

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

Sunday School 9:30 AM | Divine Liturgy 10:00 AM

September 16, 2018 – Afterfeast of the Elevation of the Cross Great Martyr Euphemia the All-Praised

The Holy Great Martyr Euphemia the All-Praised was the daughter of Christians, the senator Philophronos and Theodosia. She suffered for Christ in the year 304 in the city of Chalcedon, on the banks of the Bosphorus opposite Constantinople. The Chalcedon governor Priscus circulated an order to all the inhabitants of Chalcedon and its surroundings to appear at a pagan festival to worship and offer sacrifice to an idol of Ares, threatening grave torments for anyone who failed to appear. During this impious festival, 49 Christians were hidden in one house, where they secretly attended services to the True God.

The young maiden Euphemia was also among those praying there. Soon the hiding place of the Christians was discovered, and they were brought before Priscus to answer for themselves. For nineteen days the martyrs were subjected to various tortures and torments, but none of them wavered in their faith nor consented to offer sacrifice to the idol. The governor, beside himself with rage and not knowing any other way of forcing the Christians to abandon their faith, sent them for trial to the emperor Diocletian. He kept the youngest, the virgin Euphemia, hoping that she would not remain strong if she were all alone.



Saint Euphemia, separated from her brethren in faith, fervently prayed the Lord Jesus Christ, that He strengthen her in her impending ordeal. Priscus at first urged the saint to recant, promising her earthly blessings, but then he gave the order to torture her.

The martyr was tied to a wheel with sharp knives, which cut her body. The saint prayed aloud, and as it happened, the wheel stopped by itself and would not move even with all the efforts of the executioners. An angel of the Lord, came down from Heaven, removed Euphemia from the wheel and healed her of her wounds. The saint gave thanks unto the Lord with gladness.

Not perceiving the miracle that had occurred, the torturer ordered the soldiers Victor and Sosthenes to take the saint to a red-hot oven. But the soldiers, seeing two fearsome angels in the midst of the flames, refused to carry out the order of the governor and became believers in the God Whom Euphemia worshipped. Boldly proclaiming that they too were Christians, Victor and Sosthenes bravely went to suffering. They were sent to be eaten by wild beasts. During their execution, they cried out for mercy to God, asking that the Lord would receive them into the Heavenly Kingdom. A heavenly Voice answered their cries, and they entered into eternal life. The beasts, however, did not even touch their bodies.

Saint Euphemia, cast into the fire by other soldiers, remained unharmed. With the help of God she emerged unharmed after many other tortures and torments. Ascribing this to sorcery, the governor gave orders to dig out a new pit, and filling it with knives, he had it covered over with earth and grass, so that the martyr would not notice the preparation for her execution.

Here also Saint Euphemia remained safe, easily passing over the pit. Finally, they sentenced her to be devoured by wild beasts at the circus. Before execution the saint began to implore that the Lord deem her worthy to die a violent death. But none of the beasts, set loose at her in the arena, attacked her. Finally, one of the she-bears gave her a small wound on the leg, from which came blood, and immediately the holy Great Martyr Euphemia died. During this time there was an earthquake, and both the guards and the spectators ran in terror, so that the parents of the saint were able to take up her body and reverently bury it not far from Chalcedon.

A majestic church was afterwards built over the grave of the Great Martyr Euphemia. At this temple the sessions of the Fourth Ecumenical Council took place in the year 451. At that time, the holy Great Martyr Euphemia confirmed the Orthodox confession in a miraculous manner, and exposed the Monophysite heresy. Details of this miracle are related under July 11.

