

SOBORNOST

St. Thomas the Apostle Orthodox Church

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American Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Diocese

ECUMENICAL PATRIARCHATE
OF CONSTANTINOPLE

SERVICES

Wednesday: Moleben to the Theotokos 6:00 AM

Friday: Moleben to the Cross 6:00 AM

Saturday: Confession 4:30 PM | Great Vespers 5:00 PM

Sunday: Matins (Orthros) 8:45 AM | Divine Liturgy 10:00 AM

July 18, 2021 – 4th Sunday After Pentecost

Holy Fathers of the First Six Ecumenical Councils

On the Sunday that falls between the 13th and 19th of this month [July], we commemorate the Holy Six Ecumenical Synods, namely the 318 God-bearing Fathers of the First Synod who gathered in Nicaea against Arianism in the year 325; and the 150 of the Second Synod who came together in Constantinople against the Pneumatomachs in the year 381; and the 200 at the Third who came together in Ephesus against Nestorius in the year 431; and the 630 at the Fourth in Chalcedon who came together against the Monophysites in the year 451; and the 165 of the Fifth Synod who came together against Origen and his followers in the year 553; and the 170 of the Sixth who came together in Constantinople against the Monothelites in 680.

The Six Synods defeated the factions of the heretics, having divine words as a weapon.

According to the notes of Saint Nikodemos the Hagiorite for this commemoration, there is a discrepancy on this day as to whether we should celebrate the Six Ecumenical Synods or just the Fourth Ecumenical Synod, while the Canon of Philotheos chanted on this day only refers to the Fourth and the Sixth Ecumenical Synods which were against the Monophysites and the Monothelites. Instead of this Canon, however, it is the Canon of Germanos the New which should be chanted on this day, being the same chanted on the Sunday after October 11th when we commemorate the Seventh Ecumenical Synod, because it refers to all Seven



Ecumenical Synods. It is more fitting for this Canon to be chanted today rather than after October 11th, because on the Sunday after October 11th only the Seventh Ecumenical Synod is commemorated and not all Seven. Moreover, it was the tradition in the days of Saint Nikodemos to chant the Canon of Germanos the New on this day rather than that of Philotheos. This being the case, it would be more fitting on this day to celebrate all Seven Ecumenical Synods rather than just the Six.

As for the Fourth Ecumenical Synod being alone commemorated on this day in some sources, Saint Nikodemos clarified that this was because of the miracle of Saint Euphemia at the Fourth Synod which the Church celebrates on July 11th. In his editing of the *Synaxaristes*, Saint Nikodemos listed the commemoration for the Fourth Ecumenical Synod to take place on the same day as the miracle on July 11th, while this Sunday should commemorate the Six Ecumenical Synods, although it would be more fitting to commemorate all Seven on this day according to the order of the Canon of Germanos the New. The fact that the Seventh Ecumenical Synod is not commemorated today testifies to the antiquity of today's celebration.

To clarify, all Seven Ecumenical Synods are commemorated separately on their own particular day: the First Synod is celebrated on the Sunday after the Ascension, the Second on May 22, the Third on September 9, the Fourth on July 11, the Fifth on July 25, the Sixth on September 14, and the Seventh on the Sunday after October 11.

A brief summary of the dogmatic theology of the first Six Ecumenical Synods is formulated and contained in the First Canon of the Synod of Trullo (also known as Quinisext in Latin or Penthekte in Greek), held in the year 692:

"That order is best of all which makes every word and act begin and end in God. Wherefore that piety may be clearly set forth by us and that the Church of which Christ is the foundation may be continually increased and advanced, and that it may be exalted above the cedars of Lebanon; now therefore we, by divine grace at the beginning of our decrees, define that the faith set forth by the God-chosen Apostles who themselves had both seen and were ministers of the Word, shall be preserved without any innovation, unchanged and inviolate.

