

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

Divine Liturgy 10:00 AM.

June 4, 2017 – Holy Pentecost

"All of Pentecost," as St. Basil the Great teaches, "is a reminder of the Resurrection, which we expect in the future age." And it is why the Holy Church commands us during all of Pentecost, as well as on all the Sundays of the year (see First Ecumenical Council, Canon 20; Sixth Ecumenical Council, Canon 90), to pray standing which signifies our co-resurrection with Christ the Savior and serves as a reminder of our future resurrection. Having completed the specified days of prayer "the Church thoroughly teaches its children to pray standing, that, being a frequent reminder of the never-ending life, we do not leave with an incorrect parting word for such repose." The Church Typicons (Ustavi) teach us to prefer on this day the erect position of the body during prayer, as a clear reminder of moving our thoughts from the present to the future.

Arguing the importance and meaning of the feast of Pentecost, St. Chrysostom says: "great, beloved, and unspeakable gifts are granted us on this day by God who loves mankind. Now the Lord grants us the coming of the Holy Spirit, and through Him grants us countless blessings from heaven. Tell me, what is necessary for our salvation that is not established through the spirit? Though Him we are released from slavery, we are called to freedom, we are raised up to the position of son, and finally, so to speak, we shall be transfigured, putting away the heavy and stinking



burden of sins. Through the Holy Spirit we have the investing of priests and the ranks of teachers. From this Source we also have gifts of revelation and the gift of healing. And we have all the rest that adorns the Church of God, which is granted from here."

According to the explanation of His Eminence Innocent, Archbishop of Chersonese, the present feast is not one celebration, but a whole collection of celebrations. The New Testament celebrates, for now is the day the Holy Spirit descends on the Apostles, together with that, it is the foundation and the beginning of Church in grace. The invisible world celebrates, for on the present special day the Holy Church raises up prayers for the souls of the departed brethren, (extends its motherly hold by interceding for mercy to "those being held in Hades"). The visible and sensual world celebrates, for on the present special day the Holy Church, decorating the temples with branches, one may say, connects the temples with the temples of nature, remembering by this the primitive condition of man in Eden, and pre-describing the future situation on Zion when there will be no sensual temples, but all will be temples. Faith now celebrates, for now it worships the Holy, Consubstantial and Undivided Trinity, the teaching of Which is one of the greatest mysteries of the faith. Hope now celebrates, for the Holy Church from the present now ascends to the future, foresees the end of the kingdom of grace, the approach of the kingdom of glory, and prays for compassion at the future judgment seat. Love now celebrates, sweeping with its prayerful arrangement the visible and invisible, the heaven, the earth and the infernal regions.

"The light-depicting children" the Holy Church (i.e. such, whose lives reflect the fulfillment of the commandments of Christ the Savior), of course, all receive "the fire breathing dew of the Spirit" on this feast in the new, complete cleansing of sins and are more inflamed with fidelity to the Lord, more zealous for the life pleasing to God. Now the sinners who represent the other side of church celebration: the fire of grace of the Holy Spirit burns all the guilty, all those alienated from the life-creating Divine brightness, inducing into the conscience of the person his impartial judge. And here it is during the presentation of the similar action of the fire of grace of the All Holy Spirit, who destroys all the impure, the involuntary dark thoughts that appear in the soul of the sinner. Not having in himself the spiritual might for the experience of joy on this great church feast and together with remembering the corporal, impure sinful life, the sinner on this joyful day trembles before the judgment seat of the divine fire, which has descended even on him with all his sinful inclinations, with his slavery to sin and to the devil. But if the present church celebration has stirred up fear before the judgment seat of the divine fire in the soul of the sinner, then it is for his good: for all is not yet lost for him; he will find calm for himself on the present feast. This fear before the judgment seat of

God having appeared in his soul is the beginning of his spiritual rebirth, the beginning of his tearful invocation to his Savior, the beginning of his tearful supplication for the saving grace of the All Holy Spirit now most abundantly pouring into the regions of his soul, cleansing him, like fire, from all that is sinful in him. Such sinner is close to his salvation. But there is a spiritual situation, the most terrible situation completely hopeless, which is called spiritual blindness. This situation in its final development is not that the other, as the full living alienation from the Deity, from all sacred Divine laws but is also without the slightest consciousness of his sinfulness, unrighteousness of his way of living.

