

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 25, 2017 – 3rd Sunday After Pentecost | Virginmartyr Febronia of Nisibis | New Martyrs of the Turkish Yoke

The Virgin Martyr Febronia suffered during the reign of Diocletian (284-305). She was raised at a monastery in the city of Sivapolis (Assyria). The head of the women's monastery was the abbess Bryaena, the aunt of Saint Febronia. Being concerned about her niece's salvation, she assigned her a stricter form of life than the other nuns. According to their monastic rule, on Fridays the sisters put aside their other duties and spent the whole day in prayer and the reading of Holy Scripture. The abbess usually assigned the reading to Saint Febronia.

News of her pious life spread throughout the city. The illustrious young widow Hieria, a pagan, began to visit her, and under the influence of her guidance and prayer she accepted holy Baptism, bringing her parents and kinsfolk to the Christian Faith.

Diocletian sent a detachment of soldiers to Assyria under the command of Lysimachus, Selinus and Primus for the destruction of Christians. Selenos, the uncle of Lysimachus, was noted for his fierce attitude against Christians, but Lysimachus was of a different frame of mind from him, since his mother had sought to inspire love for the Christian faith in her son, and she had died a

Christian. Lysimachus had discussed with his kinsman Primus how it would be possible to deliver Christians from the hands of the torturer. When the detachment of soldiers approached the convent, its inhabitants hid. There remained only the abbess Bryaena, her helper Thomais and Saint Febronia, who was seriously ill at the time.

It grieved the abbess terribly that her niece might fall into the hands of the torturers, who might defile her. She prayed fervently that the Lord would preserve her and strengthen her in the confession of Christ the Savior. Selinus gave orders to bring him all the nuns of the convent. Primus with the detachment of soldiers found no one, except the two old women and Saint Febronia. He regretted that they had not hidden, and he suggested to the nuns that they flee. But the nuns decided not to leave the place of their labors and they entrusted themselves to the will of the Lord.

Primus told Lysimachus about the particular beauty of Saint Febronia and advised him to take her for himself. Lysimachus said that he would not seduce a virgin dedicated to God, and he asked Primus to hide the other nuns somewhere so that they would not fall into the hands of Selinus. One of the soldiers overheard the conversation and told Selinus. They led Saint Febronia off to the military commander with her hands bound and a chain around her neck. Selinus urged her to deny Christ, promising her honors, rewards, and marriage with Lysimachus. The holy virgin firmly and fearlessly answered that she had an Immortal Bridegroom, and she would not exchange Him for any mortal man. Selinus subjected her to fierce torture. The saint prayed, "My Savior, do not abandon me in this terrible hour!"

They beat the martyr for a long time, and blood flowed from her wounds. In order to intensify the suffering of Saint Febronia, they tied her to a tree and set a fire under it. The tortures were so inhuman, that the people began to demand an end to the torture, since there was no confession of guilt by the girl. Selinus continued to mock and jeer at the martyr, but Saint Febronia became silent. Because of weakness she was unable to utter a word. In a rage Selinus gave orders to tear out her tongue, smash her teeth, and finally, to cut off both hands and feet. The people were unable to bear such a horrid spectacle and they left the scene of the torture, cursing Diocletian and his gods.

Among the crowd was the nun Thomais, who afterwards recorded Saint Febronia's martyrdom in detail, and also her student Hieria. She came forth out of the crowd and in the hearing of all reproached Selinus for his boundless cruelty. He gave orders to arrest her, but learning that Hieria was of illustrious standing whom he

could not readily subject to torture, he said, “By your speech you have brought on Febronia even greater torment.” Finally, they beheaded the holy Martyr Febronia.

Departing the place of execution, Lysimachus wept and withdrew to his quarters. Selinus made ready to eat, but he was not able to take food, and went off to the quiet of his own chambers. Suddenly, he became like one deranged. Looking up to the heavens, he raved and bellowed like a bull, then fell down and struck his head on a marble column and died. When Lysimachus learned of this, he said, “Great is the God of the Christians, Who has avenged Febronia’s blood, so unrighteously shed!” He prepared a coffin, placed the martyr’s body in it, and took it to the convent.

Abbess Bryaena fell senseless, seeing the mutilated remains of Saint Febronia. Later, she recovered her senses and gave orders to open the convent gates so that all would be able to come and venerate the holy martyr and glorify God Who had given her such endurance in suffering for Christ. Lysimachus and Primus renounced their idol worship and accepted both Baptism and monasticism. Hieria gave her wealth to the convent and petitioned Abbess Bryaena to accept her at the convent in place of Saint Febronia.

Every year, on the day of the martyric death of Saint Febronia, a solemn feast was celebrated at the convent. During the time of the all-night Vigil the nuns always saw Saint Febronia, at her usual place in church. From the relics of Saint Febronia occurred numerous miracles and healings. The Life of Saint Febronia was recorded by the nun Thomais, an eyewitness to her deeds.