With the taking of Chalcedon by the Persians in the year 617, the relics of the holy Great Martyr Euphemia were transferred to Constantinople (in about the year 620). During the Iconoclast heresy, the reliquary with the relics of Saint Euphemia appears to have been thrown into the sea. Pious sailors recovered them. They were afterwards taken to the Island of Lemnos, and in the year 796 they were returned to Constantinople. [As of 8 years ago, the face of St. Euphemia is still incorrupt! – Ed.] (*from oca.org*)

Today's Epistle Lesson – St. Paul's Letter to the Galatians 2:16-20

Brethren, you know that a man is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ, and not by works of the law, because by works of the law shall no one be justified. But if, in our endeavor to be justified in Christ, we ourselves were found to be sinners, is Christ then an agent of sin? Certainly not! But if I build up again those things which I tore down, then I prove myself a transgressor. For I through the law died to the law, that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me; and the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

Today's Gospel Lesson – Saint Mark 8:34-38: 9:1

The Lord said, "If anyone wishes to come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it; and whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it. For what does it profit a man, to gain the whole world and forfeit his life? For what can a man give in return for his life? For whoever is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him will the Son of man also be ashamed, when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels." And he said to them, "Truly, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death before they see the kingdom of God come with power."

A Word From the Holy Fathers

-When you cultivate prayer, the Tempter's blusterings will not trouble you. Prayer diminishes his strength; he cannot do anything to us.

-Christ often comes and knocks at your door and you invite him to sit in the living-room of your soul. Then, absorbed in your own business you forget the Great Visitor. He waits for you to appear and when you are too long in returning, he gets up and leaves. At other times, you are so busy that you answer him from the window. You don't even have time to open the door.

- You are royalty, destined for the heavenly bridal chamber.
- When you see a person who is spiritually tired do not burden him any further, because his knees won't be able to bear it.
- Love the One, so that even wild beasts will love you.
- True wealth, for me, is to see you in the Kingdom of Heaven.
- When the flame of love exists, it consumes whatever evil approaches.
- The person who loves spiritually feels prayerful, so that he can be found within God and his brother.
- He is saddened when his brother is not advancing well and prays for his progress.
- Whoever has Christian love never changes.
- Christ is the same, yesterday and today, but we have closed our eyes and look into the darkness.
- We must be ready for our defence and our martyrdom.
- I beseech the Lord to sanctify you, so that I may see you in Paradise. This is the dowry which I seek from the Lord for you.
- For God's Grace to come during the Liturgy, you must be concentrated and untroubled.
- The more a person loves God, the more he loves other people. He loves them with holiness, respect and refinement, as images of God.
- When your heart does not have Christ, it will contain either money, property or people instead.
- Please put this commandment into practice: Cultivate love towards the Person of Christ to such an extent that, when you pronounce His name, tears fall from your eyes. Your heart must really be aflame. Then He will become your teacher. He will be your Guide, your Brother, your Father, and your Geron (Elder).
- I desire the rebirth of Monasticism, because in my opinion, monasticism is the elite battalion of the Church.
- Prayer is grace. God gives it when zeal and humility exist.
- A pure heart passes through Heaven's gate with ease.
- Worldly people tire you, because whatever is stored up inside them comes at you like waves of electricity. We must be people of grace so much so that whoever comes to us may find rest.

-Let us look upon everyone as our superiors, however weak they may appear. Let us not be harsh, but always bear in mind that the other person also has the same destination as us.

-We must have Love, even if they do us the greatest harm, we must love them. We will be able to enter Paradise only with love.

-Cultivate the Jesus Prayer and a time will come when your heart will leap with joy, just as it does when you are about to see a person who you love very much.

-Do not neglect evening prayer. Pray with eagerness like those who are going to a feast. They are awake and feel joy alone. Thus, since you are going to speak with your Bridegroom, do not listen when the Tempter tells you various things in order to hinder you, because you know there is someone who cares for you.

-Question: "Elder, how must we picture Christ?" Answer: "We must always bring to Christ to mind with love. We could be holding the photograph of someone in our hands, but since we do not know them, we do not love him, we are not moved. Whereas, when we pick up a photograph of our mother, our soul immediately leaps and cries out with love."

-A person can be raised up above the earth by two wings, one is simplicity and the other is purity of heart. You must be simple in your actions and pure in your thoughts and feelings. With a pure heart you'll seek God and with simplicity you'll find Him and be glad.

