

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 22, 2018 – 8th Sunday After Pentecost

Myrrhbearer and Equal of the Apostles Mary Magdalene

On the banks of Lake Genesareth (Galilee), between the cities of Capharnum and Tiberias, was the small city of Magdala, the remains of which have survived to our day. Now only the small village of Mejhdel stands on the site.

A woman whose name has entered forever into the Gospel account was born and grew up in Magdala. The Gospel tells us nothing of Mary's younger years, but Tradition informs us that Mary of Magdala was young and pretty, and led a sinful life. It says in the Gospels that the Lord expelled seven devils from Mary (Luke. 8:2). From the moment of her healing Mary led a new life, and became a true disciple of the Savior.

The Gospel relates that Mary followed after the Lord, when He went with the Apostles through the cities and villages of Judea and Galilee preaching about the Kingdom of God. Together with the pious women Joanna, wife of Choza (steward of Herod), Susanna and others, she served Him from her own possessions (Luke 8:1-3) and undoubtedly shared with the Apostles the evangelic tasks in common with the other women. The Evangelist Luke, evidently, has her in view together



with the other women, stating that at the moment of the Procession of Christ onto Golgotha, when after the Scourging He took on Himself the heavy Cross, collapsing under its weight, the women followed after Him weeping and wailing, but He consoled them. The Gospel relates that Mary Magdalene was present on Golgotha at the moment of the Lord's Crucifixion. While all the disciples of the Savior ran away, she remained fearlessly at the Cross together with the Mother of God and the Apostle John.

The Evangelists also list among those standing at the Cross the mother of the Apostle James, and Salome, and other women followers of the Lord from Galilee, but all mention Mary Magdalene first. Saint John, in addition to the Mother of God, names only her and Mary Cleopas. This indicates how much she stood out from all the women who gathered around the Lord.

She was faithful to Him not only in the days of His Glory, but also at the moment of His extreme humiliation and insult. As the Evangelist Matthew relates, she was present at the Burial of the Lord. Before her eyes Joseph and Nicodemus went out to the tomb with His lifeless Body. She watched as they covered over the entrance to the cave with a large stone, entombing the Source of Life.

Faithful to the Law in which she was raised, Mary together with the other women spent following day at rest, because it was the great day of the Sabbath, coinciding with the Feast of Passover. But all the rest of the peaceful day the women gathered spices to go to the Grave of the Lord at dawn on Sunday and anoint His Body according to the custom of the Jews.

It is necessary to mention that, having agreed to go on the first day of the week to the Tomb early in the morning, the holy women had no possibility of meeting with one another on Saturday. They went separately on Friday evening to their own homes. They went out only at dawn the following day to go to the Sepulchre, not all together, but each from her own house.

The Evangelist Matthew writes that the women came to the grave at dawn, or as the Evangelist Mark expresses, extremely early before the rising of the sun. The Evangelist John, elaborating upon these, says that Mary came to the grave so early that it was still dark. Obviously, she waited impatiently for the end of night, but it was not yet daybreak. She ran to the place where the Lord's Body lay.

Mary went to the tomb alone. Seeing the stone pushed away from the cave, she ran away in fear to tell the close Apostles of Christ, Peter and John. Hearing the strange message that the Lord was gone from the tomb, both Apostles ran to the tomb and, seeing the shroud and winding cloths, they were amazed. The Apostles went and said nothing to anyone, but Mary stood about the entrance to the tomb and wept. Here in this dark tomb so recently lay her lifeless Lord.

Wanting proof that the tomb really was empty, she went down to it and saw a strange sight. She saw two angels in white garments, one sitting at the head, the other at the foot, where the Body of Jesus had been placed. They asked her, "Woman, why do you weep?" She answered them with the words which she had said to the Apostles, "They have taken my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid Him." At that moment, she turned around and saw the Risen Jesus standing near the grave, but she did not recognize Him.

He asked Mary, "Woman, why do you weep? Whom do you seek?" She answered thinking that she was seeing the gardener, "Sir, if you have taken him, tell me where you have put Him, and I will take Him away."

Then she recognized the Lord's voice. This was the voice she heard in those days and years, when she followed the Lord through all the cities and places where He preached. He spoke her name, and she gave a joyful shout, "Rabboni" (Teacher).

Respect and love, fondness and deep veneration, a feeling of thankfulness and recognition at His Splendor as great Teacher, all came together in this single outcry. She was able to say nothing more and she threw herself down at the feet of her Teacher to wash them with tears of joy. But the Lord said to her: "Do not cling to me; for I am not yet ascended to My Father; but go to My brethren and tell them: "I ascend to My Father, and your Father; to My God and to your God."