In the year 363 the relics of Saint Febronia were transferred to Constantinople. Soon after the death of Saint Febronia, Saint James the Bishop of Nisibis (January 13) built a church and transferred into it a portion of the of the holy martyr’s relics. *(from oca.org)*

Today’s Epistle Lesson – St. Paul’s Letter to the Romans 5:1-10

Brethren, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only *that*, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope. Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that

while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.

Today's Gospel Lesson – Saint Matthew 6:22-33

The Lord said, “The lamp of the body is the eye. If therefore your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness!

No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.

Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature? So why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, *will He* not much more *clothe* you, O you of little faith? Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.”

A Word From the Holy Fathers

Should we wait for a period of prosperity or ease to do works which are pleasing to Him and an obligation for us? From what turn of fortune will this come? Because we see hanging over our heads terrible sins which are not corrected. Thus we would do or experience something similar to the man who has fallen into the water, and does not try to flail his arms and swim as vigorously as he can, in the hope that he may be able to grab hold of a piece of wood or a root or something which could save him, but waits for the water to dry up and then thinks of grabbing onto something which could save him.

– St. Athanasius I, Patriarch of Constantinople, *Letter 14*

Also Commemorated Today: Holy New Martyr George of Krini

On the third Sunday after Pentecost, the Orthodox Church commemorates those who were martyred by the Turks after the fall of Constantinople in 1453. Among them are two saints who were martyred this day, St. George of Krini and St. Procopius of Varna. Saint George was born to pious and wealthy parents in the province of Attaleia (Antalya) in Asia Minor. On their property, they even had a church built dedicated to Saint Katherine. One day when George was an infant child and was playing near his home, he was observed by Aga Brusali, the governor of the area, who wanted to take young George as his own, for he lacked a male child. George was therefore renamed Mehmed, raised by the governor, and when he came of age given to his daughter in marriage, with whom he bore a son.

After this the true parents of George persuaded a fellow Orthodox Christian named Maria, who was a servant in the home of the Aga, to reveal to George his true origin and how he came to be brought up in the home of the Aga and become a Muslim. When Maria told George, he was deeply moved by his true origins. He therefore decided that he and Maria would pretend to go on a pilgrimage to Mecca, but instead they went to the Holy Land. After two years there, George decided to go to Krini (Cesme) in Asia Minor, where he married an Orthodox Christian named Helen Mavrogiannis. Meanwhile the Greek Revolution had broken out, and the Ottomans had slaughtered nearly the entire population of Chios, which is across from Krini. Krini was used as a shipping area to send irregular Ottoman troops to Chios, and George took advantage of this situation.

Because of his knowledge of Turkish he became a groom to Aga Suleiman the governor, and later he heard that his former father-in-law, Aga Brusali, was coming to Krini with troops to put down the revolutionaries. Maria warned George of Aga Brusali's coming and urged him to flee, but George, who secretly



wanted to die a martyr, told her that he was going to take advantage of the situation. He therefore accompanied Aga Suleiman to the government building, helped him dismount from his horse and held on to his mount until his return.

Aga Brusali, who was in the government house, happened to look out and saw his son-in-law, becoming furious at Aga Suleiman, seeing his son-in-law in such a lowly position. George then entered the building and stood before his father-in-law, who said to him: "Mehmed, what is the reason you used guile and deceit to leave your home? Didn't you feel sorry for your wife? Didn't you even feel sorry for your

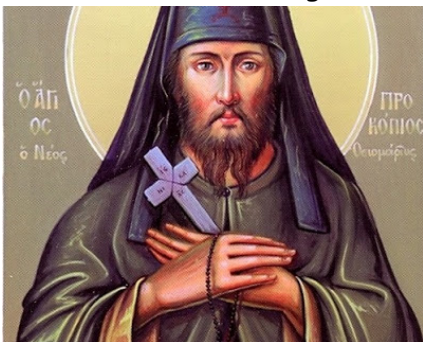
son?" To this George responded: "You are mistaken. I am not Mehmed, but George, and I wish to die an Orthodox Christian." "Infidel," responded the Aga, "don't you bear the badge [of circumcision] since infancy? Haven't I brought you up as my son and given you to my daughter, and so many other good things, and now you tell me I am mistaken?" George answered: "Yes, you are mistaken. Because you did not give birth to me, nor have I known you as a father, nor am I named Mehmed, but George, an Orthodox Christian." In saying this, the Aga had George imprisoned and beaten, hoping this would change his attitude.

Now there was a preacher in the area named Father George, who found out about George and asked the local leaders of the Greek Orthodox community to send two fellow Orthodox Christians to jail for allegedly owing money. In this way he could communicate with George in prison through them and give him moral support and Holy Communion. In prison George was tormented by having his feet placed in stocks and a heated iron device placed on his head, among other things. George bore all this torments with steadfastness of faith and courage.

Hearing that his death by hanging was imminent, he requested that Father George bring him Holy Communion quickly. The next day George was taken outside to the house of the prominent Orthodox Christian named Pantelakes Pharmakis. He was given a last chance to return to Islam, but George refused. Then with the noose around his neck, he turned East and prayed: "Lord, remember me in Your Kingdom." He was then hanged from the wall of the house of Pantelakes, on June 25, 1823.

