

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 11, 2017 – Sunday of All Saints

Today is the Sunday of All Saints, and who thinks about how the main purpose of our life on this earth is to acquire holiness? Yes, we exist to become saints.

The failure of this achievement is the greatest tragedy of human existence. But how is holiness considered today? What is our stance before it? How do we view it? How do we live it? How can we find it and not lose it? How do we use it, perhaps even exploit it?

Holiness does not eliminate the human personality. It does not violate human freedom and will, uniqueness and the sacredness of the human person. Holiness is not unmanned and the manufacturing of an identical statue. Many have a false perception of holiness. The most fragrant books of the lives of saints give us numerous and beautiful examples from the West to the East, among women and men, young and old, educated and illiterate, married and unmarried, clergy and laity, closed and open types of personalities.

Generally holiness, being divine and sacred, causes awe and respect, admiration and fascination, but we must say that sometimes myths and exaggerations and inauthenticity is sometimes interwoven. A saint is considered completely detached from everything mundane. The source of holiness, self-holiness and self-goodness, is God.



By sharing in Him it is offered to us. The early Christians were called saints in order to be reminded of the purpose of their lives. Holiness today is considered remote, otherworldly, impossible. It is a gift to the elite aristocracy of the spirit. Holiness has been given a purely moralistic dimension that does not characterize the status of the substance of a Christian.

Holiness is not a championship match, a supernatural feat, an awesome act of prowess, the acquisition of a winning record. Holiness is not an illuminated sign, a glowing halo, a spectacular display, a needed advertisement, the diffusion of applause. Rather, holiness loves to live in obscurity, ingloriousness, forgotten, silence, repentance and humility. Holiness is communion with All Holy God, not a human achievement. Holiness is true balance, authentic health, a meaningful relationship with God. It is the obedience to His command, that we become holy as God is holy. The will of God is our sanctification.

By holiness is meant following Christ to Gethsemane and Golgotha. Holiness is not transmitted, not earned by merely reading books and having lengthy discussions in living rooms. It calls out that we must give blood, in order to receive the Spirit. We must persistently fight and be patient, to defeat the wild beast with many heads called pride. The saint overcomes selfishness, love for the flesh, ambition and love for money, with love for the divine, love for people, philanthropy, brotherly kindness, love for children, and the virtuous life.

The saints, according to the late Elder (now St.) Justin Popovich, are the centuries old authentication of the gospel, the extensions of Christ. They have proved by practice that the virtues of the gospel are feasible. Many pilgrims to Mount Athos today seek great saints in order to have their problems solved. In other words, we want the saints and Christ and the Church out of pure self-interest, to spend our lives undisturbed and well. This shows that there is a magical conception to holiness, the holy sacraments and the Church. This is how Orthodoxy becomes religionized. Elder (now St.) Paisios would tell us that the saints would love Christ even if there was no paradise in the afterlife!

True holiness, because unfortunately there is a pseudo-holiness, is not a powerful projector, a loud speaker, lights, clicking, decoys and promotion. It is hidden, whether it be on Athos or in the city or in the village. It thrives in secrecy, humility and the in goodness of the honorable, the loyal, enduring illness, rejection, failure, grief, criticism, irony, and so on. Holiness may be in the minority and the exception, but it exists. This is very important and a message of great hope. – Monk Moses of Mt. Athos (*from johnsanidopoulos.com*)

Today's Epistle Lesson – St. Paul's Letter to the Hebrews 11:33-12:2

Brethren, all the saints through faith subdued kingdoms, worked righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, became valiant in battle, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again. Others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. Still others had trial of mockings and scourgings, yes, and of chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted, were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented— of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts and mountains, *in dens and caves of the earth*. And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise, God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us.

Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares *us*, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of *our* faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Today's Gospel Lesson – Saint Matthew 10:32-33, 37-38, 19:27-30

The Lord said to his disciples, "whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven. But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven. He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me.

Then Peter answered and said to Him, "See, we have left all and followed You. Therefore what shall we have?" So Jesus said to them, "Amen I say to you, that in the regeneration, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, you who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My name's sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and inherit eternal life. But many *who are* first will be last, and the last first.

A Word From the Holy Fathers

Does not every Orthodox Christian have the obligation to say and practice the words, "in the morning I will wait on you and you shall watch over me"? For what other expiation can we wretched people offer to God, if we hourly become

entangled in myriad offenses, and do not even strive on Sundays and other feast days of the Lord to assemble for veneration of the God of all? How can we fittingly say, "But I will enter into your house in the multitude of your mercy"? Where and when will "your prayer be set before Him like incense"? And as for the man who is not free to say, "O Lord, I have loved the beauty of your house, and the place of the tabernacle of your glory", how can he add the words, "Destroy not my soul together with the ungodly, nor my life with bloody men", if then, overcome by such indolence, we remain insensitive and do nothing for the good?

