

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: Great Vespers 5:00 PM

Sunday: Matins (Orthros) 8:45 AM

Divine Liturgy 10:00 AM

***Please note that attendance is currently limited by restrictions dictated by local response to the COVID-19 pandemic; if you are currently not assigned to an attendance group, please contact outreach@apostlethomas.org for information on when you may attend.**

July 26, 2020 | 7th Sunday After Pentecost | Great-Martyr Paraskevi

+ Bishop Augoustinos (Homily delivered in Chaidari, Athens, before 1967)

St. Paraskevi was not an ordinary woman. She was a spiritual meteor, a bedrock of virtue, unshakable amid the ocean of corrupt society. She implemented that which Christ said, that: "He who hears my words and keeps them resembles a house built upon the rock, and though the rains came and the winds and the rivers fell upon it, the house was not shaken" (Matt. 7:24-25.) And St. Paraskevi was a bedrock of virtue. Foamy waves fell upon her, the biggest waves of life.

First, the wave of corruption fell upon her. She was not born in a small village. She was born in the most corrupted city, which in the Holy Scriptures is called the Babylon of the world due to its corruption (Rev. 17:5). She was born in Rome, a suburb of Rome. However, she remained uplifted. She was a lily among the dung of society.



Let us all hearken to this, for when we see some woman being led astray, we say: "Society is responsible." Yes, society is responsible, I don't deny this. But she herself is also responsible. Give me a woman who loves Christ like St. Paraskevi, and throw her into the most corrupted society, and no wave and no devil could shake her.

As soon as one wave left, a stronger wave fell upon her: the wave of orphanhood. This wave is terrible. St. Paraskevi was orphaned of her father and her mother. Because of this she is a protector of orphans. She was orphaned at that age when children could become prey to unscrupulous traffickers who try to exploit them. But she stood tall even while an orphan. She had within her a great fervor for holiness, the life of virginity and grandeur.

Woe to the woman who does not have these great desires. No matter how high she climbs, no matter how many qualifications she has, she is deplorable. It is better to be an unlettered villager, who are like a lily, like the flowers that grow in the crags of the rocks of our homeland.

Therefore, the waves of corruption and orphanhood fell upon her, but she remained untouched. Because of this I call her a rock. Furthermore, another rock fell upon her: that of money, of wealth. After the death of her pious parents, she remained the sole inheritor of their vast property, which they left to her. Every other girl would think differently. One might buy silk clothes, one might go to dances and gatherings, one might run right and left, would go on trips, would experience the spirit of the sinful life. St. Paraskevi however did the opposite.

Money is a great temptation. It is better to be a blessed poor person. Thrice-blessed are little huts, more than great homes. Because in huts dwell diamonds, while in the palaces and the large homes dwell many times prideful souls, who do not love Christ.

Money fell into the hands of St. Paraskevi. But she did what St. Anthony did, who had also inherited vast property. He went into church one day. His ear hearkened to the Priest who was reading the Gospel: "Sell your goods and give them to the poor" (Matt. 19:21). Sell everything and give them to the poor. Anthony heard this. And he did not say that Christ was saying this to others. He distributed his property to the poor. As he hearkened to the words of Christ, so did St. Paraskevi. She kept only a small amount, and with this she founded a small sisterhood of orphan women virgins, who were dedicated to preaching, to enlightenment and to philanthropy.

So many foamy waves fell upon St. Paraskevi. Finally, the red wave of blood fell upon her! It was a time when only one would be heard to be a Christian, and one would be put in prison. They seized her at that hour when she had gathered the

girls together to teach them. They led her before the judge. They asked her: "Are you a Christian?" She responded: "I boast that I am a Christian." "We give you," they said, "three days time to deny Christ." "No," the Saint responded, "I don't need time to decide. From this instant I have dedicated to sacrifice my life for Christ. Do whatever you wish." And her martyrdom began.

They threw her in a dungeon of the prison. They whipped her with bullwhips. They threw her to the wild beasts. They threw her into a cauldron with burning tar and oil. She endured many forms of martyrdom, but all of these she conquered through the power of Christ. At the end, her hour came. They took her to a temple of the idols with statues of the false gods. She knelt, closed her eyes and made a mystical prayer to God. Immediately, there was an earthquake. The statues fell to the earth and became dust.

They couldn't stand it anymore. Thousands of barbarous hands of the idolaters seized her, and took her outside and to the place of execution. Her face was shining like the sun. She knelt, prayed and thanked God. Finally, she was beheaded by a Roman soldier. And while her honorable head fell down, and her blood watered the earth, her soul, white as a dove, flew to the heavens.