-Self-denial must be cultivated with discernment; otherwise we may reach the point of suicide.

-We are on the high seas of life, sometimes there are storms and at other times calm. God's grace does not leave us. Otherwise, we would have sunk, if he had not held us up.

-The saints always look to the other life. It is the grace of the remembrance of death.

-God guards us from temptation. He does not allow us to be tempted beyond our strength; He allows everything, for our own good.

-Fight the Hater of Good, who envies you; bravely suffer whatever befalls you with fortitude, patience and faith.

-Trust in the Lord always and he will nourish you in time of hunger.

-With a good word for your neighbour, supporting him, you buy paradise.

-Repentance must occur, not from fear of punishment but because we have sinned before God.

– St. Amphilochios of Patmos

Also Commemorated Today: Martyr Ludmilla of Bohemia, Grandmother of Martyr-Prince Wenceslaus



The Holy Martyr Ludmilla, a Czech (Bohemian) princess, was married to the Czech prince Borivoy. Both spouses received holy Baptism from Saint Methodius, Archbishop of Moravia and Enlightener of the Slavs (Comm. 11 May).

As Christians, they showed concern for the enlightening of their subjects with the light of the true Faith, they built churches and invited priests to celebrate the divine services. Prince Borivoy died early at age 36. Saint Ludmilla, as a widow, led an austere, pious life and continued to be concerned for the Church during the reign of her son Bratislav, which lasted for 33 years.

Bratislav was married to Dragomira, with whom he had a son, Vyacheslav. After the death of Bratislav, eighteen-year-old Vyacheslav came on the throne. Taking advantage of the inexperience and youth of her son, Dragomira began to introduce pagan manners and customs in the country.

Saint Ludmilla, of course, opposed this. Dragomira came to hate her mother-in-law and tried to destroy her. When Saint Ludmilla moved away to the city of Techin, Dragomira sent two boyars in secret to murder her. Saint Ludmilla was praying at the time, and the two assassins entered the house and carried out Dragomira's orders.

The relics of the holy Martyr Ludmilla was buried in Techin in the city wall. Numerous healings occurred at her grave. Prince Vyacheslav transferred the body of Saint Ludmilla to the city of Prague and placed it in the church of Saint George. *(from oca.org)*

Elder Amphilochios (Makris) of Patmos is Canonized by the Ecumenical Patriarchate

The Holy and Sacred Synod of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, which is gathering in the Phanar, under the leadership of Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, has decided, according to sources, today (August 29th, 2018) to canonize Elder Amphilochios Makris of Patmos (1889-1970).

This new Saint of the Orthodox Church was a friend and spiritual child of St. Nektarios. He was a spiritual father to many people of the Church, both Greeks and foreigners. He served as the Abbot of the Monastery of St. John the Theologian on Patmos. Furthermore, he founded the women's Monastery of the Annunciation [of the Theotokos], the "Mother of the Beloved", in 1937.

Elder Amphilochios made his mark on Patmos with his great spiritual, ethnic and ecological service. He became an inspiration for missionary work in Africa and many other places. (*from fullofgraceandtruth.blogspot.com*)

THE ELDER AND THE TREES

Metropolitan Kallistos (Ware) of Diokleia, relates: “When I was a deacon at the Monastery of St John the Theologian on Patmos in the 1960’s, our elder, Father Amphilochios (who died in 1970), used to say to us, “Do you know that God gave us one more commandment, which is not recorded in Scripture? It is the commandment, ‘Love the trees.’” Whoever does not love the trees, so he believed, does not love Christ. “When you plant a tree,” he told us, “you plant hope, you plant peace, you plant love, and you will receive God’s blessing.”

An ecologist long before ecology had become fashionable, when hearing the confessions of the local farmers, Father Amphilochios used to assign to them as a penance the task of planting a tree. Nor was this all. He would himself go around the island to see how they were carrying out their penance, whether they were keeping their tree-penance properly watered, whether they were making sure that it was not eaten by goats. Under his influence, the center of the island has been transformed: where, a century ago, there were bare and barren slopes, today there are flourishing groves of pine and eucalyptus. “Love the trees,” Father Amphilochios insisted. Do we not find there, in his emphasis upon love, the answer to the ecological problem? We cannot save what we do not love.”