Moreover the faith of the three hundred and eighteen holy and blessed fathers who were assembled at Nicaea under Constantine our Emperor, against the impious Arius, and the gentile diversity of deity or rather (to speak accurately) multitude of gods taught by him, who by the unanimous acknowledgment of the faithful revealed and declared to us the consubstantiality of the Three Persons comprehended in the Divine Nature, not suffering this faith to lie hidden under the

bushel of ignorance, but openly teaching the faithful to adore with one worship the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, confuting and scattering to the winds the opinion of different grades, and demolishing and overturning the puerile toyings fabricated out of sand by the heretics against orthodoxy.

Likewise also we confirm that faith which was set forth by the one hundred and fifty fathers who in the time of Theodosius the Elder, our Emperor, assembled in this imperial city, accepting their decisions with regard to the Holy Spirit in assertion of his Godhead, and expelling the profane Macedonius (together with all previous enemies of the truth) as one who dared to judge Him to be a servant who is Lord, and who wished to divide, like a robber, the inseparable unity, so that there might be no perfect mystery of our faith.

And together with this odious and detestable contender against the truth, we condemn Apollinaris, priest of the same iniquity, who impiously belched forth that the Lord assumed a body unendowed with a soul, thence also inferring that his salvation wrought for us was imperfect.

Moreover what things were set forth by the two hundred God-bearing fathers in the city of Ephesus in the days of Theodosius our Emperor, the son of Arcadius; these doctrines we assent to as the unbroken strength of piety, teaching that Christ the incarnate Son of God is one; and declaring that she who bare him without human seed was the immaculate Ever-Virgin, glorifying her as literally and in very truth the Mother of God (Theotokos). We condemn as foreign to the divine scheme the absurd division of Nestorius, who teaches that the one Christ consists of a man separately and of the Godhead separately and renews the Jewish impiety.

Moreover we confirm that faith which at Chalcedon, the Metropolis, was set forth in accordance with orthodoxy by the six hundred and thirty God-approved fathers in the time of Marcian, who was our Emperor, which handed down with a great and mighty voice, even unto the ends of the earth, that the one Christ, the son of God, is of two natures, and must be glorified in these two natures, and which cast forth from the sacred precincts of the Church as a black pestilence to be avoided, Eutyches, babbling stupidly and inanely, and teaching that the great mystery of the economy was perfected in thought only. And together with him also Nestorius and Dioscorus of whom the former was the defender and champion of the division, the latter of the confusion [of the two natures in the one Christ], both of whom fell away from the divergence of their impiety to a common depth of perdition and denial of God.

Also we recognize as inspired by the Spirit the pious voices of the one hundred and sixty-five God-bearing fathers who assembled in this imperial city in the time of our Emperor Justinian of blessed memory, and we teach them to those who come

after us; for these synodically anathematized and execrated Theodore of Mopsuestia (the teacher of Nestorius), and Origen, and Didymus, and Evagrius, all of whom reintroduced feigned Greek myths, and brought back again the circlings of certain bodies and souls, and deranged turnings [or transmigrations] to the wanderings or dreamings of their minds, and impiously insulting the resurrection of the dead. Moreover [they condemned] what things were written by Theodoret against the right faith and against the Twelve Chapters of blessed Cyril, and that letter which is said to have been written by Ibas.

Also we agree to guard untouched the faith of the Sixth Holy Synod, which first assembled in this imperial city in the time of Constantine, our Emperor, of blessed memory, which faith received still greater confirmation from the fact that the pious Emperor ratified with his own signet that which was written for the security of future generations. This synod taught that we should openly profess our faith that in the incarnation of Jesus Christ, our true God, there are two natural wills or volitions and two natural operations; and condemned by a just sentence those who adulterated the true doctrine and taught the people that in the one Lord Jesus Christ there is but one will and one operation; to wit, Theodore of Pharan, Cyrus of Alexandria, Honorius of Rome, Sergius, Pyrrhus, Paul and Peter, who were bishops of this God-preserved city; Macarius, who was bishop of Antioch; Stephen, who was his disciple, and the insane Polychronius, depriving them henceforth from the communion of the body of Christ our God.

