Christians convinced Saints Cosmas and Damian to hide for a while until they could help them escape. Unable to find the brothers, the soldiers arrested instead other Christians of the area where the saints lived. Saints Cosmas and Damian then came out of hiding



and surrendered to the soldiers, asking them to release those who had been arrested because of them.

At Rome, the saints were imprisoned and put on trial. Before the Roman emperor and the judge they openly professed their faith in Christ God, Who had come into the world to save mankind and redeem the world from sin, and they resolutely refused to offer sacrifice to the pagan gods. They said, “We have done evil to no one, we are not involved with the magic or sorcery of which you accuse us. We treat the infirm by the power of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and we take no payment for rendering aid to the sick, because our Lord commanded His disciples, “Freely have you received, freely give” (Mt. 10: 8).

The emperor, however, continued with his demands. Through the prayer of the holy brothers, imbued with the power of grace, God suddenly struck Carinus blind, so that he too might experience the almighty power of the Lord, Who does not forgive blasphemy against the Holy Spirit (Mt. 12:31). The people, beholding the miracle, cried out, “Great is the Christian God! There is no other God but Him!” Many of those who believed besought the holy brothers to heal the emperor, and he himself implored the saints, promising to convert to the true God, Christ the Savior, so the saints healed him. After this, Saints Cosmas and Damian were honorably set free, and once again they set about treating the sick.

But what the hatred of the pagans and the ferocity of the Roman authorities could not do, was accomplished by black envy, one of the strongest passions of sinful human nature. An older physician, an instructor, under whom the holy brothers had studied the art of medicine, became envious of their fame. Driven to madness by malice, and overcome by passionate envy, he summoned the two brothers, formerly his most beloved students, proposing that they should all go together in order to gather various medicinal herbs. Going far into the mountains, he murdered them and threw their bodies into a river.

Thus these holy brothers, the Unmercenary Physicians Cosmas and Damian, ended their earthly journey as martyrs. Although they had devoted their lives to the Christian service of their neighbors, and had escaped the Roman sword and prison, they were treacherously murdered by their teacher.

The Lord glorifies those who are pleasing to God. Now, through the prayers of the holy martyrs Cosmas and Damian, God grants healing to all who with faith have recourse to their heavenly intercession.

The Unmercenary Saints Cosmas and Damian of Rome should not be confused with the Unmercenary Saints Cosmas and Damian of Asia Minor (November 1), or the Unmercenary Saints Cosmas and Damian of Arabia (October 17) (*from oca.org*)

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

Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved. For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes. For Moses writes about the righteousness which is of the law, "The man who does those things shall live by them." But the righteousness of faith speaks in this way, "Do not say in your heart, 'Who will ascend into heaven?'" (that is, to bring Christ down from above) or, "'Who will descend into the abyss?'" (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). But what does it say? "The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart" (that is, the word of faith which we preach): that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

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

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

THE THREE MEDICINES OF THE HOLY UNMERCENARIES

By His Eminence Metropolitan Seraphim of Kastoria

In accordance with the tradition of our Holy Church, we approach our saints every day, honoring their memories, bearing their names and asking for their intercessions and mediations before the throne of God.

They are saved, we are sinners; they are in the Light, we are in darkness. Full of illnesses we ask the saints to heal our bodies, though more rarely to heal our souls. And the saints, compassionate as they are, being imitators of the merciful God,

graciously give us what we need, assisting us, strengthening us and healing us. But we especially recommend three medicines.

The first medicine is the fear of God. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" (Ps. 110:10), recommends the Psalmist of Holy Scripture. Fear of God precedes all virtues. To approach God, to submit to Him our requests, for Him to hear us and grant us what we need, fear must distinguish us, that is, we must recognize His omnipotence, accept Him in our lives, receive His commandments, remember that He is judge of the living and the dead. Moreover, for our life to obtain value, we must be in communion with God. "Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the duty of all men" (Eccl. 12:13). You cannot blaspheme the name of God and at the same time ask for your healing, nor can you approach Him and ask for His mercy and at the same time trample on other people. Your life should be such that communication with God is secure and certain, and you will be established by the saints of our Church.

The second medicine is prayer. "It is needed for man to always pray and supplicate God", exhorts the Holy Shepherd. This is what Christ assured us: "Without Me you can do nothing." Prayer is not only an honor for man, to be able to communicate with Almighty God, but it is also a privilege and responsibility. To reach the throne of Divine Majesty, it should be accompanied with humility, simplicity and trust. Prayer is even the result of the fear of God. If there is no fear of God our prayer cannot be heard by God. This is why God sometimes does not meet our requests, simply because we neither fear God nor reverence Him.

