

# 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 8, 2018 – 6<sup>th</sup> Sunday After Pentecost**

## Greatmartyr Procopius of Caesarea

The Holy Great Martyr Procopius, in the world Neanius, a native of Jerusalem, lived and suffered during the reign of the emperor Diocletian (284-305). His father, an eminent Roman by the name of Christopher, was a Christian, but the mother of the saint, Theodosia, remained a pagan. He was early deprived of his father, and the young child was raised by his mother. Having received an excellent secular education, he was introduced to Diocletian in the very first year of the emperor's accession to the throne, and he quickly advanced in government service. Towards the year 303, when open persecution against Christians began, Neanius was sent as a proconsul to Alexandria with orders to mercilessly persecute the Church of God.

On the way to Egypt, near the Syrian city of Apamea, Neanius had a vision of the Lord Jesus, similar to the vision of Saul on the road to Damascus. A divine voice exclaimed, "Neanius, why do you persecute Me?"

Neanius asked, "Who are you, Lord?" "I am the crucified Jesus, the Son of God." At that moment a radiant Cross appeared in the air. Neanius felt an inexpressible



joy and spiritual happiness in his heart and he was transformed from being a persecutor into a zealous follower of Christ. From this point in time Neanius became favorably disposed towards Christians and fought victoriously against the barbarians.

The words of the Savior came true for the saint, “A man’s foes shall be those of his own household” (Mt. 10:36). His mother, a pagan herself, went to the emperor to complain that her son did not worship the ancestral gods. Neanius was summoned to the procurator Judaeus Justus, where he was solemnly handed the decree of Diocletian. Having read through the blasphemous directive, Neanius quietly tore it up before the eyes of everyone. This was a crime, which the Romans regarded as an “insult to authority.” Neanius was held under guard and in chains sent to Caesarea of Palestine, where the Apostle Paul once languished. After terrible torments, they threw the saint into a dark prison. That night, a light shone in the prison, and the Lord Jesus Christ Himself baptized the suffering confessor, and gave him the name Procopius.

Repeatedly they led Saint Procopius to the courtroom, demanding that he renounce Christ, and they subjected him to more tortures. The stolidity of the martyr and his fiery faith brought down God’s abundant grace on those who witnessed the execution.

Inspired by the example of Procopius, many of the holy martyr’s former guards and Roman soldiers went beneath the executioner’s sword together with their tribunes Nikostrates and Antiochus. Twelve Christian women received martyr’s crowns, after they came to the gates of the Caesarea Praetorium.

Struck by the great faith and courage of the Christians, and seeing the firmness of her son in bearing terrible sufferings, Theodosia became repentant and stood in the line of confessors and was executed. Finally the new procurator, Flavian, convinced of the futility of the tortures, sentenced the holy Great Martyr Procopius to beheading by the sword. By night Christians took up his much-tortured body, and with tears and prayers, they committed it to the earth. This was the first martyrdom at Caesarea (303). (*from oca.org*)

### **Today’s Epistle Lesson – St. Paul’s Letter to the Romans 12:6-14**

Brethren, having gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, *let us use them*: if prophecy, *let us prophesy* in proportion to our faith; or ministry, *let us use it* in *our* ministering; he who teaches, in teaching; he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.

*Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good. Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another; not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer; distributing to the needs of the saints, given to hospitality. Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse.*

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

At that time, Jesus got into a boat, crossed over, and came to His own city. Then behold, they brought to Him a paralytic lying on a bed. When Jesus saw their faith, He said to the paralytic, “Son, be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you.” And at once some of the scribes said within themselves, “This Man blasphemes!” But Jesus, knowing their thoughts, said, “Why do you think evil in your hearts? For which is easier, to say, ‘Your sins are forgiven you,’ or to say, ‘Arise and walk’? But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins”—then He said to the paralytic, “Arise, take up your bed, and go to your house.” And he arose and departed to his house. Now when the multitudes saw *it*, they marveled and glorified God, who had given such power to men.

### **STS. PROKOPIOS AND CONSTANTINE, PROTECTORS OF ORTHODOX MARRIAGE**

In the blessing at the conclusion of the Holy Matrimony service, the prayers of St. Prokopios and those of Sts. Emperors Constantine and Helen are requested, as they are considered as protector saints of marriage. *(It should be noted that the name Prokopios means "to advance" or "to move forward" or "to improve" or "to increase". In the last prayer during the Service of Matrimony, when St. Prokopios is invoked, it is prayed that the newly-crowned couple "advance" or "move forward" (προκόπτων) in their faith in Christ. In the hymns dedicated to St. Prokopios we pray that just as he "advanced" in faith, that he also lead us to "advance" in Christ and good works. This is the primary reason St. Prokopios is invoked during the Service of Matrimony. – J.S.)* But I have been asking myself why the Church considers Sts. Constantine and Helen as intercessors for marriage? By mentioning them together in the service of Holy Matrimony, is confusion not perpetuated (or created) among some believers that they are husband and wife?

