

# 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.**

## June 16, 2019 – Holy Pentecost

By Met. Anthony (Bloom) of Sourozh

The Church of God is not an institution, it is a miracle and it is a mystery. It is a miracle because how could we expect that closeness of God which is revealed to us in the Church. And it is also a mystery in the original sense of the world, something which cannot be either explained or conveyed in words, something that can be known only through a spellbound communion with God. The English word “God” comes from a Germanic root that means “him, before whom one prostrates in adoration”. This is where our knowledge of God begins – the sense of the divine presence that forces us down to our knees, spellbound, silent, not with an empty silence that is ours at times but with a silence which is nothing but intent worshipful listening, listening to the presence, listening to that presence which is at the core of the silence. And he who speaks to us within this silence is the Holy Spirit, who unveils before our minds and hearts what the words spoken by God, revealed to us in the Gospel truly convey.

It is only under the guidance of the Holy Spirit that we can both believe and understand what Christ spoke because words in themselves are always equivocal, they may be clear or obscure, they may be made to mean what they never meant.



And this is the role of the Holy Spirit - to make us understand God's word as it was born in the divine silence and unfolded before us in words which we could understand. But these words are not a prison, they are an open door as Christ is the door leading to the Father and leading to eternal life. It is the Holy Spirit who according to the promise of our Lord unveils for us the meaning of the Scriptures, it is not scholarship, it is worship and a worship that allows us to commune with the mind of God and the heart of God. The Spirit of truth, but also Him whom the Scripture calls the Paraclete, a complex word as so many of the words of ancient languages. It means "the Comforter", Him who gives consolation. It means 'Comforter' in the sense that He gives us strength, it means also "Him, who brings joy". And these three meanings are important but He can be to us the Comforter in these various ways only if we are in need of His comfort.

What kind of consolation do we need? Most of us feel perfectly comfortable in our lives and indeed in our worship and our spiritual life, and who of us is in a position to say with all the intensity and depth with which St. Paul spoke these words, "For me life is Christ, death would be a gain because as long as I live in the body, I am separated from Christ"? Can we honestly say that for us life is Christ, that all that He stands for is life-giving, all that is contrary to Him, to us is death? Can we say that we have died with Christ to everything which is alien to God? Can we say that we are alive only when the things of God come our way - prayer, deep meditation, the kind of understanding which the Spirit of God reveals to us? And so we must ask ourselves very sternly a first question: is Christ my life or not? Would it be enough for me to feel that life is fulfilled, complete to be at one with Christ in all things or do I feel that there are so many things which I love and which I am not prepared to let go off even to be with Christ?

And again, Christ is in the midst of us invisibly, mysteriously. Yes, but He is not with us in the way in which He was with the Apostles. We cannot say with St. John that we speak of what we have seen, what we have heard, what our hands have touched. We know Christ in the spirit, no longer in the flesh, and yet Christ rose in the flesh, Christ ascended and is seated at the right hand of the Father in His body glorified. Paul longed to be with Him in this companionship full of veneration, of reverence, of love. He wanted to be at one with Him without anything separating from Him. "Who shall make me free of this body of corruption?" - of this body against which my thoughts and my prayers and my best inclinations, and my most passionate impulses for good break down? Can we say that? Is death what we expect longingly because it will unite us to Christ? Or are we still pagan at heart and do we wish to flee from death? And instead of saying, "Lord, Jesus, come and come soon!" aren't we prepared to say, "Tarry, O Lord, tarry, give me time," in the way in which Augustine prayed to the Lord after his conversion, "Lord, give me

chastity but not just now.” Isn’t it that our condition - not concerning chastity alone but everything in life: not just now, o Lord, the time will come when all my energies will be spent, when age will have come and made life much less attractive or unpalatable - then take me. No, this is not it. And so when we think of the Holy Spirit as our Comforter, as one who consoles us from the absence of Christ by making us to commune with the essence of things, where do we stand? Is He our Comforter while we need no comfort?

And again, in our ministry how often do we feel that we are totally, ultimately helpless, that what we are called to do is simply beyond human possibilities? In the beginning of the Eucharistic celebration in the Orthodox Church, when the priest is vested, when he has prepared the Holy Gifts, when he is about to give the first liturgical exclamation, when in his naivety “Now I will perform miracles on earth,” the deacon turns to him and says, “And now, father, it is for God to act.” All you could do, you have done, you have prayed and prepared yourself, made yourself open to God, you have vested yourself and become an image – but only an image, not the thing. You have prepared the bread and the wine and now what is expected of you is something which you cannot do, you cannot by any power including apostolic succession make this bread into the Body of Christ, this wine into the Blood of Christ, you have no power over God and you have no power over the created world.