The third medicine is love for our neighbor. God is love, and He wants us to be people of love. "The Lord is good to all; He has compassion on all He has made" (Ps. 145:9). God gives His mercies and spreads His love to all His creation. If a person does not have this love for others, they cannot even speak of God, nor seek that their requests be satisfied. If they do not acquire "inner mercy" and if they cannot see the face of God in another person, they will not even see the Kingdom of Heaven.

These three medicines, so powerful for our sinful times as well as for the apostasy, fearlessness and ruthlessness that overwhelms us all, are given to us by the Holy Unmercenaries, whose memory we celebrate today. They had the fear of God, used prayer and they sincerely loved their fellow man. That is why God gave them the gift to work miracles. Saints of God, intercede for us. (*from johnsanidopoulos.com*)

A Word From the Holy Fathers

When we know that faith without works is dead, why don't we take care to act as is pleasing unto God, but, O woe, behave as if no Day of Judgment and the reward of Hell or the kingdom of heaven awaited us? Especially when people of any intelligence realize that those who have revered and honored God from of old are glorified in this world, and that they will be remembered eternally, and that ineffable blessedness awaits them, but as for those who have delivered themselves into the depths of darkness in their lack of fear of God, and who are not willing to come to their senses and move toward the light of repentance, even if in the deceit of life they thought they were exalted, still "their memory has been destroyed with a noise." Since we are not willing to listen to what God has commanded through His prophets, and through the holy Gospels and apostles and teachers (for who is not led to understanding by the holy passage, "they have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them: and live?"), and are completely disobedient, how shall we live? For, as the saying goes, "The eyes of the Lord are over the righteous," and so forth, so also, "The face of the Lord is against them that do evil, to destroy their memorial from the earth, and "The righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance, he shall not be afraid of any evil report," and "Blessed is the man that fears the Lord: he will delight greatly in His commandments."

... If then we hasten toward repentance, and cease our shameful acts, after hearing the words, "If you are willing and hearken unto me, you shall eat the good of the land," I beg of you, let us strive to avoid the threat which follows. "Turn to me" not in word alone, but in deed, "and I will turn to you." What glory for us to gain both life here on earth and eternal life, and what misfortune to be deprived of both! Let us not deceive ourselves that by sowing evil, we will someday reap good. If we do not try to mend our ways, who will be our guardian? "Not even Noah and Daniel and Job", says the Lord, "can save from hell their sons and daughters who have acted unlawfully." Therefore let us seek God; "the Lord is near," it is said, "to all who call upon Him in truth." Therefore let us rouse each other with words and deeds to a law-abiding existence, for as "we turn our hearts toward Him, thus will He speak peace to his people"....

Let us revere and fear God, let us love Him, my beloved, since He anxiously awaits and desires our repentance. And let the generation which succeeds us hear about us what was said of the Ninevites, that "God saw their works, when they turned each one from their evil ways, and from the iniquity that was in their hands, and He repented of the evil which He had said He would do them." "Let us draw near to Him:" through our works, "and He will draw near to us." And may we be deemed worthy of Him, through the intercessions of our eternally celebrated

Mistress and Lady, the Mother of God, and through the prayers of all the saints from the beginning of the world....

– St. Athanasius, Patriarch of Constantinople, *Letter 110*

Also Commemorated Today: St. Peter the Patrician

Saint Peter was the son of the patrician and commander Constantine, who served under Emperor Constantine VI (780- 797) and Empress Irene. From a young age Peter attended various schools, and gathered knowledge like a bee gathers honey. After he got married and his father died, he was honored and became Domestic of the Schools, which was a senior military post, and was also given the title of Patrician. When Nikephoros the Patrician became Emperor (802-811), he made Peter Domestic of the Hikanatoi, or the head of the elite imperial guard. The emperor then took Peter with him to Bulgaria in 811, where there was a war between the Romans and Bulgarians.

Having gathered for war, the Romans defeated the Bulgarians, but the emperor was mortally wounded and Peter along with fifty commanders was captured and imprisoned. While in prison, Peter prayed, and Saint John the Theologian and Evangelist appeared. The Holy Apostle released him from his bonds and guided him back to the land of the Romans. From that moment the blessed one looked upon all worldly things as dung, and after retiring from the military he left for Mount Olympus in Asia Minor. There he found Saint Ioannikios the Great, who guided him in the way of virtue and salvation, and was clothed in the angelic schema of the monks.

While at Mount Olympus, the Saint exercised every virtue. After thirty-four years had passed, he returned to Constantinople. There he built a church in the Evandrou quarter. Because his wife and son had died, he built a hut some distance away and lived there for eight years. Saint Peter covered his body in a garment made of prickly hair, and throughout all the years he lived as an ascetic he never wore shoes. He disciplined his body with fasting and vigils and other hardships. Having conducted his life well and in a God-pleasing manner, he reposed in the Lord. It is said that under his garment of hair, he was dressed in a garment made of wicker, and with this he was buried. (*from johnsanidopoulos.com*)

Treasurer's report for June

Glory to God! For the month of June, we had \$10,013 of income and \$14,905 in expenses. Major expenses included more water removal from the house basement, and the final icon project installment. With the installation of the beautiful new icons, we have paid for them in full and are complete with those payments. We

also gave a considerable amount to charity last month. Thank you once again for being such great stewards of God's house!