Elder Amphilochios adored greenery and trees. Pine trees were almost unheard of in Patmos. When the simple women of the island first saw the pine trees that he had planted they named the trees “Amphilochians”. He developed beds of pine trees, and from these nursery beds he planted new roots himself, but also gave them to others to plant. As mentioned, quite often, in confession, he would oblige the faithful to plant two or three pine trees so that their sins could be forgiven. Slowly this dry, barren, rocky island started to become green. Not only did he arrange the planting of trees, he got involved in watering them too. He helped out with the arduous task of watering the newly planted shoots in the arid summer months. He believed that whoever planted or watered a tree, became a co-creator in nature with God, the Maker of all.

Fr. Antipas, the former abbot of Patmos, relates how once a nun destroyed a tree, and he had never seen the Elder filled with such righteous indignation except for when this happened. It was like Christ banishing the money lenders from the temple. He made the poor nun plant five trees and water them for three years, so that God would forgive her! When these trees grew he delighted in sitting in their shade, spending hours in prayer, praising God, alongside the trees, “Praise the Lord

...Mountains and all hills; Fruitful trees and all cedars; Young men and maidens, old men and children ...Let them praise the name of the Lord” (Psalm 148).

He longed to see Patmos covered in greenery and he celebrated when he heard that the lads at the Patmiada School had planted several thousand pine trees. How many saints of the Church chose to live amongst trees and in forests, discovering that these were places that developed vigilance of the heart, and that the thought of heaven was easily cultivated in these natural temples!

(from cyberdesert.wordpress.com)

The Universal Exaltation of the Precious and Life-Giving Cross

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Today as we venerate the Holy Cross of our Lord, and Orthodox Christians around the world raise the symbol of the sacred and precious wood, we proclaim the Cross to be an invincible shield, a divine scepter, and the boast of the faithful. We exalt it affirming that the Cross sanctifies to the ends of the world. We hail the life-giving Cross as the “unconquerable trophy of godliness, door to Paradise, and succor of the faithful.” Through the Cross our enemies are vanquished, freedom from corruption and mortality is established, and salvation is offered universally.

As the Cross is lifted up, we marvel at how an instrument meant for torture and shame leads us to abundant and eternal life. We contemplate how an object that inflicted suffering and death reveals the glory and power of God. We offer praise and thanksgiving, for instead of hate and inhumanity, the Cross has become love and freedom. Instead of suffering, we find healing and hope. The Cross leads us from death and life, and through the Cross we know that all things are possible to those who believe in Christ.

Today as we lift up the Holy Cross, we offer a witness to the world of the power of faith. We are reminded that Christ has called us to *deny ourselves and take up our cross daily and follow Him*. (Luke 9:23) We reflect on the words of the Apostle Paul which offer guidance on the relationship of the Cross and faith: *I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who lives, but Christ who lives in me; and the life I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me*. (Galatians 2:20) The Cross shows us the power of God that makes all things possible through faith.

As we venerate the Cross of Christ and affirm the victory and potential we have through it... may we be filled with amazement as we look upon the Cross and affirm what the power of God has accomplished for our salvation. May we go

forth from our gathering as His people, the Cross before us, knowing that through our faith in Christ, great and marvelous things, things that seem impossible and unattainable, will be accomplished for His honor and glory!

With paternal love in Christ,

† **D E M E T R I O S,**

Archbishop of America

***NOTE* - Fr. Joseph will be out of town from Sept. 17-26; if you need a priest in the interim, contact Fr. Peter Zarynow at 301-299-5120. We will pray the 3rd/6th Hour on Sunday, Sept. 23 at 9:30, followed by a deacon's service with Eucharist at 10:00. The usual service schedule will resume with Confession and Vespers on Saturday, Sept. 29.**

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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, 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.)