

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 AM**

Friday: Moleben to the Cross 6 AM

Saturday: Confession 4:30 PM

Great Vespers 5:00 PM

Sunday: Matins (Orthros) 8:45 AM

Divine Liturgy 10:00 AM

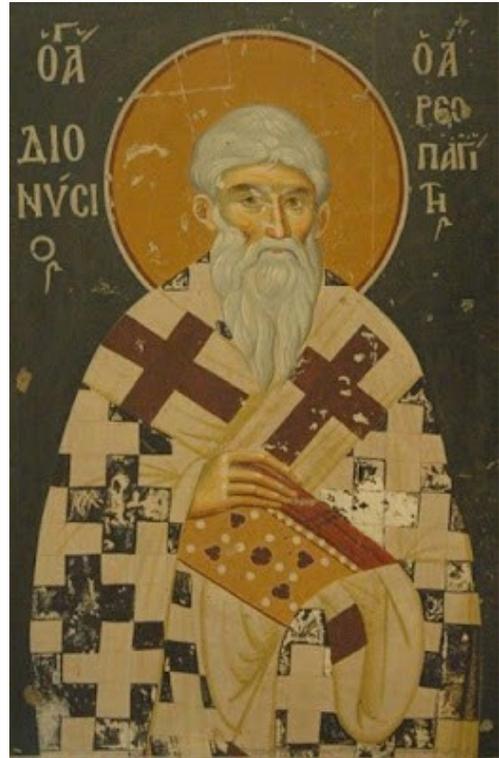
October 3, 2021 – 15th Sunday After Pentecost

Hieromartyr Dionysius the Areopagite, Bishop of Athens

Saint Dionysius lived originally in the city of Athens. He was raised there and received a classical Greek education. He then went to Egypt, where he studied astronomy at the city of Heliopolis. It was in Heliopolis, along with his friend Apollophonos where he witnessed the solar eclipse that occurred at the moment of the death of the Lord Jesus Christ by Crucifixion. "Either the Creator of all the world now suffers, or this visible world is coming to an end," Dionysius said. Upon his return to Athens from Egypt, he was chosen to be a member of the Areopagus Council (Athenian high court).

When the holy Apostle Paul preached at the place on the Hill of Ares (Acts 17:16-34), Dionysius accepted his salvific proclamation and became a Christian. For three years Saint Dionysius remained a companion of the holy Apostle Paul in preaching the Word of God. Later on, the Apostle Paul selected him as bishop of the city of Athens. And in the year 57 Saint Dionysius was present at the repose of the Most Holy Theotokos.

During the lifetime of the Mother of God, Saint Dionysius had journeyed from Athens to Jerusalem to meet Her. He wrote to his teacher the Apostle Paul: "I



witness by God, that besides the very God Himself, there is nothing else filled with such divine power and grace. No one can fully comprehend what I saw. I confess before God: when I was with John, who shone among the Apostles like the sun in the sky, when I was brought before the countenance of the Most Holy Virgin, I experienced an inexpressible sensation. Before me gleamed a sort of divine radiance which transfixed my spirit. I perceived the fragrance of indescribable aromas and was filled with such delight that my very body became faint, and my spirit could hardly endure these signs and marks of eternal majesty and heavenly power. The grace from her overwhelmed my heart and shook my very spirit. If I did not have in mind your instruction, I should have mistaken Her for the very God. It is impossible to stand before greater blessedness than this which I beheld.”

After the death of the Apostle Paul, Saint Dionysius wanted to continue with his work, and therefore went off preaching in the West, accompanied by the Presbyter Rusticus and Deacon Eleutherius. They converted many to Christ at Rome, and then in Germany, and then in Spain. In Gaul, during a persecution against Christians by the pagan authorities, all three confessors were arrested and thrown into prison. By night Saint Dionysius celebrated the Divine Liturgy with angels of the Lord. In the morning the martyrs were beheaded. According to an old tradition, Saint Dionysius took up his head, proceeded with it to the church and fell down dead there. A pious woman named Catulla buried the relics of the saint.

The writings of Saint Dionysius the Areopagite hold great significance for the Orthodox Church. Four books of his have survived to the present day:

- On the Celestial Hierarchy
- On the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy
- On the Names of God
- On Mystical Theology

In addition, there are ten letters to various people. The book *On the Celestial Hierarchies* was written actually in one of the countries of Western Europe, where Saint Dionysius was preaching. In it he speaks of the Christian teaching about the angelic world. The angelic (or Celestial-Heavenly) hierarchy comprises the nine angelic Ranks: Seraphim, Cherubim, Thrones, Dominions, Powers, Authorities, Principalities, Archangels and Angels.