Such a person is not touched at all with the present church celebration. He is spiritually blind for he does not see the now appointed way by the Church of light, life, truth and grace. He is deaf, for does not hear the joyful appeal of the Church to the recognition of the grace of the Spirit. He is poor, for he does not have the holy feeling, required for sensing church joy. He is nude, for he is deprived of Divine grace. He is unfortunate, for he does not understand all the perniciousness of his way of life. He is pitiful, as he is led to the abyss of the dead. Such an awful condition is arrived at in the years of childhood and youth of opposing the Christian advice of his mother or educator, to the good lessons of study and education, later, to the lessons of life and the word of God, and at all times, to the suggestions of his conscience. The sinner, not suddenly but gradually, reaches such a strange condition.

Each new resistance to the voice calling him to salvation hardens his conscience more and more. This voice becomes weaker and weaker day by day, and the sinner approaches all the closer to that fatal limit when, left to himself and his persistence, he will become inaccessible to all appeals of grace. He will continue to listen, perhaps, to the preaching of the Gospel, but this preaching will not lead him to salutary action. And neither the threats of the truth touch his conscience, nor the meek appeals of grace reach his heart. The Judgment Seat of God will still amaze people around him but he himself sheds tears about sufferings or death of his relatives. But the Holy Spirit, Who alone can make these trials salutary for the soul, already will not penetrate them any more through His beneficial influence, and the sinner amidst grief remains chained in the bonds of sin. The distance between him and God increases more and more. His indifference, unbelief, moral dream seize him all the more strongly in his soul. For him repentance and consequently also forgiveness become more impossible. It is not other than the unfortunate condition of the soul, its own persistent opposition to the Holy Spirit, closed a way to repentance and reconciliation with God for itself. Such a person cannot have a place in today's celebration. And as his indifference, according to the word of God, is vomited up "out of the Divine mouth" (Rev. 3:13-18). "Their

judgment has not been idle, and their destruction does not slumber" (2 Peter 2:3; Ref. Heb. 6:4-6; 10:27-29). He cannot belong to the Holy Church, and in this life he is given to slavery to the devil, and in future he will be prepared for Gehenna. And this judgment of God is expressed not in those, or other external actions, but occurs inside the person himself invisible to others (John 3:19 - 20).

The person condemns himself by not belonging to the Church. Today he feels the burden of the church celebration, and he does not understand the joyful feelings of the "light shaped children of the church", who received "the fire breathing dew of the Spirit." He does not even understand the joyful repentant feelings, which members of the Church today experience, repenting their pernicious life in sin. He feels superfluous in this celebration and he himself leaves it.

Today's celebration has also the meaning in the forms of fiery tongues of the Spirit of grace for the persistent unrepentant sinners, for it judges them, and does not give them the right of participation in the church joy. Blessed are those who belong to the number of the "light shaped children" in the Holy Church! If in their hearts a full stony unfeeling has taken hold, then having the boldness of the children of the Holy Church they also should now raise up such prayers that has also warmed them with the fire of the Divine grace that they, even though at the end of their life, have addressed to the source of blessings and for this reference have been saved by the Good Comforter. The same who feel in themselves the need for repentant prayer for their defiled life, should stir up in their souls the hope of light that in the consciousness of the their sinfulness their penitential prayer will be warmed by fire of the grace of All Holy Spirit and will intercede on this gala day for the "fire breathing dew of the Spirit." (*adapted from Manual for Church Servers by S. Bulgakov, trans. Archpriest Eugene D. Tarris*)

Today's Epistle Lesson – The Acts of the Apostles 2:1-11

When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and *one* sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. And there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men, from every nation under heaven. And when this sound occurred, the multitude came together, and were confused, because everyone heard them speak in his own language. Then they were all amazed and marveled, saying to one another, "Look, are not all these who speak Galileans? And how *is it that* we hear, each in our own language in which we were born? Parthians and Medes and Elamites, those dwelling in Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and

Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya adjoining Cyrene, visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabs—we hear them speaking in our own tongues the wonderful works of God.”

Today’s Gospel Lesson – Saint John 7:37-52, 8:12

On the last day, that great *day* of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, “If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.” But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet *given*, because Jesus was not yet glorified. Therefore many from the crowd, when they heard this saying, said, “Truly this is the Prophet.” Others said, “This is the Christ.” But some said, “Will the Christ come out of Galilee? Has not the Scripture said that the Christ comes from the seed of David and from the town of Bethlehem, where David was?” So there was a division among the people because of Him. Now some of them wanted to take Him, but no one laid hands on Him. Then the officers came to the chief priests and Pharisees, who said to them, “Why have you not brought Him?” The officers answered, “No man ever spoke like this Man!” Then the Pharisees answered them, “Are you also deceived? Have any of the rulers or the Pharisees believed in Him? But this crowd that does not know the law is accursed.” Nicodemus (he who came to Jesus by night, being one of them) said to them, “Does our law judge a man before it hears him and knows what he is doing?” They answered and said to him, “Are you also from Galilee? Search and look, for no prophet has arisen out of Galilee.” Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, “I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life.”