And, to say so once for all, we decree that the faith shall stand firm and remain unsullied until the end of the world as well as the writings divinely handed down and the teachings of all those who have beautified and adorned the Church of God and were lights in the world, having embraced the word of life. And we reject and anathematize those whom they rejected and anathematized, as being enemies of the truth, and as insane ragers against God, and as lifters up of iniquity.

But if any one at all shall not observe and embrace the aforesaid pious decrees, and teach and preach in accordance therewith, but shall attempt to set himself in opposition thereto, let him be anathema, according to the decree already promulgated by the approved holy and blessed Fathers, and let him be cast out and stricken off as an alien from the number of Christians. For our decrees add nothing to the things previously defined, nor do they take anything away, nor have we any such power." (*from johnsanidopoulos.com*)

Today's Epistle Lesson – St. Paul's Letter to the Romans 6:18-23

Brethren, having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness. I speak in human *terms* because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members *as* slaves of uncleanness, and of lawlessness *leading* to

more lawlessness, so now present your members *as* slaves of righteousness for holiness. For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. What fruit did you have then in the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things *is* death. But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life. For the wages of sin *is* death, but the gift of God *is* eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Today's Gospel Lesson - Saint Matthew 8:5-13

At that time, when Jesus had entered Capernaum, a centurion came to Him, pleading with Him, saying, "Lord, my servant is lying at home paralyzed, dreadfully tormented." And Jesus said to him, "I will come and heal him." The centurion answered and said, "Lord, I am not worthy that You should come under my roof. But only speak a word, and my servant will be healed. For I also am a man under authority, having soldiers under me. And I say to this *one*, 'Go,' and he goes; and to another, 'Come,' and he comes; and to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does *it*." When Jesus heard *it*, He marveled, and said to those who followed, "Amen, I say to you, I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel! And I say to you that many will come from east and west, and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. But the sons of the kingdom will be cast out into outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." Then Jesus said to the centurion, "Go your way; and as you have believed, *so* let it be done for you." And his servant was healed that same hour.

A Word From the Holy Fathers

The way of our Fathers requires strong faith and longsuffering, whereas our contemporaries attempt to acquire spiritual gifts, including even direct contemplation of the Absolute God, through pressure and in a brief space of time. Often one can remark a disposition in them to draw a parallel between prayer in the Name of Jesus and yoga or 'transcendental meditation' and the like. I think it necessary to point out the dangers of this delusion the danger of looking on prayer as a very simple, easy 'technical' means leading to direct union with God. I consider it essential to emphasize the radical difference between the Jesus Prayer and all other ascetic theories.

All those are deluded who endeavor mentally to divest themselves of everything that is transitory, relative, in order in this way to cross some invisible threshold, to realize their being 'without beginning', their 'identity' with the Source of all that is; in order to return to Him, to be merged in Him, the nameless transpersonal Absolute; in order in the vast expanse of what is beyond thought to unify one's

personal individuality with the individualized form of natural existence. Ascetic efforts of this kind enabled some strugglers to a certain extent to rise to metaphysical contemplation of being; to experience a certain awe; to know the state when the mind is stilled, when it goes beyond the bounds of time and space. In like states man may feel the peace of divestment of the constantly changing manifestations of the visible world: may uncover in himself freedom of spirit and contemplate mental beauty.

The ultimate development of such impersonal asceticism has led many ascetics to perceive the divine origin in the very nature of man; to a tendency to the self-divinization that lay at the root of the great Fall; to see in man a certain 'absoluteness' which in essence is nothing else but the reflection of the Divine Absoluteness in the creature created in His likeness; to feel drawn to return to the state of peace which man knew before his appearance in this world.

In any case after this experience of some such form of mental aberration may arise in the mind. I am not setting myself the task of listing all the various types of mental intuition but I will say from my own experience that the True, Living God, the I AM, is not here in all this. This is the natural genius of the human spirit in his sublimated impulses towards the Absolute.

