

SOBORNOST

St. Thomas the Apostle Orthodox Church

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American Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Diocese

*ECUMENICAL PATRIARCHATE
OF CONSTANTINOPLE*

SERVICES

**Wednesdays in Great Lent: Liturgy of
Presanctified Gifts 6:30 PM**

Friday: Moleben to the Cross 6:00 AM

Saturday: Confession 4:30 PM

Great Vespers 5:00 PM

Sunday: Matins (Orthros) 8:45 AM

Sunday School 9:30 AM

Divine Liturgy 10:00 AM

March 6, 2022 – Sunday of Forgiveness (Cheesefare)

Today, we commemorate the expulsion of Adam and Eve from paradise for disobeying the Lord's commandment not to eat of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. This disobedience subjected all of creation – of which Adam and Eve had been appointed overseers – to decay. Because of this disobedience, the human race acquired a propensity to sin and its relationship with God was broken. Jesus Christ came so that, through His death and Resurrection, He might restore us to right relationship with God. On this day, we lament our fallen state, looking forward in anticipation to being made whole once again. We call to mind our thoughts, words, and actions against God and neighbor which we have committed, asking forgiveness of one another so we can begin this season of penitence with a clean slate. Have you committed an offense against someone? Make things right today! – Ed.

The Theater and Actors of Hypocrisy

By Metropolitan Hierotheos of Nafpaktos and Agiou Vlasiou

"When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show others they are fasting." (Matt. 6:16)



When the Lord came into the world, He found a perverted spiritual condition. All the worship of fallen man had been transformed into a public spectacle. It was moving in the periphery. Hypocrisy was everywhere. People were anthropocentric even on their path to God. Fasting, prayer, righteousness were the means of projection. Instead of worshiping God, man worshiped himself. He was trying to reach God through his ego. He did not know that deification comes through the blessedness of humility, through the complete disappearance, or rather through the transformation of the ego. This truly horrific situation is vividly and graphically described in today's Gospel passage. The Lord, healing this morbid spiritual condition that was demonic, moved it from the periphery to the depths. Everything must be done "in secret". We will seek today to study a little both hypocrisy and hypocrites.

The theater of hypocrisy

Hypocrisy is the pretentiousness of virtue and pious life. The non-existence of the inner life, of true piety, is manifested externally, as existing, in the forms of piety. That is why hypocrisy is a manipulative theater and the hypocrites are actors. Occasionally they play different roles "to be seen by men".

Hypocrisy, according to the Fathers, is a pretense of friendship, hatred disguised as friendship, animosity manifested as favor, envy that mimics the character of love. Hypocrisy is fictitious and not real life virtue, the pretense of righteousness, deception that has the form of truth (Maximus the Confessor).

In other words, when a passion puts on the corresponding virtue to circulate among people, it is called hypocrisy. This condition literally destroys the human person. Man from a person becomes a mask. And as we pointed out before, this horrible situation is done in an attempt to project the ego. So in fact it is the worship of the ego that becomes the condemnation of man.

Actors in the time of Christ

The "woe" that Christ addressed to the Pharisees, the foremost exponents of hypocrisy, is well known. The Lord used a very realistic picture to present the schizophrenic condition of the hypocrites. The hypocrites look like tombs which "on the outside look beautiful, but on the inside are full of dead bones and all kinds of corruption." So did the Pharisees. The Lord told them, "outwardly you appear righteous unto men, but within you are full of hypocrisy and iniquity" (Matt. 23:28). The Pharisees were actors. They went up to the religious scene of the time, sometimes expressing a good they did, of dubious origin, sometimes trying to appear to people as righteous, while they were the most unrighteous. But to be true we must say that hypocrisy was a feature and disease of the time, since the people were distinguished for this disease (Lk. 12:56).

Actors of every era

Unfortunately, hypocrisy is not a product of the pre-Christian era. It still exists today and is a misfortune that also occurs among people who follow Christ. If we honestly examine ourselves we will find that we are actors at all levels of life and we constantly play theater.