– Athanasius I, Patriarch of Constantinople, *Letter 44*

Also Commemorated Today: Apostle Bartholomew

The Holy Apostle Bartholomew was born at Cana of Galilee and was one of the Twelve Apostles of Christ. After the Descent of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost, it fell by lot to the holy Apostles Bartholomew and Philip (November 14) to preach the Gospel in Syria and Asia Minor. In their preaching they wandered through various cities, and then met up again. Accompanying the holy Apostle Philip was his sister, the holy virgin Saint Mariamne. Traversing the cities of Syria and Myzia, they underwent much hardship and tribulations, they were stoned and they were locked up in prison. In one of the villages they met up with the Apostle John the Theologian, and together they set off to Phrygia. In the city of Hieropolis by the power of their prayers they destroyed an enormous viper, which the pagans worshipped as a god. The holy Apostles Bartholomew and Philip with his sister confirmed their preaching with many miracles.

At Hieropolis there lived a man by the name of Stachys, who had been blind for 40 years. When he received healing, he then believed in Christ and was baptized. News of this spread throughout the city, and a multitude of the people thronged to the house where the apostles were staying. The sick and those beset by demons were released from their infirmities, and many were baptized. The city prefect gave orders to arrest the preachers and throw them in prison, and to burn down the house of Stachys. At the trial pagan priests came forth with the complaint that the strangers were turning people away from the worship of the ancestral gods.

Thinking that perhaps some sort of magic power was hidden away in the clothes of the apostles, the prefect gave orders to strip them. But Saint Mariamne became like a fiery torch before their eyes, and none dared touch her. They sentenced the saints to death. The Apostle Philip was crucified upside down. Suddenly there was an earthquake, and a fissure in the earth swallowed up the prefect of the city, together with the pagan priests and many of the people. Others took fright and rushed to take down the apostles from the crosses. Since the Apostle Bartholomew had not been suspended very high, they soon managed to take him down. The Apostle

Philip, however, had died. After making Stachys Bishop of Hieropolis, the Apostle Bartholomew and Saint Mariamne left the city and moved on.

Preaching the Word of God, Mariamne arrived in Lykaonia, where she peacefully died (February 17). The Apostle Bartholomew went to India, where he translated the Gospel of Matthew into their language, and he converted many pagans to Christ. He also visited Greater Armenia (the country between the River Kura and the upper stretches of the Tigrus and Euphrates Rivers), where he worked many miracles and healed the daughter of King Polymios from the demons afflicting her. In gratitude, the king sent gifts to the apostle, who refused to accept them, saying that he sought only the salvation of the souls of mankind.

Then Polymios together with his wife, daughter, and many of those close to them accepted Baptism. And people from more than ten cities of Greater Armenia followed their example. But through the intrigues of the pagan priests, the Apostle Bartholomew was seized by the king's brother Astiagus in the city of Alban (now the city of Baku), and crucified upside down. But even from the cross he did not cease to proclaim the good news about Christ the Savior. Finally, on orders from Astiagus, they flayed the skin from the Apostle Bartholomew and cut off his head. Believers placed his relics in a leaden coffin and buried him.

In about the year 508 the holy relics of the Apostle Bartholomew were transferred to Mesopotamia, to the city of Dara. When the Persians seized the city in 574, Christians took the relics of the Apostle Bartholomew with them when they fled to the shores of the Black Sea. But since the enemy overtook them there, they were compelled to leave the coffin behind, and the pagans threw it into the sea. By the power of God the coffin miraculously arrived on the island of Lipari. In the ninth century, after the taking of the island by the Arabs, the holy relics were transferred to the Neapolitan city of Beneventum in Italy, and in the tenth century part of the relics were transferred to Rome.

The holy Apostle Bartholomew is mentioned in the Life of Saint Joseph the Hymnographer (April 4). Having received from a certain man part of the relics of the Apostle Bartholomew, Saint Joseph conveyed them to his own monastery near Constantinople, and he built a church in the name of the Apostle Bartholomew, placing in it a portion of the relics. Saint Joseph ardently desired to compose hymns of praise in honor of the saint, and he fervently besought God to grant him the ability to do so.

On the Feast day in memory of the Apostle Bartholomew, Saint Joseph saw him at the altar. He beckoned to Joseph and took the holy Gospel from the altar table and pressed it to his bosom with the words, "May the Lord bless you, and may your song delight the whole world." And from that time Saint Joseph began to write hymns and canons to adorn not only the Feast day of the Apostle Bartholomew, but

also the Feast days of many other saints, composing about 300 canons in all. Saints John Chrysostom, Cyril of Alexandria, Epiphanius of Cyprus and certain other teachers of the Church regard the Apostle Bartholomew as being the same person as Nathanael (John 1:45-51, 21:2). (from *oca.org*)

On Stewardship and the Orthodox Life – 135: Memory



“You must always go over in your memory, and guard in unceasing meditations, the remembrance of the goodness of God Who has ordered your life’s course according to His design, of His benefits that aim at your soul’s salvation.”
(St. Mark the Ascetic, *Therapy of Spiritual Illnesses*)

Have you ever wondered why we have a memory? Most of us would say that we have a memory so that we can remember things, numbers, sayings, events, work material, pleasures, pain, etc. Well, you would be wrong! God gave us memory so that we might continually remember Him and the benefits he has bestowed upon us. You see, the remembrance of God is also the remembrance of God’s gifts. **Through remembrance, we give thanks to God.** The primary form of this remembrance is continual prayer.