It is only Christ who is the only celebrant because He is the High Priest of all creation who sending the Holy Spirit can break through into time, open it up so that eternity can flow, indeed, make eruption into it and within this eschatological situation in which eternity fills time make possible the impossible, make bread into the Body of Christ crucified and risen, the wine into the Blood of Christ crucified and risen.

And all our function depends only on the Holy Spirit. Strength? St. Paul hoped for strength, he prayed for it and the Lord answered him, “My grace suffices unto thee, My strength is made manifest in weakness.” And Paul rejoices in his weakness, so, he says, that all should be the power of God. Not the weakness of our slackness, of our laziness, of our timidity, of our cowardice, of our forgetfulness, no, not that weakness but the frailty recognized, which is given to God, the sur-render of ourselves. If I may use an image, it is that of the sail of a sailing ship. Of all the parts of the ship the sail is the frailest, the weakest and yet filled with the wind, (and the word “wind” in ancient languages is the same as “spirit” – ruach, πνευμα) it can carry the heavy structure of the ship to its haven. This is the kind of weakness, of frailty which we have got to offer to God, such frailty that He can use it freely, without resistance, and then our strength will be stronger than any-thing which the created world can possess. The martyrs were

frail, as frail as we were, but they abandoned themselves to God and they lived and died in the power of the Spirit. We need that strength.

And then the Paraclete is the one that gives joy, the joy of entering already now into eternity, the joy of being joined to Christ in the communion of the one body, the joy of giving our lives for Him and if necessary – our death, a joy which the world cannot give but which the world cannot take away. I will end on one example of this joy of the Spirit. I met a few years ago in Russia an elderly priest who had spent 36 years in prisons and concentration camps. He sat opposite me with eyes shining with joy and gratitude and he said, “Do you realize, can you imagine, how infinitely good God had been to me? The Soviet authorities did not allow a priest either into prisons or into camps; and He chooses me, a young, inexperienced priest and sends me first to prison and then to camp to look after His lost sheep.” There was nothing in him but gratitude and joy. And that joy, that kind of gratitude against the history of his life was truly an outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

Let us therefore in all our life, whether we pray, listen to the unutterable groanings of the Spirit within us, teaching us ultimately to call the God of Heaven our Father if we are in Jesus Christ, in the words of Irenaeus of Lyon, sons of God in the Only-Begotten Son of God. Amen.

### **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*

Let us spiritually extol the grace of the Holy Spirit in spiritual hymns, since spiritual grace has on this day shown upon us from heaven. Though our words are too weak to express adequately the greatness of this grace, we shall praise its power and activity to the extent of our abilities; for the Holy Spirit probes all things, even the depths of divinity.

We are celebrating the day of Pentecost, the day of the Descent of the Holy Spirit to the Apostles, the day of the hope of perfection, the end of expectation, the longing for salvation, the fulfillment of prayer and the image of patience. Today the Spirit Who acted to scatter the nations in the time of Heber has formed tongues of fire among the Apostles. His action of old led to the confusion of the nations, in order to restrain the will of man from its brazenness and consequent chastisement; on this occasion, however, amidst fiery tongues, the deeds wrought by the activity of the Holy Spirit served to preserve us as recipients of preaching, in fulfillment of the will of God.

In the beginning the Spirit of God moved over the water, and later, in the time of Christ, the same Holy Spirit of God rested upon him. Then He moved, and now He rested, as being one in essence, equal in honor, ever-existent and unoriginate together with the Father and the Son. He Who by the flight of a dove over the waters of the Flood heralded fair weather to Noah, the same Holy Spirit, by the sight of a dove at the waters of the Jordan, showed the world the Sonship of Him Who was baptized. Moreover, the Lord had a terrifying answer for those who dared to utter blasphemy against the Holy Spirit: “Whoever speaks blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come.”