Reading about the lives of these protector saints of marriage, we find some striking similarities between them. Just as Constantine the Great had a strong relationship with his mother who was instrumental in bringing him to Christ, Prokopios also had a strong relationship with his mother Theodosia. The difference is that Prokopios led his mother (who was a strong pagan believer) to Christ.

Another similarity is that both St. Constantine and St. Prokopios had a vision of the Holy Cross. Most of us are familiar with the revelation to Constantine, which changed the course of Salvation history. The vision of the Holy Cross was instrumental in Constantine's decision to make Christianity the official religion of the Empire. It also empowered his mother Helen to travel to the Holy Land to find the holy places where our Lord lived, walked, taught and ministered unto us and to build churches on these sites.

Reminiscent of St. Paul the Apostle, St. Prokopios, who was at one time a general in the Roman army of Diocletian, was sent to Alexandria to destroy those "who believe in the One who was crucified." About three o'clock in the morning, while on the road to Alexandria, an earthquake shook the ground and there was lightning and thunder. Prokopios heard a voice from Heaven asking him, "O Neania (which was his name as a pagan), do you come against Me also?" A bright cross appeared in the sky and the voice continued, "I am Jesus the Crucified One, the Son of God." The cross went up to Heaven and the voice spoke again saying, "In this sign that you saw, you will defeat your enemy and My peace will be with you." The Holy Cross, which led these Saints to the true faith, united them in the Body of Christ and protected their lives, is also the guiding sign of Holy Matrimony.

The experience of the Cross is what made these Saints the praying protectors of Holy Matrimony. Of course, we acknowledge the fact that "the cross we all must carry" in our following of Christ is part of marriage. However, the cross is also associated with marriage, because marriage is seen as a fight. This fight is not a struggle between two persons trying to work out their differences and making the marriage (the "becoming one") work, as we might simplistically see it. This is a good fight, a "warlike" fight, the husband and wife become partners, and they help and support one another.

We understand marriage in this way as a school of virtues. In marriage, the natural gratification of the pleasures of the flesh is sanctioned by God as an expression of true love between a husband and a wife and as a means of perpetuating mankind. In regard to this, St. Paul says, "But I say to the unmarried and to the widows: it is good for them if they remain even as I am (unmarried): but if they cannot exercise self-control, let them marry. For it is better to marry than to burn with passions." The Cross of Christ is part of marriage, for in this sign, marriage will succeed, will conquer, will destroy the enemies of our souls and will find the peace of God.

Sts. Constantine and Helen are considered as intercessors for marriage, because they were crowned emperors: "God-crowned Kings and Saints-equal-to-the-Apostles." Marriage is also called "the crowning" (cununia, the Romanian word

for Holy Matrimony, comes from the noun *cununa*, meaning crown), for in marriage, a crowning takes place. The new couple indeed becomes King and Queen, being crowned for each other. Their crowning is recognized on Earth and in Heaven. They start a new dynasty, and a new little church,” which can last until the end of the world through their offspring. What I believe is more important is the fact that Sts. Constantine and Helen’s crowns were received in Heaven. We know the same thing about St. Prokopios, who died as a martyr for the faith in Christ. From the Heavenly place, these saints pray that the crowned servants of God in Holy Matrimony will also become worthy of the Heavenly Kingdom. Let those of us who receive the crowns of Holy Matrimony, remember that marriage will succeed only when it is under the protection of the sign of the Holy Cross. Let us also remember that, ultimately, marriage is not a goal in itself, but a means for the Salvation of our souls. In this respect, the prayer of the priest at the crowning is meaningful: “Bless their goings out and their comings in; replenish their life with good things; receive their crowns into Your kingdom, preserving them spotless, blameless, and without reproach, unto ages of ages.” (*adapted fr. johnsanidopoulos.com*)

## *A Word From the Holy Fathers*

Do not put your trust in yourself. Place all hope in the Lord, and His help will always be with you. In preparing for battle, however, do not think that you will always be victorious. Often there will be only hardship that will bring nothing but affliction. You will often see that with each desire to be careful, slips and blunders steal by and creep in. Know ahead of time that this is the way things are. You will encounter them, but do not be afraid. You are seeing all of this now beforehand; do not expect the life ahead to be anything other than one in the midst of all kinds of hostility, worries and misfortunes. Provide yourself with only one thing, strong courage: no matter what happens, stay with what you have begun. This alone must now be established and set for life by commitment and by steadfast perseverance. No matter how life goes, whatever successes and failures there are, you should give all of this over to God’s will.