She came to herself and again ran to the Apostles, to do the will of Him sending her to preach. Again she ran into the house, where the Apostles still remained in dismay, and proclaimed to them the joyous message, "I have seen the Lord!" This was the first preaching in the world about the Resurrection. The Apostles proclaimed the Glad Tidings to the world, but she proclaimed it to the Apostles themselves.

Holy Scripture does not tell us about the life of Mary Magdalene after the Resurrection of Christ, but it is impossible to doubt, that if in the terrifying minutes of Christ's Crucifixion she was at the foot of His Cross with His All-Pure Mother and Saint John, she must have stayed with them during the happier time after the Resurrection and Ascension of Christ. Thus in the Acts of the Apostles Saint Luke writes that all the Apostles with one mind stayed in prayer and supplication, with certain women and Mary the Mother of Jesus and His brethren.

Holy Tradition testifies that when the Apostles departed from Jerusalem to preach to all the ends of the earth, then Mary Magdalene also went with them. A daring woman, whose heart was full of reminiscence of the Resurrection, she went beyond her native borders and went to preach in pagan Rome. Everywhere she proclaimed to people about Christ and His teaching. When many did not believe that Christ is risen, she repeated to them what she had said to the Apostles on the

radiant morning of the Resurrection: “I have seen the Lord!” With this message she went all over Italy.

Tradition relates that in Italy Mary Magdalene visited Emperor Tiberias (14-37 A.D.) and proclaimed to him Christ’s Resurrection. According to Tradition, she brought him a red egg as a symbol of the Resurrection, a symbol of new life with the words: “Christ is Risen!” Then she told the emperor that in his Province of Judea the unjustly condemned Jesus the Galilean, a holy man, a miracle worker, powerful before God and all mankind, had been executed at the instigation of the Jewish High Priests, and the sentence confirmed by the procurator appointed by Tiberias, Pontius Pilate. Mary repeated the words of the Apostles, that we are redeemed from the vanity of life not with perishable silver or gold, but rather by the precious Blood of Christ.

Thanks to Mary Magdalene the custom to give each other paschal eggs on the day of the Radiant Resurrection of Christ spread among Christians over all the world. In one ancient Greek manuscript, written on parchment, kept in the monastery library of Saint Athanasius near Thessalonica, is a prayer read on the day of Holy Pascha for the blessing of eggs and cheese. In it is indicated that the igumen in passing out the blessed eggs says to the brethren: “Thus have we received from the holy Fathers, who preserved this custom from the very time of the holy Apostles, therefore the holy Equal of the Apostles Mary Magdalene first showed believers the example of this joyful offering.”

Mary Magdalene continued her preaching in Italy and in the city of Rome itself. Evidently, the Apostle Paul has her in mind in his Epistle to the Romans (16: 6), where together with other ascetics of evangelic preaching he mentions Mary (Mariam), who as he expresses “has bestowed much labor on us.” Evidently, she extensively served the Church in its means of subsistence and its difficulties, being exposed to dangers, and sharing with the Apostles the labors of preaching.

According to Church Tradition, she remained in Rome until the arrival of the Apostle Paul, and for two more years following his departure from Rome after the first court judgment upon him. From Rome, Saint Mary Magdalene, already bent with age, moved to Ephesus where the holy Apostle John unceasingly labored. There the saint finished her earthly life and was buried.

Her holy relics were transferred in the ninth century to Constantinople, and placed in the monastery Church of Saint Lazarus. In the era of the Crusader campaigns they were transferred to Italy and placed at Rome under the altar of the Lateran Cathedral. Part of the relics of Mary Magdalene are said to be in Provage, France near Marseilles, where over them at the foot of a steep mountain a splendid church is built in her honor.

The Orthodox Church honors the holy memory of Saint Mary Magdalene, the woman called by the Lord Himself from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God. Formerly immersed in sin and having received healing, she sincerely and irrevocably began a new life and never wavered from that path. Mary loved the Lord Who called her to a new life.