David, declaring his desire for this Holy Spirit, prayed to God, saying: “Cast me not away from Your presence, O Lord; and take not Your Holy Spirit from me.” As is well known, where He is absent, every sort of corruption sets in. Thus, the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul, and an evil spirit entered into him, because of which David said, “Take not Your Holy Spirit from me.” This same Holy Spirit sanctified the prophets, instructed the apostles and empowered the martyrs. This same Holy Spirit consecrated Isaiah, taught Ezekiel and revealed the resurrection of the dead.... This same Holy Spirit of God came to dwell in the holy Virgin Mary, embracing her with the communion of the Divine Word at the good pleasure of the Father, and making her the Theotokos. Elizabeth, being filled with this same Holy Spirit, understood that the Lord had come to her by means of the Virgin; so she said, “And whence is this to me, that the Mother of my Lord should come to me?” Zachariah, the father of John, was filled with the same Holy Spirit, whereby he declared that the son born to him would be the prophet and forerunner of the King Who was to come. John himself was also filled with the same Holy Spirit; the eyes of his intellect were given light, and he beheld the heavens opened, and the Holy Spirit hovering over Him Who was being baptized, Him Who baptized with the Spirit and fire.

By the action of the same Holy Spirit, the Lord Himself, when He was giving His Apostles His teaching in detail and strengthening their minds for the time of His Passion, said to them: “If I do not go away, the Comforter will not come unto you.” Moreover, revealing to them the Spirit’s consubstantial power, He said: “When the Holy Spirit is come, Which proceeds from the Father, He will guide you into all truth.” The holy Apostles waited expectantly for the coming of the power of this same Holy Spirit; they waited together to be clothed with power from on high, according to the commandment of the Lord, Who had said: “Tarry in the city of Jerusalem, until you are endued with power from on high; for, behold, I shall send the promise of My Father upon you.” And, as it is written, “when the day of Pentecost was fully come, all the holy Apostles were assembled with one accord in

one place, and the Paraclete was sent to them under the appearance of tongues of fire.”

Having received the abundant promise of the Father and the Holy Spirit, they were strengthened, and they manifested Him Who was sent to them, His grace and His power. The martyr and protodeacon Stephen, filled with the same Holy Spirit, Whom he received by the laying-on of hands of the Apostles, did great wonders and miracles among the people. Being full of the Holy Spirit, he saw the doors of heaven opened and the Only-begotten Son and Word of God standing in the flesh at the right hand of the power of God. Filled with this same Holy Spirit, Paul became the preacher of divine mysteries....

This is the Spirit of Whom the Lord, when He breathed upon His disciples after His Resurrection from the dead on the third day, said: “Receive the Holy Spirit.” And again, it is the same Spirit Who has vouchsafed to give eternal life to the faithful after the general resurrection from the dead. As it is written: “You will send forth Your Spirit, and they shall be created; and You shall renew the face of the earth.”

Many are the gifts of the Holy Spirit; many and all-powerful are His gifts. As it says in a certain place: “By the Word of the Lord were the heavens established, and all the might of them by the Spirit of His mouth.” And Isaiah says: “The Spirit of God shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and strength, the spirit of knowledge and godliness.” And Paul adds, “The Spirit of adoption and of grace.” He Who is equally ever-existent, and equally unoriginate, and Who shares the throne and the honor of God, His Son and Word, called this Spirit the Spirit Who is our Comforter. David calls Him “the Holy Spirit,” since the Holy Spirit is sent by holiness; “the governing Spirit,” since He has dominion over all, because all things came from Him and are kept in existence by Him; and “the good Spirit,” since salvation and all kinds of goodness are from Him....

He is one in essence, one in principle and one in counsel with the Father and the Son. Would you believe? Listen to what the Scriptures say of Him: “When He prepared the heaven, I was present with Him.” The prophet further says: “The Lord, and His Spirit has sent me.” Lest anyone think, from what was said, that this new Spirit would come from any creatures living or yet to come, or from any other person, He says: “And I will put My Spirit in you;” inasmuch as He said, “A new Spirit.”

In the Acts of the holy Apostles, this was expressed in commandments: “The Holy Spirit said, ‘Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them.’” And again, “It seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us;” even as it had

been said, “I will put My Spirit in you.” Would you demonstrate that this was indeed His coming, as was foretold in parables, and that it was His grace acting upon the holy Apostles? Will you believe what was said? Listen to St. John the Evangelist, who says: “The Holy Spirit was not yet given, because that Jesus was not yet glorified.” Paul called this Spirit the Spirit of adoption and the Spirit of grace, inasmuch as in the waters of the baptismal font men are born again of water and the Spirit, and we receive the adoption of sons. In the same way, the Lord said to Nicodemus: “Unless a man is born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.”