That night, a bright light shone on the body of George. This caused the Turks to order his body be taken down immediately, and they forced some Jews to drag his body to the sea, and they threw it in the water. When the body of George was thrown into the sea, a ship captained by Eliax Sklavounes docked in the harbor flying an Austrian flag. Hearing the splash, the captain ordered a life-boat lowered, and the body was recovered. In the morning, with favorable tide and wind, the captain sailed for Russia, where he handed the body of the Martyr over to Orthodox Christians who buried him with honor.

Holy New Martyr Prokopios of Varna



Saint Prokopios came from the village of Varna in Bulgaria, and at the age of twenty went to Mount Athos to live as a monk in the Skete of Saint John the Forerunner, under the guidance of Elder Dionysios. Later, for reasons unknown to us, Prokopios abandoned the monastic life of Mount Athos and went to Smyrna, and there he became a Muslim in his despair of abandoning his monastic

profession. There he was educated in Islam by the head Janissary of Smyrna who, after fifteen days, had Prokopios circumcised.

But once this took place, his conscience was pricked and he tearfully repented of his action. After confessing his sin to a priest, he revealed that he wanted to shed his blood for his Christian faith to complete his repentance. The priest tried to persuade him to return to Mount Athos, where through his repentance and asceticism he can receive the mercy of God, and he also feared that Prokopios would once again recant his faith in the face of torture. For fifteen days Prokopios lived under the guidance of this priest and was strengthened in his faith and resolve to die a martyric death. On the fifteenth day, a Saturday, Prokopios told the priest: "Today is my last day. I have decided to testify and to bid my farewell." After they chanted together the Supplicatory Canon to the Theotokos and spoke their last words, Prokopios put on his Turkish clothing and presented himself before the Ottoman courts.

Standing before the judge, Prokopios threw off his Turkish headdress and put on his monastic hat that he wore as a monk on Mount Athos. Then he abjured the Islamic faith as being false, and proclaimed Jesus Christ as true God. Although the judge tried to persuade him to return to Islam with promises and flatteries, which then turned to threats, Prokopios remained steadfast in his faith. For this reason it was ordered that he be beheaded. On his way to the site of the execution, Turks derided him and shamed him, but the Holy Martyr ran with eagerness and joy to his death, saying farewell to all the Christians he encountered along the way. At the place of execution, he stood with courage and boldness, so that none of the Turkish executioners would approach to behead him. Consequently, they brought forward a former Orthodox Christian who had converted to Islam, and he beheaded the Saint. In this manner Saint Prokopios received the unfading crown of martyrdom on June 25, 1810. (*from johnsanidopoulos.com*)



On Stewardship and the Orthodox Life – Part 139: Laying the Foundation

“...and the rain came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell; and great was the fall of it.” (Matthew 7:27 RSV)

Our churches are dying; the foundations are crumbling, the people are leaving! The rain has come, and the winds are blowing, and the foundation is crumbling. Have you looked around and seen what is happening?

We have lost the basic concept of the Orthodox Church? Are we failing to hear Christ words spoken to the disciples? *“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy*

*Spirit and teaching them all I have commanded you” (Matthew 28: 19). **Are we making Disciples?** We work at repairing and maintaining the church building, we make perogies and other foods to sell, we work at festivals and events but do we “make disciples?” Some of us use the time and talents God has gifted us but do we use them in a manner which God had intended? Have we lost the true purpose of the Church and what God has asked, no, commanded us to do? Doing work as mentioned above in and for the Church is not wrong or bad, it is good; but do we put it as the **main priority** of the parish?*

Our parishes and Diocese are shrinking every year. Our youth are leaving the church and participating elsewhere or even worse, not worshipping God at all. We have let a culture of **clericalism** and **minimalism** seep into our parishes and over decades has come to be the standard. We have put our facilities and our needs before the needs of those that are lost. Is that what “being in Communion” is all about? Did we not over the past few weeks talk about at baptism you became a member of the body of Christ and as such you are now a disciple of Christ. And we read above that Christ commands His disciples to go out and make more disciples! The **culture** of the parishes needs **rejuvenation**, back to what God intended it to be and what He sent His Son to show us leaving the Holy Spirit to guide us.

We also talked in previous weeks that “being in communion” means that you are sharing your gifts that God has given you with each and every member of the body of Christ and each in return is sharing with you working in synergy with each other and God to reach Theosis. Are we using our gifts to make disciples? Next week, we will discuss **impediments** to us following the Great Commission. We will discuss minimalism and clericalism and how it affects stewardship which ultimately affects the Church and the culture of the Church. (*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.



July Anniversaries and Birthdays

Anniversaries:

Jacob & Hillary Maher 19th
Jim & Jessica Stiver 26th Doug & Lauren Chadwick 28th



Birthdays:

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

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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, 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 servant of God Gordon Dewey, and all those in need of our prayers. (Please advise Fr. Joseph of changes.)