Indeed, we play theater, when in the way of prayer and the life of worship in general we seek to attract the attention of others and at worst we seek to cover the disease of the soul. When with the form of modesty and the curtain of gloom we hide "the inherent audacity" and "the abominations of the soul" (Saint Nilus). We play theater when we fight for justice and equality, when in fact we are the most unjust and greatest tyrants. We play theater when we present ourselves as caring for and sacrificing for others, while seeking to exploit every situation. We play theater when we appear unhappy, sad, despised, to create similar impressions and to distract others. We play theater everywhere and always. At home, in society, in the Church.

We have learned to use different masks in our relationships with our fellow human beings, what a strange thing that we do it and noticeably these days? It has been observed that what concerns man or what man does all year round, manifests itself externally at a time when socially ... it is allowed! If we look at this energy through the state of hypocrisy, we will find that from the way in which man today destroys the person and uses various masks, he reveals his repressed experiences, manifests his external passions, as characterized by Holy Fathers.

The schizophrenia of hypocrisy

The hypocrite can be said with certainty to be a schizophrenic type. He believes one thing and does another. He is one way and appears another way. He thus reveals his divided and alienated personality, since he manifests with his life the split between existence and appearance, of being and becoming. The hypocrite constantly seeks to show what he is not and this makes him anxious, nervous and neurotic, with a sick way of speaking. He is tortured internally. Sooner or later this schizophrenic condition is realized and this discovery increases the problem.

Many claim that schizophrenia is a sign of all modern culture. Indeed, this is absolutely true, since the modern way of life is eminently hypocritical. It has transformed man from a person (being that exists "as life beyond space and time") into a mask, into an individual, into an inner world being.

We must become simple people. Avoid sophistication. To appear as we are. The apostle Peter commands: "Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind" (1 Pet. 2:1). Hypocrisy is a product of pride. Simplicity is the product of humility. When one seeks the purification of the

soul from the passions, then one is unified. He eliminates all masks and becomes a person. And the person values the existence of man. Let the period of Great Lent help us to cultivate the inner man. From the book *Όσοι Πιστοί*. Translated by John Sanidopoulos. (*from johnsanidopoulos.com*)

Today's Epistle Lesson – St. Paul's Letter to the Romans 13:11-14:4

Brethren, *it is* high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation *is* nearer than when we *first* believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light. Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to *fulfill its* lusts. Receive one who is weak in the faith, *but* not to disputes over doubtful things. For one believes he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats *only* vegetables. Let not him who eats despise him who does not eat, and let not him who does not eat judge him who eats; for God has received him. Who are you to judge another's servant? To his own master he stands or falls. Indeed, he will be made to stand, for God is able to make him stand.

Today's Gospel Lesson – Saint Matthew 6:14-21

The Lord said, "If you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses. Moreover, when you fast, do not be like the hypocrites, with a sad countenance. For they disfigure their faces that they may appear to men to be fasting. Amen, I say to you, they have their reward. But you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, so that you do not appear to men to be fasting, but to your Father who *is* in the secret *place*; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you. Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

A Word From the Holy Fathers

Of us, then, whose also is the Passover, the calling is from above, and 'our conversation is in heaven,' as Paul says; 'For we have here no abiding city, but we seek that which is to come,' whereto, also, looking forward, we properly keep the feast....

Heaven truly is high, and its distance from us infinite; for 'the heaven of heavens,' says he, 'is the Lord's.' But not, on that account, are we to be negligent or fearful,

as though the way thereto were impossible; but rather should we be zealous. Yet not, as in the case of those who formerly, removing from the east and finding a plain in Shinar, began [to build a tower], is there need for us to bake bricks with fire, and to seek slime for mortar; for their tongues were confounded, and their work was destroyed. But for us the Lord has consecrated a way through His blood, and has made it easy....

For not only has He afforded us consolation respecting the distance, but also in that He has come and opened the door for us which was once shut. For, indeed, it was shut from the time He cast out Adam from the delight of Paradise, and set the Cherubim and the flaming sword, that turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life—now, however, opened wide. And He who sits upon the Cherubim having appeared with greater grace and loving-kindness, led into Paradise with himself the thief who confessed, and having entered heaven as our forerunner, opened the gates to all....