Thus, the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of sonship and the Spirit of grace; for grace and truth came by Jesus Christ, through the Holy Spirit, for those who have been born by the power of God. Moreover, the Spirit is called the Comforter, because He is also our advocate with the Father. And not only is He with the Father, but He is always with us also as a gift. “And I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you forever,” comforting your hearts and making them steadfast in divine patience and trust in Christ. Whereas the holy Apostles received this testament after Christ’s holy Rising from the dead, and were sent forth to teach and to baptize in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and whereas we have already been vouchsafed this true washing by the Holy Spirit, let us strive to keep our souls and our bodies undefiled as we glorify the Most holy and consubstantial Trinity, the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto the ages of ages. Amen.

– St. John Chrysostom, *Homily on Pentecost*



## The Spiritual Aspect of Fatherhood

A conference participant once asked the speaker, “What is the best way for a father to love his children?” The speaker replied, “The best way for a father to love his children is to love their mother.” I reflect often upon that superbly accurate statement. And I think the reverse is equally true: the best way a mother can love her children is to love their father. More than anything else in the world, children need a loving family and parents who support each other, even if the parents are apart through separation or divorce. Christ challenges us to love one another, and that challenge becomes even more compelling within our own families. Even in the best of families, there is brokenness. And that is why the man’s call to fatherhood is so important. We fathers are called to show our families strong, manly love and forgiveness, virtues modelled powerfully in the father of the prodigal son (Lk 11:32).



This father is stable, loving, and generous. In his fairness, he avoids violating the freedom of either of his sons. When the prodigal demands his inheritance and decides to leave, the father does not attempt to withhold the money. He does not pressure the son to stay by trying to make him feel guilty. And the father is wise enough not to send care packages to relieve the son's distress. The father allows both of his adult sons to make their own mistakes and to learn from their failures, an appropriate form of discipline for older adolescents and young adults.

The prodigal's father demonstrates manly leadership by taking loving initiatives, and he takes many such initiatives. He maintains a thriving business to provide the generous inheritance. He creates and supports a loving family for the prodigal to run from and for the older son to remain with. And there is his last generous, joyful initiative as he runs out to embrace the returning son, kiss him, and put on him the best robe, ring, and shoes. He celebrates the return of his son with a feast. And in a scene all of us fathers can recognize, he opens up the conversation with the sulking older son. The father takes the initiative in bringing about forgiveness and reconciliation in the whole family. He is a model for us in responding to our call to follow the Spirit of Jesus in taking many initiatives in our families, especially that of boundless forgiveness for our children.

When a father takes responsibility for his own spiritual life, for the way he prays, goes to church, and practices virtue in the family, he gives a good example. Then, his leadership in the family is authentic, based on his own solid relationship with God, and he is less likely to be concerned about any resistance his children may give him. He can lead family prayer. When I suggest that we stand in the living room and pray before a trip or that we pray in a restaurant, I often feel an initial resistance in my children. But quiet cooperation and peacefulness soon follow. Sometimes the children will even tell me that they prayed in a restaurant when I wasn't there. At times the father's role of leading the family to great forgiveness and prayer-fulness is an unpopular one. But as a man grows in his own spiritual life, he becomes more sturdy and willing to accept responsibility. Although all this is impossible for us fathers to do alone, God can do all things. God can even bestow the awesome spiritual power of fatherhood upon us. (*from orthodoxnotes.com*)

~ HAPPY FATHER'S DAY! ~

**Social Team for June 23**

Team 1 is up next week – Blaydoe P., Chumak, Connour, Samson. Thank you!

## Follow Our Diocese On-Line

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***In Your Prayers – Please Remember...*** His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch BARTHOLOMEW, His Eminence Metropolitan 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, Presbyteria Katie Baker and family, Santiago Alzugaray, Jeffrey Carey, Tatyana and Slava Chumak & family, Xenia Chilkowich, Jon Church, Ramius Connour, Curtis Cooper, Luke Cooper, Tina Crull, Mary Diane David, Ron Dominiecki, 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. Nectaros 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.)