Since then, how many years have passed! But as long as the world will exist, the name of St. Paraskevi will remain unto eternity. For: "The memory of the righteous is unto eternity" (Ps 111:6). My brethren, St. Paraskevi is an example for all of us. But foremost, she is an example of a virtuous life and faith for women and young people. In this age of great corruption, she is the example and the mirror of virtue for womanhood.

We live in a time of Babylon, a time of the Apocalypse, when the devil is roaring. He tries to strike the whole world. But most of all, he rabidly fights to strike and to soil girls and women. He wants not a single girl to remain unsoiled. He fights with terrible magazines and newspapers. He soiled our girls with terrible brochures, with movies, with TV shows, which are schools of crime and dishonor. He soils them with mixed baths, with terrible photographs, with corrupting dances, with parties. The day will come when you will not find a pure girl. What will we do? To arms, my brethren, to arms! Not to physical weapons, but to spiritual ones. Fathers, mothers, look towards the honor of your girls.

I'm finished, but rather, I'm not yet finished, because I want to be paid. What payment? Money? I am a monk and I leave that to you. I will not finish my homily unless my soul is satisfied. Do you want your homes to be blessed and your girls to be secure? Today, the feast of St. Paraskevi, I entreat you all to do three things. First, go straightaway to your home, and look everywhere to find terrible articles and pictures, and gather them to light them with a holy fire to burn them all.

Second, I recommend to all of you to go buy the life of St. Paraskevi and an icon of hers to hang in your home, and speak to your children: "My daughter, my child, become like St. Paraskevi." And the third thing? Having done the first two, light a candle for the wayward women, those who live in filth and dishonor, and say to St. Paraskevi: "St. Paraskevi, you who are a lily of heaven, help these women of Greece, the women of the whole world to return near the Panagia, near to God, near to Greece, so that we might all have the protection of the Holy Trinity," Whose blessings I pray might be with you all. Amen. (*from johnsanidopoulos.com*)

Today's Epistle Lesson – St. Paul's Letter to the Romans 15:1-7

Brethren, we who are strong ought to bear with the scruples of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let each of us please *his* neighbor for *his* good, leading to edification. For even Christ did not please Himself; but as it is written, "The reproaches of those who reproached You fell on Me." For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope. Now may the God of patience and comfort grant you to be like-minded toward one another, according to Christ Jesus, that you may with one mind *and* one mouth glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore receive one another, just as Christ also received you, to the glory of God.

Today's Gospel Lesson – Saint Matthew 9:27-35

At that time, two blind men followed Jesus, crying out and saying, "Son of David, have mercy on us!" And when He had come into the house, the blind men came to Him. And Jesus said to them, "Do you believe that I am able to do this?" They said to Him, "Yes, Lord." Then He touched their eyes, saying, "According to your faith let it be to you." And their eyes were opened. And Jesus sternly warned them, saying, "See *that* no one knows *it*." But when they had departed, they spread the news about Him in all that country. As they went out, behold, they brought to Him a man, mute and demon-possessed. And when the demon was cast out, the mute spoke. And the multitudes marveled, saying, "It was never seen like this in Israel!" But the Pharisees said, "He casts out demons by the ruler of the demons." Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people.

A Word From the Holy Fathers

[After the consecration of the Eucharist] comes the remembrance of those who have fallen asleep in the God of spirits and of all flesh, Who is the Lord of both the dead and the living, and Who rules over those in heaven, on earth, and in the lower

regions. For Christ the King is present, and the Holy Spirit calls all the living and the dead to unity and rest until the appearance of our God and Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and to assemble and come before His face; because the chains of all the souls in Hades have been loosed through the death and resurrection of Christ. For He has been raised from the dead, having become the first-fruit and first-born from the dead. He prepared a way for all to the resurrection from the dead and granted rest in eternal and blessed life to those who have fallen asleep in the hope of His resurrection. The souls of Christians are called together to assemble with the prophets, apostles, and hierarchs in order to recline with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob at the mystical banquet of the Kingdom of Christ.

Thereby having come into the unity of faith and communion of the Spirit through the dispensation of the One who died for us and is sitting at the right hand of the Father, we are no longer on earth but standing by the royal throne of God in heaven, where Christ is, just as He himself says: "Righteous Father, sanctify in you name those whom you gave me, so that where I am, they may be with me" (cf. Jn. 17). Therefore, receiving adoption and becoming co-heirs with Christ through His grace, and not through works, we have the spirit of the Son of God. Contemplating His power and grace, the priest calls out, saying: "Abba, heavenly Father, make us worthy to say boldly and without condemnation:"

"Our Father, Who art in heaven, hallowed by Thy name" - the name is that of the Son of God. Saying "Father" points out to you of whose goods you have been made worthy, now that you have become a son of God. Saying "in heaven" points out your Father's native country and home: if you want to have God as a father, look to heaven and not to earth. For you do not say "my Father," but "our Father," since you have all met as brothers of the one Father. "Hallowed be Thy name," that is, make us holy so that You may be glorified by us. For as God is blasphemed by me, so He is also glorified by me.