She was faithful to Him not only when He was surrounded by enthusiastic crowds and winning recognition as a miracle-worker, but also when all the disciples deserted Him in fear and He, humiliated and crucified, hung in torment upon the Cross. This is why the Lord, knowing her faithfulness, appeared to her first, and esteemed her worthy to be first to proclaim His Resurrection. (*adapted from oca.org*)

Today's Epistle Lesson – St. Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians 1:10-18

Brethren, I plead with you by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and *that* there be no divisions among you, but *that* you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. For it has been declared to me concerning you, my brethren, by those of Chloe's *household*, that there are contentions among you. Now I say this, that each of you says, "I am of Paul," or "I am of Apollos," or "I am of Cephas," or "I am of Christ." Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul? I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius, lest anyone should say that I had baptized in my own name. Yes, I also baptized the household of Stephanas. Besides, I do not know whether I baptized any other. For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of no effect. For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

Today's Gospel Lesson – Saint Matthew 14:14-22

At that time, when Jesus went out He saw a great multitude; and He was moved with compassion for them, and healed their sick. When it was evening, His disciples came to Him, saying, "This is a deserted place, and the hour is already late. Send the multitudes away, that they may go into the villages and buy themselves food." But Jesus said to them, "They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat." And they said to Him, "We have here only five loaves and two fish." He said, "Bring them here to Me." Then He commanded the multitudes to sit down on the grass. And He took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, He blessed and broke and gave the loaves to the disciples; and the disciples gave to the multitudes. So they all ate and were filled, and they took up twelve baskets full of the fragments that remained. Now those

who had eaten were about five thousand men, besides women and children. Immediately Jesus made His disciples get into the boat and go before Him to the other side, while He sent the multitudes away.

THE TRUTH ABOUT ST. MARKELLA OF CHIOS

By John Sanidopoulos

Once in a while we come upon a detailed biography of a saint and we wonder where all this information came from. The details are such that only an eye-witness can testify to them, yet when we come to the end of the story we see that all the eyewitnesses are no longer alive to tell the story. In such cases, we need to understand that there is something else being conveyed in the narrative besides telling us a detailed historical biography.



Such is the case with St. Markella of Chios, a beloved saint in the Orthodox Church celebrated annually on July 22nd throughout the Orthodox world. Yet before St. Markella became widely known in the past century or so, she was locally venerated in the island of Chios. Historically, there are no manuscripts or other written documents that refer to her life. For this reason, those ecclesiastical writers who sought to compile her life to be included in the official reading of the Church came out empty handed, and hence her name was commemorated without any details. Today, however, when we research the life of St. Markella, we get a detailed biography of around thirty pages (see <https://www.johnsanidopoulos.com/2010/07/life-and-martyrdom-of-saint-markella-of.html>). How did this come about?

Metropolitan Sophronios Eustratiades of Leontopolis (1878- 1947), in his book *Lives of the Saints of the Orthodox Church*, explains as follows under the section titled "Venerable Markella":

It is unknown when the Saint lived. In the surviving record about her it says that 'there is no account of her, no canon and no legend, and therefore seems unknown,' but has become known through the inhabitants of the island of Chios, and from many years past have a temple in honor of the Saint, by whom is performed many miracles. Her biographical record in the "Leimonarion" is a construct of modern times, making her to be a citizen of Chios, although we have no ancient sources for this. The poetic

service dedicated to her was composed by Hieromonk Nikephoros of Chios, based on the modern legend of the same Nikephoros. Also, there is no evidence of a more ancient service to her. The residents of Chios, among other miracles of the Saint, affirm also the following: At the beach where her temple is located there are stones full of coagulated blood which they scrape off and put into vessels and this is able to cure every disease. The following important iambic verses are written of Markella:

'Though unknown to us all Markella, Christ saw the way you contested.'

But while this verse is ignorant of the way of her contest, her recent biographer Nikephoros says that she was killed by her father for refusing to succumb to his lewd desires.

St. Nikodemos the Hagiorite (1749–1809), in his Synaxaristes for the Twelve Months of the Year, also explains the strange iambic verses as follows:

Though unknown to us all Markella, Christ saw the way you contested.

It appears that it is not known who this Saint Markella is, or where she was martyred, because no record has been preserved and her story has not been handed down. But the inhabitants of the island of Chios from olden times built a revered church in her name, and they have a great relationship and reverence towards her. Hence there followed many miracles performed in Chios through this Saint on a daily basis.

One miracle among many takes place even today. Where the church of the Saint was built, one can find gravel and rocks near the shore, which appear to be full of coagulated blood. Christians take these bloodied rocks and scrape them, and they put the scrapings in a pot which they keep for the healing of every illness. From this the Saint has become familiar to everyone as a Venerable One and Martyr. A Martyr from the coagulated blood found on the rocks there. A Venerable One from her appearances, which she does through sleep. To many who flee to her church for the grace of healing, the Saint appears in their sleep wearing the clothing of a nun, and it is thought she comes from the sea and enters the church there.