The purpose of the divinely-established Angelic Hierarchy is the ascent towards godliness through purification, enlightenment and perfection. The highest ranks are bearers of divine light and divine life for the lower ranks. And not only are the sentient, bodiless angelic hosts included in the spiritual light-bearing hierarchy, but also the human race, created anew and sanctified in the Church of Christ.

The book of Saint Dionysius On the Ecclesiastical Hierarchies is a continuation of his book On the Celestial Hierarchies. The Church of Christ, like the Angelic ranks, in its universal service is set upon the foundation of priestly principles established by God.

In the earthly world, for the children of the Church, divine grace comes down indescribably in the holy Mysteries of the Church, which are spiritual in nature, though perceptible to the senses in form. Few, even among the holy ascetics, were able to behold with their earthly eyes the fiery vision of the Holy Mysteries of God. But outside of the Church's sacraments, outside of Baptism and the Eucharist, the light-bearing saving grace of God is not found, neither is divine knowledge nor theosis (deification).

The book On the Names of God expounds upon the way of divine knowledge through a progression of the Divine Names.

Saint Dionysius' book On Mystical Theology also sets forth the teaching about divine knowledge. The theology of the Orthodox Church is totally based upon experience of divine knowledge. In order to know God it is necessary to be in proximity to Him, to have come near to Him in some measure, so as to attain communion with God and deification (theosis). This condition is accomplished through prayer. This is not because prayer in itself brings us close to the incomprehensible God, but rather that the purity of heart in true prayer brings us closer to God.

The written works of Saint Dionysius the Areopagite are of extraordinary significance in the theology of the Orthodox Church, and also for late Medieval Western theology. For almost four centuries, until the beginning of the sixth century, the works of this holy Father of the Church were preserved in an obscure manuscript tradition, primarily by theologians of the Alexandrian Church. The concepts in these works were known and utilized by Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Dionysius the Great, pre-eminent figures of the catechetical school in Alexandria, and also by Saint Gregory the Theologian. Saint Dionysius of Alexandria wrote to Saint Gregory the Theologian a Commentary on the "Areopagitum." The works of Saint Dionysius the Areopagite received general Church recognition during the sixth-seventh centuries.

Particularly relevant are the Commentaries written by Saint Maximus the Confessor (January 21). (trans. note: although many scholars suggest that the "Areopagitum" was actually written by an anonymous sixth century figure who employed the common ancient device of piously borrowing an illustrious name, this in no way diminishes the profound theological significance of the works.)

In the Russian Orthodox Church the teachings of Saint Dionysius the Areopagite about the spiritual principles and deification were at first known through the writings of Saint John of Damascus (December 4). The first Slavonic translation of the “Areopagitum” was done on Mt. Athos in about the year 1371 by a monk named Isaiah. Copies of it were widely distributed in Russia. Many of them have been preserved to the present day in historic manuscript collections, among which is a parchment manuscript “Works of Saint Dionysius the Areopagite” belonging to Saint Cyprian, Metropolitan of Kiev and All Rus (September 16) in his own handwriting.

According to one tradition, he was killed at Lutetia (ancient name of Paris, France) in the year 96 during the persecution under the Roman emperor Dometian (81-96). Today most scholars and theologians believe that Saint Dionysius the Areopagite did not die in Gaul, and that Saint Dionysius (or Denys) of Paris is a different saint with the same name.

Saint Demetrius of Rostov says that the Hieromartyr Dionysius was beheaded in Athens, and that many miracles were worked at his grave. (*from oca.org*)

Today’s Epistle Lesson – St. Paul’s Second Letter to the Corinthians 4:6-15

Brethren, it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to *give* the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us. *We are* hard-pressed on every side, yet not crushed; *we are* perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed — always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. For we who live are always delivered to death for Jesus’ sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. So then death is working in us, but life in you. And since we have the same spirit of faith, according to what is written, “I believed and therefore I spoke,” we also believe and therefore speak, knowing that He who raised up the Lord Jesus will also raise us up with Jesus, and will present *us* with you. For all things *are* for your sakes, that grace, having spread through the many, may cause thanksgiving to abound to the glory of God.

Today’s Gospel Lesson – Saint Luke 6:31-36

The Lord said, “Just as you want men to do to you, you also do to them likewise. But if you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. And if you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. And if you lend *to those* from whom you hope to receive back, what credit is that to you? For even sinners lend

to sinners to receive as much back. But love your enemies, do good, and lend, hoping for nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High. For He is kind to the unthankful and evil. Therefore be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful.”