Adam, who originally possessed this memory, lived in prayer and put into practice this continual remembrance of God. By continual remembrance, man can be strengthened in keeping and practicing God’s commandments thereby preserving himself from the passions and developing the virtues.

The Psalmist states, Psalms 102:2, *“Forget not all His benefits.”* By remembrance, we show our love and gratitude to God and become the temple of God. Worldly cares do not interrupt this remembrance, and our joy comes from the remembrance of God and His benefits.

When we become wrapped up in human-centric thoughts and forget God, we develop an **“illness of memory”** according to St. Isaac the Syrian. St. Hesychius the Priest states, *“From forgetfulness we fall into negligence, and from negligence into...misplaced desires.”* In other words, our desires are no longer to continually remember God but are the sensual desires of the flesh. We, therefore, fall into sin and desire more and more of earthly things. We forget the benefits with which God has gifted us.

The result of this then is instead of the remembrance of God we become habitually disposed to the “remembrance of evil” and those desires that arouse our sensual passions. Those desires that arouse our want, our obsession with more. Jean-Claude Larchet, *Therapy of Spiritual Illnesses*, states, *“..the more it (the memory)*

recalls God, the less it recalls the world: conversely, the more it remembers the world, the less it remembers God.”

We need only to change our focus. Bring back the remembrance of God and His benefits. Use those gifts God has given us as he has instructed us to do. Be stewards of God, make **“Stewardship a Way of Life!”** By using the gifts God has given you, you will begin to continually place God at the forefront of your memory, honor and thank Him for those gifts and be in continual prayer. You will restore your memory to its natural place, the place where God positioned it. (*from acrod.org*)

Also Commemorated Today: Appearance of the Archangel Gabriel to a Monk on Mt. Athos



The “It is Truly Meet” Icon of the Mother of God is in the high place of the altar of the cathedral church of the Karyes monastery on Mount Athos.

One Saturday night an Elder went to Karyes for the all-night Vigil. He left, instructing his disciple to remain behind and read the service in their cell. As it grew dark, the disciple heard a knock on the door. When he opened the door, he saw an unknown monk who called himself Gabriel, and he invited him to come in. They stood before the icon of the Mother of God and read the service together with reverence and compunction.

During the Ninth Ode of the Canon, the disciple began to sing “My soul magnifies the Lord...” with the Irmos of Saint Cosmas the Hymnographer (October 14), “More honorable than the Cherubim...” The stranger sang the next verse, “For He has regarded the low estate of His handmaiden...” Then he chanted something the disciple had never heard before, “It is truly meet to bless Thee, O Theotokos, ever-blessed and most pure, and the Mother of our God...” (*in our translation, “You are truly deserving of glory...” – ed.*) Then he continued with, “More honorable than the Cherubim...”

While the hymn was being sung, the icon of the Theotokos shone with a heavenly light. The disciple was moved by the new version of the familiar hymn, and asked his guest to write the words down for him. When the stranger asked for paper and ink, the disciple said that they did not have any. The stranger took a roof tile and wrote the words of the hymn on its surface with his finger. The disciple knew then that this was no ordinary monk, but the Archangel Gabriel. The angel said, “Sing

in this manner, and all the Orthodox as well.” Then he disappeared, and the icon of the Mother of God continued to radiate light for some time afterward.

The Eleousa Icon of the Mother of God, before which the hymn “It Is Truly Meet” was first sung, was transferred to the katholikon at Karyes. The tile, with the hymn written on it by the Archangel Gabriel, was taken to Constantinople when Saint Nicholas Chrysoberges (December 16) was Patriarch.

Numerous copies of the “It Is Truly Meet” Icon are revered in Russian churches. At the Galerna Harbor of Petersburg a church with five cupolas was built in honor of the Merciful Mother of God, and into it they put a grace-bearing copy of the “It Is Truly Meet” icon sent from Athos. (*from oca.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.

May Treasurer's Report

Glory to Jesus Christ! For the month of May our income/expenses were:

Operating Income \$10,550.00 | Operating Expenses \$9,673.47 | Income Over \$ 876.53

Major expenses for this month were \$724.47 liturgical candles for the Holy Fire and support of a Diocesan youth to work with the orphanage in Guatemala.

Thank you for being good Stewards of God's House.

Kari

Congratulations to Ashley McNeil!



Last week, St. Thomas celebrated the graduation of parishioner Ashley McNeil from high school. She will be attending Salisbury Uni-versity (on the DelMarVa peninsula, not too far from Dcn. Steve & Nancy Hall!), and plans to study nursing. Congratulations!

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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. Nectaros 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.)