A Word From the Holy Fathers

We are summoned today to the sacred halls, to sing heartily to Christ, the eternal Ruler of all, Who glorifies with praise all those who reverence and glorify Him in this life. And those who intend to assemble should consider what kind of festival is owed by Orthodox Christians, and what sort of celebration is appropriate for them. We should not recline and feast in the enclosures of sacred churches as if they were places for drinking bouts, but should lift up our hands and thoughts to God, and pray that the faithful may be preserved not only from the snares of the devil, but from all earthly darkness, and from the confused wandering of life here on earth, so that Christ the Truth may not reproach us as He did some of our forebears, saying, "My house is a house of prayer, but you have made it a den of thieves."

Therefore I ask that no one come to church for the sake of indulging himself, or to lift up his eyes, but to feast his soul on the ambrosia of the Spirit, and to utter with confidence, "In the morning I will wait upon you, and you shall look upon me." "For," Christ says, "Two men went up into the temple," not to feast, but "to pray"; and in this, for men of understanding, the luxury of a complete banquet resides, and thus was the publican impartially justified, because he went up rightly. If we assemble in this way at the imperial halls of such banqueting, then our approach is blessed, as we demonstrate that our wares are in accordance with Christ, and as we honor Christ and His servants in a fitting manner. But if certain people come to delight in the pleasures of the stomach, as I saw yesterday - when the assembled multitudes departed, they left behind some bones and scraps - what benefit will they reap by assembling for this purpose, and turning the halls of Divine Wisdom into places for drinking bouts? And who will assure them that they will find another opportunity for spiritual ascent and to achieve deification through prayer, which the saints would procure for us if we would be willing? For a different approach to the temple is not praiseworthy, since chaff is not praiseworthy compared with wheat, nor is indulging the flesh praiseworthy compared with spiritual labors.

Therefore I beg this of you: in addition to everything else, let us not celebrate the holy mysteries in an impure fashion, nor exalted things in a degrading manner, nor honorable things dishonorably. For great is the reward for a man to be seen praying to God in a pious manner, since it is uncertain whether he will live long enough to earn such a reward again on the morrow. For it is not even certain that those who enter the sacred precincts piously shall hear the sound of celebrants in the other world, and celebrate together with them forever. And alas for our insensibility, and every faithful Orthodox Christian who lies under this obligation, if we ridicule the festivals of pagans and Jews here, but are the only ones not to hold this celebration for Christ, our God and Master, as seems good to the Holy Spirit; so be it, so be it.

– Athanasius I, Patriarch of Constantinople, *Letter 47*

Also Commemorated Today: St. Metrophanes the first Patriarch of Constantinople

Saint Metrophanes, Patriarch of Constantinople, was a contemporary of Saint Constantine the Great (306-337). His father, Dometius, was a brother of the Roman emperor Probus (276-282). Seeing the falseness of the pagan religion, Dometius came to believe in Christ. During a time of terrible persecution of Christians at Rome, Saint Dometius set off to Byzantium with two of his sons, Probus and Metrophanes. They were instructed in the law of the Lord by Bishop

Titus, a man of holy life. Seeing the ardent desire of Dometius to labor for the Lord, Saint Titus ordained him presbyter. After the death of Titus first Dometius (272-303) was elevated to the bishop's throne, and thereafter his sons, Probus (303-315) and in 316 Saint Metrophanes.

The emperor Constantine once came to Byzantium, and was delighted by the beauty and comfortable setting of the city. And having seen the holiness of life and sagacity of Saint Metrophanes, the emperor took him back to Rome. Soon Constantine the Great transferred the capital from Rome to Byzantium and he brought Saint Metrophanes there. The First Ecumenical Council was convened in 325 to resolve the Arian heresy. Constantine the Great had the holy Fathers of the Council bestow upon Saint Metrophanes the title of Patriarch. Thus, the saint became the first Patriarch of Constantinople.

Saint Metrophanes was very old, and was not able to be present at the Council, and he sent in his place the chorepiscopus (vicar bishop) Alexander. At the close of the Council the emperor and the holy Fathers visited with the ailing Patriarch. At the request of the emperor, the saint named a worthy successor to himself, Bishop Alexander. He foretold that Paul (at that time a Reader) would succeed to the patriarchal throne after Alexander. He also revealed to Patriarch Alexander of Alexandria that his successor would be the archdeacon Saint Athanasius. Saint Metrophanes reposed in the year 326, at age 117. His relics rest at Constantinople in a church dedicated to him.