From these two authoritative sources, we learn that the modern legend of St. Markella was compiled by St. Nikephoros of Chios (1750-1821) based on the traditions of the local inhabitants with additional didactic elements based on these stories. Before these stories were compiled, nothing was known, as is testified by the iambic verses in her honor. Metropolitan Dionysios of Chios further adds in his biography published in 1990:

There are several theories given regarding when St. Markella may have lived. Some suggest she lived during the persecution of Isidoros in Chios. Others maintain that her Roman name, her father's idolatrous persuasion, and her father's use of a bow and arrow may place the account during the persecution of the third and fourth centuries. On the other hand, many contend she lived after Sts. Isidore and Matrona, the latter having reposed in 1462. Saint Nikephoros of Chios, who composed her divine service, together with chroniclers, place the martyrdom c. 1500. Most theologians and scholars prefer the date after 1500, especially since no records or shrine to her memory exist before that time.

Based on all this information, St. Nikolai Velimirovich (1880- 1956) in his Prologue offers the best summary of the life of St. Markella:

Saint Markella is greatly venerated on the island of Chios. In the church dedicated to her there, miracles occur every year. However, her life is not known. According to tradition Markella was an unusually pious girl who was left motherless at an early age. Her bestial, pagan father wanted to live with his daughter as with a wife. Markella fled from her father, but he, enraged like a wild beast, caught up with her and cut her into pieces. In the proximity of her church, there are certain stones that, from time to time, become as if covered with blood. People take these stones, bring them to church, and pray to St. Markella. They then touch the sick with them, who are thereby healed. (*adapted fr. johnsanidopoulos.com*)

A Word From the Holy Fathers

We should pray from our hearts to the great God and the Mother of God and His saints... and first of all concern ourselves with moderation and righteousness as much as is humanly possible; for in this way we will receive help from heaven. How disgraceful it is for a man to give up the twofold love and help of God for the sake of physical pleasures! And how glorious it is for a man to have faith in God and to rise above corrupting pleasures! For those who live in this way are fearful to their enemies, and beloved by all, and yearned for by God, not only in this world, but in the world to come.

– St. Athanasius, Patriarch of Constantinople, *Letter 13*

NOTE

Fr. Joseph will be out of town from tomorrow until Friday. If you need a priest while he is away, please contact Fr. Peter Zarynow at (301) 299-5120.

Semi-Annual Parish Meeting & Vote Results

Thank you to all who participated in the discussion and the vote this month! We had an overwhelming majority vote for Option 1 (over 70% of the whole parish), so the Council has already begun preparing the basement and scheduling the work to clear out mold damage in the basement, remediate the mold, fix the primary flooding issue (water seeping in through the east foundation of the house), install another sump drain, and install an automatic generator for power outages. Currently, the church has enough funds to cover this work, but that is purely due to your generosity and the fiscal responsibility of current and past treasurers. Please help us to continue working toward our goal of paying off the mortgage and doing "small" projects around the church by donating toward the general fund and the building fund. Also, a big thank-you to the small group that did significant work clearing the basement on Monday; they brought everything we need upstairs, and donated a large amount of unwanted items to charity. The whole parish benefits from your involvement, whether in person or monetarily...thank you!

In Christ,

Kelsey Moore, Trustee

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In Your Prayers – Please Remember... His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch BARTHOLOMEW, His Grace Bishop GREGORY, Fr. Joseph & Family, Greek Orthodox Archbishop Paul Yazigi of Aleppo, Syriac Orthodox Archbishop Yohanna Ibrahim of Aleppo, His Grace Bishop Neofitos of Nyeri and Mt. Kenya, Fr. John & Pani Betty Jean Baranik, Fr. Vincent Saverino, Presbytera Katie Baker and family, Santiago Alzugaray, Alicia Barosio and family, Jeffrey Carey, Tatyana and Slava Chumak & family, Xenia Chilkowich, Jon Church, Ramius Connour, Curtis Cooper, Luke Cooper, Tina Crull, Mary Diane David, Ron Dominiacki, Linda A. Georgiev, Heather Himler, John Homick, Cameron Houk, Helen Janowiak, John M. Janowiak, Tucker Karl and family, Robert & Pam Karpin, Andrew Kinn, Kopan family, Brian, Helen, and Luke Mahony, Valentina Makowelski, Susan Matula, Anna Meinhold, Dn. Henry Middleton, David & Kathryn Newman, Bobby Nutter & Family, Henry & Lisa Osborne, Westin Perry & Parents, John Reece, Mary Reed, Chris & Kaitlin Rixey, Jerry Von Ronne, Anne Rosario, James, Theodore and Christina Ristas, Samson Family, Sharon Sheptak, Alexander Shostko, 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.)