All contemplation arrived at by this means is self-contemplation, not contemplation of God. In these circumstances we open up for ourselves created beauty, not First Being. And in all of it there is no salvation for man. The source of real deliverance lies in unquestionable, wholehearted acceptance of the Revelation, 'I am that I am ... I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last.' God is Personal Absolute, Trinity One and Indivisible.

Our whole Christian life is based on this Revelation. This God called us from non-being into life. Knowledge of this Living God and discernment of the manner of His creation releases us from the obscurity of our own ideas, coming 'from beneath, about the Absolute; rescues us from our attraction unconscious but for all that ruinous to withdrawal from existence of any sort. We are created in order to be communicants in the Divine Being of Him Who really is. Christ indicated this wondrous way: "Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leads to life."

Apprehending the depths of the Creator's wisdom, we embark on the suffering through which Divine eternity is to be attained. And when His Light shines for us we unite in ourselves contemplation of the two extremes of the abyss on the one side, the darkness of hell, on the other, the triumph of victory. We are existentially introduced into the province of Uncreated Divine Life.

And hell loses power over us. We are given grace to live the state of the Incarnate Logos Christ Who descended into hell as Conqueror. Then by the power of His

love we shall embrace all creation in the prayer: 'O Jesus, Gracious Almighty, have mercy upon us and Your world.'

Revelation of this Personal God imparts a wondrous character to all things. Being is not some determined cosmic process but the Light of the indescribable love between Divine and created persons. It is the free movement of spirits filled with wise knowledge of all that exists, and consciousness of self.

Without this there is no sense in anything but only death. But our prayer becomes a living contact of our created persona and the Divine Person that is, something absolute. And this is expressed when we address the Word of the Father: "O Lord Jesus Christ, Unoriginate Word of Your Unoriginate Father, have mercy upon us. Save us and Your world."
- St. Sophrony of Essex

Also Commemorated Today: Grand Duchess Elizabeth

Saint Elizabeth was the older sister of Tsarina Alexandra, and was married to the Grand Duke Sergius, the governor of Moscow. She converted to Orthodoxy from Protestantism of her own free will, and organized women from all levels of society to help the soldiers at the front and in the hospitals.

Grand Duke Sergius was killed by an assassin's bomb on February 4, 1905, just as Saint Elizabeth was leaving for her workshops. Remarkably, she visited her husband's killer in prison and urged him to repent.

After this, she began to withdraw from her former social life. She devoted herself to the Convent of Saints Martha and Mary, a community of nuns which focused on worshipping God and also helping the poor. She moved out of the palace into a building she purchased on Ordinka. Women from the nobility, and also from the common people, were attracted to the convent.

Saint Elizabeth nursed sick and wounded soldiers in the hospitals and on the battle front. On Pascha of 1918, the Communists ordered her to leave Moscow, and join the royal family near Ekaterinburg. She left with a novice, Sister Barbara, and an escort of Latvian guards.

After arriving in Ekaterinburg, Saint Elizabeth was denied access to the Tsar's family. She was placed in a convent, where she was warmly received by the sisters.

At the end of May Saint Elizabeth was moved to nearby Alopevsk with the Grand Dukes Sergius, John, and Constantine, and the young Count Vladimir Paley. They were all housed in a schoolhouse on the edge of town. Saint Elizabeth was under guard, but was permitted to go to church and work in the garden.

On the night of July 5, they were all taken to a place twelve miles from Alopevsk, and executed. The Grand Duke Sergius was shot, but the others were thrown down

a mineshaft, then grenades were tossed after them. Saint Elizabeth lived for several hours, and could be heard singing hymns.