"Thy kingdom come" - That is, the second coming: for he who has a good conscience boldly desires the coming of the resurrection and the judgment.

"Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven" - just as, it says, the angels do Your will, so grant that we may do it.

"Give us this day our daily bread" - it means the bread which is sufficient for our nature and existence. He removes the care for the morrow. The body of Christ is the daily bread, and we pray that we may share in it blamelessly.

"And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us" - because we sin even after baptism. We pray that He might forgive us our debts if we do bear a grudge: for God has me as an example, and what I do to the other, He does unto me.

“And lead us not into temptation” - We men are weak; therefore, it does not behoove us to fall into temptation, but rather to pray not to be overwhelmed by temptation. For he who is over-whelmed and overcome is led into the pit of temptation: but he who has fallen, has he prevailed?

“But deliver us from the evil one” - He does not say “from evil men,” for they do not wrong us, but “the evil one.”

Then the priest exclaims, saying to all: “I am a man of like passions with you, and I do not know the sins of each of you. “Look, see, behold God!” and “God is the Holy One who abides in the saints.” The people respond, saying, “One is holy, one is our Lord, Jesus Christ,” with the God and Father and the Holy Spirit. For in the past Moses sprinkled the blood of the calves and the goat, saying to the people: “This is the blood of the covenant of God.” But now the Christ and God has given His own body and poured out and mixed His own blood, that of the new covenant, saying: “This is my body and my blood, which is broken and poured out for the remission of sins.” So henceforth with this understanding we eat the bread and drink the cup, as the body and blood of God, professing the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, to whom be glory unto the Ages. Amen.

– St. Germanus, Patriarch of Constantinople, *On the Divine Liturgy*

Also Commemorated Today: Venerable Moses the Hungarian

Although the Hungarians were mostly pagan when Saint Moses was born, and later they became Orthodox Christian, the Hungarian chieftain of Transylvania, the Gyula, was baptized in Constantinople in 952, and it is because of this that the Hungarian-born Moses was raised an Orthodox Christian and was able to travel to Kiev. Venerable Moses the Hungarian of the Kiev Caves was a brother of Saint Ephraim of Novy Torg (Jan. 28), and of Saint George. Together with them he entered into the service of the holy Prince Boris (July 24) of Kiev. After the murder of Saint Boris in 1015 at the River Alta (Saint George also perished with him), Saint Moses fled and hid himself at Kiev with Predislava, daughter of Vladimir I of Kiev and sister of the future Prince Yaroslav I the Wise. In 1018, when the Polish king Boleslav seized Kiev, Moses and his companions wound up in Poland as captives.

Tall and handsome, Moses attracted the attention of a certain rich Polish widow, who burned with a passionate desire for him and wanted to ransom him from captivity and make him her husband. Moses resolutely refused to exchange captivity for slavery to a wife. Despite his refusal, the Polish woman bought the captive. She did everything in her power to seduce the youth, but he preferred

hunger pains to banquets of food. Then the Polish woman began to convey Moses through her lands, thinking to captivate him by power and riches. Moses told her that he would not trade spiritual riches for the perishable things of this world, and that he wished to become a monk.

Passing through the area, an Athonite hieromonk tonsured Moses a monk. The Polish woman gave orders to stretch Moses on the ground and to beat him with iron rods, so that the ground became soaked with his blood. She sought permission of Boleslav to do with the captive all that she pleased. The shameless woman once gave orders to put Moses in a bed with her. She kissed and embraced him, but she accomplished nothing by this. Moses said, "From the fear of God I loathe you as impure." Hearing this, the Polish woman gave orders to give the Saint each day a hundred lashes, and then to emasculate him by having his private parts severed. For five years Moses suffered torture at her hands. Boleslav soon began a persecution against all the monks in the land, but sudden death overtook him. A revolt arose in Poland, in which the widow also was killed.

Having recovered from his wounds, Moses arrived at the Kiev Caves Monastery, bearing on himself a martyr's wounds and a crown of a confessor as courageous warrior of Christ. The Lord provided him strength in his sufferings. A certain monastic brother, oppressed by impure passion, went to Moses and sought his help, saying, "I promise to keep until death everything you tell me to do." Moses said: "As long as you live, do not speak a word to any woman." The brother promised to obey the advice of the monk. Saint Moses had in his hand a staff, without which he was not able to walk because of the wounds which he had received. With this staff Moses struck the chest of the brother who had approached him, and immediately he was delivered from temptation. Saint Moses pursued asceticism at Kiev for ten years; he died in about the year 1043 and was buried in the Near Caves. After venerating the Saint's holy relics and fervent prayer to him, monks are relieved of the temptations of the flesh, Saint John the Much-Suffering among them. (*from johnsanidopoulos.com*)

Hagia Sophia and the Ottomans

By Metropolitan Hierotheos of Nafpaktos

Great sorrow filled our souls with the transformation of Hagia Sophia into a mosque, which is an ecclesiastical and cultural rape, especially in our time, which is characterized as an era of human rights and respect for religious freedom. This shows both the mentality of the Turks and the response of those who supported them in their decision, because I do not think that they made such moves without any support from some great Heads of State.