– St. Theophan the Recluse

## **Conclusions of the 2nd International Conference on Digital Media and Orthodox Pastoral Care In Kolymbari, Crete**

‘The voice of the Lord is upon many waters... the Lord is upon many waters... the Lord will bless His people in peace (Ps. 28, 3, 11).

Gathered under the aegis of His All-Holiness Bartholomew, the Ecumenical Patriarch, through the unstinting love of the local shepherd, His Eminence Amphilochios, and the paternal blessing and care of the Very Reverend Abbot of the Holy and Great Monastery of Vatopaidi, Elder Efraim, were 103 speakers from 17 countries, clergymen and lay people, representing all aspects of ecclesiastical life. The particular focus of the conference was the function and spread of digital media in contemporary society and in developments within the Church.

At the first conference, in May 2015 in Athens, a start was made and the foundations were laid. The aim was that, at the second conference, here in Kolymbari, we would begin to build the structure through a productive approach to problems, so that solutions might appear to the problems and answers to the questions. The anthropology of the Orthodox Church was set by the main speakers as the basis for the pastoral treatment of the challenges of the digital ecosystem.

At this conference, too, at the sessions and round tables, the dangers involved in the use of digital media were analyzed, though this time in a more specialized form. Interest often centered on the special case of young people, because of their inexperience and their natural proclivity towards addiction. The creation of a framework of education which will promote discernment, as well as the development of the personality, rather than any indiscriminate suppression of the use of digital media, were the main lines along which suggestions were made. In this field, it was judged that collaboration with the family and the spiritual guide were of the essence, as was the Church's particular concern with religious education. Interesting suggestions were made regarding the use of digital technology with the aim of creating favorable psycho-educational conditions for assisting young people to understand and accept the central concepts of the life in Christ. Observations concerning the use of advertising by the Church were made in the same spirit.

The practice of fasting as a means of self-control over our passions and habits and as a way of liberating and expanding our sensory perceptions was suggested by a good number of speakers and attendees, with the aim of dealing ascetically with the use of digital media. The virtues of self-reproach and self-examination, derived from the treasury of the Orthodox niptic tradition, were projected as the bases for the character building of digital media users, as a way of dealing with all kinds of temptation.

The treatment of ecclesiastical news services and reporting, the dangers which lie therein, the manner in which they should be served, as well as ethical and moral issues were all addressed by specialists. Serious comments were expressed regarding the relationship between the official Church and personal/ independent

initiatives in the digital media. In the realm of missionary work, the new opportunities generated by digital media were highlighted, given that these have brought overwhelming changes to the practices which have been applied until now.

Notice was taken of the dangers arising from groups which, with a positive or negative religious or ecclesiastical label, promote their own interests. Suggestions were made for initiatives on the part of the Church concerning other burning questions, such as bioethics, which would involve the establishment of special committees, conferences and programs.

On the issue of broadcasting services on digital media, reference was made to the fact that, in certain cases, it creates ecclesiastical and pastoral problems. It was therefore suggested that the matter be re-examined in the spirit of a more discreet treatment which would preserve the sanctity of the sacraments and protect the user of digital media from the temptation of a harmful form of spiritual, media consumerism.

A common denominator for the foundation of an authentic ecclesiastical journalistic code of conduct, of the missionary use of digital media and the transmission of acts of worship by them, is the quest for truth and respect for the sacramental life, always in combination with the protection of individuals and their freedom. In the spirit of the above, the need was expressed for the creation of a Church news agency which would meet a need which exists in the Orthodox sphere. It was therefore announced that, as of the coming autumn, a new international Church information agency would be formed, under the name 'Orthodoxy'.

Of particular value were the papers which dealt with the presence of the official Church on the internet so far, through the various sites of the individual Churches. It was noted that, despite a generally valiant effort, much work remains to be done if these sites are to respond properly on both the pastoral and theological level. Observations regarding the inadequacy of the provision of Biblical and Patristic sources in digital form to people involved in the Church and, in particular, theology, were especially telling. The suggestions which were made were notable for their practical value.