A Word From the Holy Fathers

You ask how it could be that Jesus, who transcends all, is placed in the same order in being with all men. He is not called a man here in the context of being the cause of man but rather as being himself quite truly a man in all essential respects. But we do not confine our definition of Jesus to the human domain. For he is not simply a man, nor would he be transcendent if he were only a man. Out of his very great love for humanity, he became quite truly a human, both superhuman and among humans; and, though himself beyond being, he took upon himself the being of humans. Yet he is not less overflowing with transcendence. He is the ever-transcendent, and superabundantly so. He takes on being, and is himself a being beyond being. Superior himself to the human condition he does the work of a man. A proof of this is that a virgin supernaturally bore him and that flowing water, bearing the weight of his corporeal, earthly feet, did not yield, but, rather, held him up with supernatural power. There is so much else and who could list it all? As one considers it all in a divine manner, one will recognize in a transcending way that every affirmation regarding Jesus' love for humanity has the force of a negation pointing toward transcendence. For, if I may put the matter briefly, he was neither human nor nonhuman; although humanly born he was far superior to man, and being above men he yet truly did become man. Furthermore, it was not by a virtue of being God that he did divine things, not by virtue of being a man that he did what was human, but rather, by the fact of being God-made-man he accomplished something new in our midst – the activity of the God-man.

- St. Dionysius the Areopagite, *Letter 4*

Also Commemorated Today: Saint John the Chozebite, Bishop of Caesarea, Palestine

Saint John the Chozebite, Bishop of Caesarea in Palestine (587-596), was famed for his struggle against the Eutychian heresy, and also for his grace-filled gifts of discernment and wonderworking. He was born in the Egyptian city of Thebes and while still a youth he spent a long time in the Thebaid desert with his uncle, who was an ascetic.

The emperor, who learned of John's holy life, decided to make him bishop of the city of Caesarea. But the saint, yearning for solitude, left his cathedra and

withdrew into the Chozeba wilderness (between Jerusalem and Jericho) where he struggled in asceticism until the end of his life.

Once, while on his way to visit some of the brethren, he met a woman on the road. She entreated him to follow her to her home so that he might bless it and sanctify it by his prayers. Once they entered the house, however, the vile woman locked the door and removed all her clothing, and tried to tempt the saint into sinning with her. He opened the door and fled from the place.

After this, he performed many miracles until he fell asleep in the Lord. It is said that whenever he served the Divine Liturgy, he would see a heavenly light in the altar. *(from oca.org)*

College Student Sunday

Today is College Student Sunday, benefiting the Orthodox Christian Fellowship. The vision of the Orthodox Christian Fellowship is to be the loving presence of Christ and the Orthodox Church on college campuses; to be an integral part of students' spiritual formation by challenging them to explore the Faith; and to inspire students to commit to living an Orthodox Christian way of life daily. This is accomplished via a growing network of on-campus OCF chapters led by talented students, clergy, and lay advisors as well as through programs such as Regional Retreats, College Conference, Real Break, and the Summer Leadership Institute.

A special collection will be taken today to further the good work of OCF. Please be generous! Our parish will also donate from our discretionary fund.

Social Team for October 10

Team 3 is up next week – Edgington, Kish, Barzykin, R&C Wright. Thank you!



October Anniversaries and Birthdays



Anniversaries:

Benjamin & Cecilia Saksen 6th Lynn & Andrea Hampton 17th

Birthdays:

Bernadette Karbowsky 2 nd	Ceilidh Richardson 5 th	Elias Moore 7 th
Olivia Brady 8 th	Richard Wright 8 th	Taylor Wright 12 th
Slava Chumak 13 th	Angelo Espinal 17 th	Mary Vallandingham 17 th
Jocelyn Connour 20 th	Bernie Vallandingham 22 nd	Anna Oswald 25 th
Nikki Samson 26 th	Andrea Hampton 29 th	

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In Your Prayers – Please Remember... His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch BARTHOLOMEW, His Eminence Metropolitan GREGORY, Fr. Joseph & Family, His Grace Bishop Neofitos of Nyeri & Mt. Kenya, Tatyana & Slava Chumak & family, Luke & Marlena Cooper, Tina Crull, Mary Diane David, Howl family, Andrew Kinn, Kopan family, Valentina Makowelski, Susan Matula, Anna Meinhold, David & Kathryn Newman, John Reece, Mary Reed, Sandy Tucker, Dcn. Nectarios & Ia, Mother Virginia Marie & the Carmelite Nuns of Port Tobacco, and those in need of our prayers. (Please advise Fr. Joseph of changes.)