The bodies of Saint Elizabeth and Saint Barbara were taken to Jerusalem in 1920, and buried in the church of Saint Mary Magdalene. (*from oca.org*)

Message from Fr. Joseph

Prayer is powerful, and we need more priests in our Diocese. So, until the end of the year, Metropolitan Gregory is asking that each one of us pray daily that we have more vocations to the priesthood. He also wants us to pray by name for our clergy and seminarians--they aren't sick! The clergy that we are to pray for are: Fr. William Conjelko, Fr. Vincent Dranginis, and Deacon Edward Brisbane. The seminarians are: Dylan Kelemencz, Thomas Kovalak, Nicholas Worobey, and Aydin Zill. As I recall, we did something like this years ago and much fruit was produced. I can't wait to see what happens!

Prayer for vocations

Master of all, You promised us, "I will be with you always, even until the very end of the world," and You have taught, "I will build My Church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Mindful of this pledge, we beseech Your great goodness to inspire men to the Holy Priesthood, the service of Your Holy Orthodox Church, so that she may properly be able to fulfill Your will for Your people in this age. There are children to baptize, the sick to heal, and the dying to care for. There is the Bread of Life to distribute, and the Word of God to teach. There are sins to forgive, and charity to be done in Your Name. Send Your Church in this hour and in every age "vessels of clay" to be instruments of Your presence. Hear us, O Lord, and have mercy.

Prayer for the priesthood

O Lord Jesus Christ, Good Shepherd of Your sheep, light the fire of ardent love in the hearts of all Your priests, that they may ever and in all things seek only Your glory. Remember especially, Lord, our Metropolitan Gregory, and our spiritual father Joseph, who are laboring in Your vineyard for the salvation of all those whom You have entrusted to them. Remember also, O Lord, our priests Fr. William Conjelko, Fr. Vincent Dranginis, and Deacon Edward Brisbane, and seminarians Dylan Kelemencz, Thomas Kovalak, Nicholas Worobey, and Aydin Zill. Make their lives as holy as the word they preach. Keep them from being discouraged. Hear their prayers for our salvation. Give them wisdom and courage to proclaim Your truth. Make them priests after Your own heart. For You are a merciful God who loves us, and to You we give glory, together with Your eternal Father and Your all-holy, good and life-giving Spirit, now and ever and forever. Amen.

Social Team for July 25

Team 8 is up next week – Samson, Brady, Wyman, Joseph Frey. Thank you!

Commemoration of the Righteous Prophet Elijah

We will commemorate the Righteous Prophet Elijah with a vesperal Divine Liturgy tomorrow at 6:30 PM. Please observe at least a 3 hour fast if you plan to receive the Eucharist.

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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 & Mt. Kenya, Fr. John & Pani Betty Jean Baranik, Presbyteria Katie Baker & family, Santiago Alzugaray, Patty Blaydoe, Jeffrey Carey, Tatyana & Slava Chumak & family, Xenia Chilkowich, Jon Church, Ramius Connour, Luke & Marlena Cooper, Tina Crull, Mary Diane David, Ron Dominiecki, Linda A. Georgiev, Heather Himler, John Homick, Howl family, Helen Janowiak, John M. Janowiak, Tucker Karl & family, Robert & Pam Karpin, Andrew Kinn, Kopan family, Brian, Helen, Luke & Mia Mahony, Valentina Makowelski, Susan Matula, Anna Meinhold, Dn. Henry Middleton, David & Kathryn Newman, Bobby Nutter & Family, Henry & Lisa Osborne, Nicholas Pavlik, Westin Perry & Parents, John Reece, Mary Reed, Chris & Kaitlin Rixey, Jerry Von Ronne, Anne Rosario, James, Theodore & Christina Ristas, Robinson Family, Samson Family, Sharon Sheptak, Bernie Takabayashi & family, Sandy Tucker, Dawn & Faith Ulmschneider, Joe & Darlene Waters, Christine, Jo, Marshall, Nathaniel, Dcn. Nectaros & Ia, the Syrian Christians displaced by war, Mother Virginia Marie & the Carmelite Nuns of Port Tobacco, the newly reposed servant of God Deacon Stephen Hall, and those in need of our prayers. (Please advise Fr. Joseph of changes.)