As regards Church singing, it was remarked that, historically, every technical development had been embraced and put to use: writing, printing, the radio and television. Modern digital media offers many new ways of communicating and new tools. The pastoral answer to the ever-lurking dangers, in keeping with the measured approach of our Church, is that there should be protection against possible excesses and a maintenance of the required balance, so that the vast potential may be put to the best use.

Special weight was given at this conference to the issue of the self and the person within the digital ecosystem, both from the psychological and also, mainly, from the theological and pastoral point of view. Lots of papers led with the concept of the person/self, and round table discussions on a variety of subjects were also concerned with it. It was noted that extreme virtualization can dislocate not only the nature of things and the senses, but also people themselves. It can affect the Orthodox ontology of the person and cause painful changes in identity. In our contemporary situation, extravagant virtualization involves the danger of trans-humanism and, thereafter, post-humanism. If the Church is to utilize the great potential of digital media for its pastoral role, it must have recourse to the safety valve of 'balanced minimization' as regards the use and production of virtual imaging.

The burning question of artificial intelligence was addressed in relation to the search for a formalistic and deterministic intelligence which, reinforcing the cognitive capabilities of the human brain, would be able to solve routine problems. At the same time, issues arose concerning the nature of this enterprise, as well as its spiritual and moral dimension. Particular emphasis was placed by the specialists on the fact that the tremendous potential for processing data would produce power, but, without people, this would not translate into meaning. The center of gravity for any consideration of the issue falls on the semantic web, in other words, once again, on people themselves. On this level, the human person is irreplaceable and bears the full responsibility for the bestowal of meaning in the use of both artificial intelligence as well as in every other advanced achievement of digital technology. The theological, spiritual and pastoral understanding of all the above was informed by the relationship between God and people. To the degree that this relationship affects, inspires and guides the human person, we will find ways of using the digital ecosystem which will be appropriate for our creation in His image and our calling to be in His likeness. The fullness of the sacramental, prayerful, and loving life of the Church was repeatedly highlighted at the conference, as being the fundamental element in the healthy and genuinely productive use of digital media. The value of expert knowledge was not ignored, nor was the need for continuous updates by qualified people in positions of responsibility. The sacrament of confession was proposed as the criterion for the use of digital media by all Christians, clergy and laity. The opening of the heart in the sacrament of spiritual paternity protects the internet user from the pleasures of self-promotion, the cultivation of ideal and imaginary situations and the rejection of natural human relationships. For these reasons the common position was agreed that digital media can provide valuable services to spiritual guidance, but in no instance should ever replace the sacrament of confession.

Our contact and discussions did not end here. Much was said, but much more also remains to be discussed in the future. We shall therefore continue under the auspices of the International Union of Digital Media for Orthodox Pastoral Care, which was announced by the director of Pemptousia, Mr. Nikolaos Gouraros, in his introduction. During our time together here, we have experienced the fact that the digital world is an ocean of many waters. If people, the agents of discourse in this wonderful world, realize their aim of healing and unifying their hypostasis in Christ, then the Lord will bless the digital ecosystem and transform it into a time and place of peace, centered on the Kingdom to come. *(from myocn.net)*



## July Anniversaries and Birthdays



### Anniversaries:

Jacob & Hillary Maher 19<sup>th</sup>  
Jim & Jessica Stiver 26<sup>th</sup>      Doug & Lauren Chadwick 28<sup>th</sup>

### Birthdays:

Phyllis Kopan 4<sup>th</sup>      Olga Dewey 6<sup>th</sup>      Logan Grant 6<sup>th</sup>  
Shannon McNeil 7<sup>th</sup>      Avery Lynne Robinson 19<sup>th</sup>      Melanie Samson 20<sup>th</sup>  
Phyllis Thomidis 21<sup>st</sup>      Tudor Stefan Popescu 23<sup>rd</sup>      Valentina Makowelski 25<sup>th</sup>  
Jamila Madison 30<sup>th</sup>

## **PREPARE THE WAY!**

This Sunday, parishioners will vote on the future of the rectory/social hall. Regardless of how the vote goes, a lot of work cleaning out the basement needs to happen in the next two weeks. So, if you have some time help, please contact Bernie Vallandingham. We also need to create shelf space, so if people have unused shelving at home they're willing to donate, measure it and let Bernie know. Thank you!

### 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, 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, 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.)