However, Hagia Sophia has nothing to do with the Turkish-Ottomans, unless they consider it as booty of a continuous conquest of the Queen City from the year 1453 until today. However, history cannot be erased nor silenced nor misinterpreted.

Father George Florovsky, a great Russian theologian of the 20th century, in a text titled "The Hagia Sophia Churches", writes that the word Sophia is a biblical name, which with two others, namely Dynamis and Eirene, the Apostle Paul refers to the enhypostatic Word of God, Christ.

In fact, he writes, that the first Temple in Constantinople dedicated to the name of Hagia Sophia was probably designed by Constantine the Great, was inaugurated in 360 by Constantius and later built in its current form as the "Great Church" of Justinian.

This means that the name "Holy Wisdom" was considered a confirmation of the theology of the First Ecumenical Synod, which established the Symbol of Faith, in which we confess Christ as "Light from Light, True God from True God, begotten not made, of one essence with the Father through Whom all things were made," that He is the Word and Wisdom of God the Father.

With this perspective there were numerous churches in the then Roman Empire with the name "Hagia Sophia", even among the Slavic peoples.

I wonder: How will this Temple be used as a Mosque with the name "Hagia Sophia", which refers to Christ as God, when the Koran, as analyzed by Archbishop Anastasios of Tirana and All Albania in his well-researched book *Islam*, denies the fatherhood of God, that is, that God has no Son and is not a Father; it rejects the divinity of Christ, since Muhammad received elements of Arianism and Nestorianism; and it denies the Cross of Christ? What has the Orthodox Hagia Sophia, which refers to the divinity of Christ, got to do with the Koran and the Islamic religion that denies it?

At the same time, I would like to remind you that in the fourteenth century, shortly before the fall of Constantinople to the Ottomans, Saint Gregory Palamas had three dialogues with the representatives of the Ottomans on the basis that Muslims denied the divinity of Christ and upheld that Islam spread throughout the world with the power of the devil, with war, the sword, looting, manslaughter and murder, and Muhammad used violence and pleasure.

I refer to this theological point, in order to show the great difference between the Orthodox Church and Islam and to emphasize that Hagia Sophia is a Temple with deep theology, where the Divine Liturgy was celebrated for over a thousand years, and not just simply something that is culturally good and not simply as just a monument with a great cultural and universal inheritance. More so, it is a

provocation for it to become a place of prayer for those of another religion or another faith.

If the purpose of the existence of a Temple is changed, then this constitutes a religious rape. Hagia Sophia is an integral part of the Orthodox Church, of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, which is called the Great Church because of Hagia Sophia, which is the Great Church.

But for the sake of truth it must be underlined that this great ecclesiastical and theological treasure, and secondarily a cultural treasure, was not respected when the Western Franks who occupied it in 1204 or when the Ottomans took possession of it. Perhaps this is because there are common theological principles between Western Christianity and Islam, in regards to the person of God, the word of God, mysticism, social and mental eudaimonism, theocratic totalitarianism, and so on. Yet this is a major issue.

I have been thinking about this lately. President Erdogan has a vision, without me agreeing with it of course, and he is trying to make it happen with the participation of some northern orthodox peoples and some western nations. We, however, as Greeks and Romans, what vision do we have? And from where do we expect help? It is a matter of work.

The third fall of Hagia Sophia (first was Frankish in 1204, second was Ottoman in 1453) which took place with its conversion into a mosque, should activate not only the cultural and ecumenical immune system, but also the ecclesiastical and theological system of our being, and finally to develop our Roman philotimo. At this point there must be close co-operation between the Government and our Church.

Finally, we must remember the speech of Nikephoros Vrettakos: "I do not take the city, I do not take the light." Hagia Sophia is a blinding light, which illuminates for some and blinds others. *(from johnsanidopoulos.com)*

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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, Presbytera Katie Baker and family, Dn. Steve Hall, 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, Howl Family, 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, Robinson Family, Samson Family, Sharon Sheptak, Bernie Takabayashi & family, Dawn & Faith Ulmschneider, Christine, Marshall, Nathaniel, Dcn. 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.)