In Christ, Josh Moore, Treasurer

NEWS FROM JESSE BRANDOW

June 2018

Dear friends,

Did you hear about the volcanic eruption in Guatemala? We're okay! The churches where I work are very far from any of the volcanos in the country. I thought this was a good opportunity to let you know that we are doing well, and the mission is growing!

Guatemala News

New church consecrated in Ixcán region: On April 22nd, His Eminence Athenagoras consecrated a church in the jungles of Ixcán—a two-day journey from the airport in Guatemala City. It is our first church to be designed from the outset according to the principles of Orthodox architecture.

Guatemalan seminarians are progressing: The seminarians in our theology program have now begun their third course, which is called "Covenant: from Abraham to Moses." A fifth seminarian, Sebastián, is studying in Greece and just completed his first year. Please keep our seminarians in your prayers!

Advances in our medical mission: The Orthodox medical student, Juana Pascual, successfully completed her first year of medical school at the Mariano Gálvez University in Huehuetenango. She plans to work in the Orthodox clinic after graduating. At the clinic we welcomed our second dental resident, Candy López, who started in June and will work in Aguacate for one year.

Other advances in our 200+ parishes:

- Holy Transfiguration Church in Oaxacaná installed its first iconostasis, made by a local Orthodox carpenter
- During Lent this year Fr. Evangelios introduced the Pre-Sanctified Liturgy in his 70+ churches

Personal News

My 4th year of ministry, and beyond: I just entered my 4th year as a missionary—time flies! Many people ask: "When are you coming home?" The truth is that Guatemala is slowly becoming my home. My grandmother worked as a missionary nurse in India for more than a decade, and I am open to walking a similar path. Even if I remain in Guatemala for an extended period of time, I will

still see you regularly in the United States on furlough, with my next furlough being in 2019.

Current ministry focus: My responsibilities continue to be diverse: teaching workshops in our parishes, leading mission teams, preparing Spanish-language catechetical materials, and teaching in the St. Andrew Seminary. Since the beginning of 2018, my *primary* focus has been drawn even more towards teaching the seminarians.

Ways to Help

Prayer requests:

- Vocations to the priesthood from among our older seminarians: Sebastián, Antonio, Jorge, Pedro, Ricardo.
- Healing for all who were affected by the June 3rd eruption of the Fuego volcano.
- My continued discernment of questions related to marriage. Also, that I will have wisdom as I teach the seminarians. I don't have formal credentials to be a seminary teacher, but I am doing all I can to rise to the occasion!

Spanish speakers needed: Our August mission team needs more volunteers, especially Spanish speakers. Please consider volunteering for this opportunity.

Donate icons: We gladly accept donations of small paper icons, with two requirements: they must be laminated and they must depict Christ or the Theotokos. We distribute these to our faithful, most of whom do not have icons. Please email me at j.brandow@ocmc.org for more info.

Final Word

I'll end by sharing three of my favorite moments from the past months:

- There is a woman from one of our churches who has a massive tumor in her abdomen. For years she has prayed for healing, but the tumor continues to grow. Her extended family started pressuring her to reject her faith in Christ and turn to pagan Mayan priests instead. She refused, and with great pain she came to the Unction service during Holy Week. Many of us were moved to tears when we saw her faith.
- One of our seminarians had a "eureka" moment. After several classes on the Jesus prayer, and after reading *The Way of the Pilgrim* in Spanish, he said to me: "Jesse, I'm starting to understand that prayer isn't just about telling God our needs. It's about spending time with Him." I wanted to jump up and shout "YES!" Of course, the "needs" that this seminarian prays for are *not trite*; he is referring to the

poverty and suffering that are part of people's lives in Guatemala. Those are profound and worthy prayers, yet at the same time he is maturing to an even deeper relationship with Christ. Thanks be to God!

- I was thrilled to learn that the newly-consecrated church in Ixcán is already inspiring other Orthodox communities. The Orthodox parish in Tzisco decided to build a new church using the same traditional architectural principles that they saw in Ixcán: an overhead dome and a cruciform shape.

As you can see, Orthodoxy in Central America is bursting with energy and hope for the future! Thank you for enabling me to serve these beautiful people, through your prayers and support.

In Christ,

Jesse

Follow Our Diocese On-Line

Diocesan Website: <http://www.acrod.org>

Camp Nazareth: <http://www.campnazareth.org>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/acroddiocese>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/acrodnews>

You Tube: <https://youtube.com/acroddiocese>

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 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, Alexander Shostko, 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.)