It should be noted that the Canons to the Holy Trinity in the Midnight Office in the Octoechos were not composed by this Metrophanes, but by Bishop Metrophanes of Smyrna, who lived in the middle of the ninth century. (*from oca.org*)

On Stewardship and the Orthodox Life – 134: Freedom



“That which was created in every respect in the image of Divinity had to possess in nature a free and independent will.” (St. Gregory of Nyssa, Catechetical Orations 5)

God created man in His image, and that meant that God desires to have man participate in His perfection. St. Gregory of Nyssa in his Discourse on Death states, *“It is by his freedom that man is deiform, for independence and autonomy are proper to divine bliss.”* Man could not be like God if he did not have freedom of choice. Freedom is a divine characteristic. God gave us the freedom to choose good, to choose God. What benefit would it be to do good if we had no choice in the matter? We could not truly be like God if we lacked the freedom of choice.

So we have the choice of doing good or doing evil. The Holy Fathers tell us that evil is a product of man's improper use of the freedom of choice. **Evil does not exist outside of choice** according to St. Gregory of Nyssa. He goes on to state that, "it is free choice which gives evil its substance – it is the false usage of our free will that engendered the impulses toward evil."

With the improper use of our free will, which in nature is directed to God, we become enslaved to our desires and passions which bring us ephemeral pleasure. We turn from our natural instinct to God to the distorted instinct of His adversary, Satan and the demons. We live to please ourselves. We live to put ourselves ahead of others, ahead of God. We become slaves to our passions. **You are no longer free!** St. Isaac the Syrian, Ascetical Homilies, states "*He who does not submit his own will to God submits himself to his adversary.*" We become **pleonexic**, submissive to the desire for more.

WOW! That is pretty heavy stuff!! Yes, it is. Your salvation is heavy stuff; it is for eternity – not ephemeral like our current lives. The good news is that we can change. We can change right now like the penitent thief. God created us to be with Him, to desire to be with Him, to choose Him. Our first step is to stop choosing to want more for ourselves and to start choosing to give more to those that are in need. The practice of good stewardship is the key to changing your life. God has gifted you abundantly. Use some of those gifts of time, talent and treasure to open the door for others. Use your gift of free will to choose to live the life of a steward of God.

Not much of man's original freedom remains. The demonic powers exert such a strong influence on us and through the passions cause us to lose our freedom that God granted us. Take back what God gave you: live to be in communion with God, use your freedom to choose to be with God. Be a servant (steward) of God. *(from acrod.org)*

COMMUNION ETIQUETTE – SOME IMPORTANT THINGS TO KNOW

For cradle orthodox and converts alike, it's good to review from time to time the mechanics of how we are to worship – especially when approaching the Holy Gifts.

All Diocesan priests recently received some formal guidance from the Bishop regarding how services are conducted in parishes throughout the Diocese. One of the items noted is how parishioners are to approach the chalice for communion.

Please approach the chalice with your arms folded across your chest, right over left - do not make the sign of the cross as you stand before the chalice or after you

receive the precious Body and Blood. Open your mouth wide and allow the priest to place the Eucharist in your mouth; do not close your mouth on the spoon.

After receiving the Holy Gifts, please do not kiss either the chalice or Father's hand. The purpose of these restrictions is to reduce any possibility of the chalice being spilled or dropped.

Secondly, when we leave our seats and form a line for communion, please do not extend along the perimeter of the sanctuary. Rather, form the line in front of the tetrapod featuring the Icon of the day. Once you've venerated the icon, you may proceed to the right of the stand and wait for the person in front of you to take communion, then move forward. This announcement will be repeated for the next several weeks until everyone has heard it.

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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, Alicia Barosio and family, Jeffrey Carey, Tatyana and Slava Chumak & family, Xenia Chilkowich, Jon Church, Ramius Connour, Curtis Cooper, Luke Cooper, Tina Crull, Ron Dominiecki, Linda A. Georgiev, Heather Himler, John Homick, Cameron Houk, Helen Janowiak, John M. Janowiak, Deanna Jarrett, Tucker Karl and family, Robert Karpin, Andrew Kinn, Kopan family, Brian, Helen, and Luke Mahony, Valentina Makowelski, Susan Matula, Anna Meinhold, Dn. Henry Middleton, Josh Moore, 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, 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, the newly departed servants of God Protopresbyter Ronald Hazuda and Father William George, and all those in need of our prayers. (Please advise Fr. Joseph of changes.)