Paul also, ‘pressing toward the mark for the prize of the high calling,’ by it was taken up to the third heaven, and having seen those things which are above, and then descended, he teaches us, announcing what is written to the Hebrews, and saying, ‘For you are not come to the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, and clouds, and darkness, and a tempest, and to the voice of words. But you are come to Mount Zion, and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, and to the general assembly and Church of the first-born, which are written in heaven.’ Who would not wish to enjoy the high companionship with these? Who would not desire to be enrolled with these, that he may hear with them, ‘Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.’?

– St. Athanasius the Great, *Festal Letter 43*

Inspiration from the Lenten Triodion

This is the first day of the Fast. For you, soul, let it be the setting aside of sin, the return to God; to life with Him. Flee from the abyss of evil. Love only those ways which lead to peace, resting before and within God.

Having been tempted by foul thoughts, I have sinned in the flesh, but yet I cry out: Save me, Lord; save me, only gracious One. Do not condemn me to the fires of Gehenna, though I am fully worthy of such condemnation.

Clothed with the radiant garments of the Fast, let us shed the dark and greivous garments of debauchery, so that, illumined by divine good works, we may behold in faith the radiant Passion of the Savior.

Heal my wretched soul, made weak by the attacks of the most evil devil, most pure Queen, who gave birth to the healer, Christ, the Redemption of us who know you, undefiled Virgin and Handmaiden.

Also Commemorated Today: 42 Martyrs of Ammoria in Phrygia

During a war between the Byzantine Emperor Theophilus (829-842) and the Saracens, the Saracens managed to besiege the city of Ammoria (in Galicia in Asia Minor). As a result of treason on the part of the military commander Baditses, Ammoria fell, and forty-two of its generals were taken captive and sent off to Syria.

During the seven years of their imprisonment, their captors tried in vain to persuade them to renounce Christianity and accept Islam. The captives stubbornly resisted all their seductive offers and bravely held out against terrible threats. After many torments that failed to break the spirit of the Christian soldiers, they condemned them to death, hoping to shake the determination of the saints before executing them. The martyrs remained steadfast, saying that the Old Testament Prophets bore witness to Christ, while Mohammed called himself a prophet without any other witnesses to support his claim.

One of the captives, Theodore, had renounced the priestly office to become a general. His captors taunted him, “We know that you forsook the priestly office, became a soldier and shed blood in battle. You can have no hope in Christ, Whom you abandoned voluntarily, so accept Mohammed.” But the martyr replied, “You do not speak truthfully when you say that I abandoned Christ. Moreover, I left the priesthood because of my own unworthiness. Therefore, I must shed my blood for the sake of Christ, so that He might forgive the sins that I have committed against Him.”

The executioners took each one separately and led him off to be beheaded, then threw the bodies into the River Euphrates. In the service to them, these holy passion-bearers are glorified as: the “All-Blessed” Theodore, the “Unconquered” Callistus, the “Valiant” Constantine, the “Wondrous” Theophilus and “the Most Strong” Basoes. Saints Aetius (Aetitus) and Melissenus were also among the martyrs.

The betrayer Baditses did not escape his shameful fate. The enemy knew that it is impossible to trust a traitor, and so they killed him. *(from oca.org)*



The Forgotten Feast and Hidden Mysteries of the Cross

In my sermon today, my Christian brethren, I will speak to you about the Honorable Cross, the sacred symbol of our faith. Everything in our Church operates through the Cross.

When making the sign of the Cross we declare that we believe in Jesus Christ and belong to His Holy Church. When the pagan kings and emperors asked Christians to tell them what they believed, they did their Cross and proclaimed their faith this way.

Our Church honors the Honorable Cross with a great feast on September 14th, the so-called "Universal Exaltation of the Honorable Cross". But today, my brethren, I want to speak to you of another feast of the Cross, that we have forgotten.

Did you know that the Cross on which Christ was crucified, was buried below the earth on Golgotha, and by a survey done by Saint Constantine and Saint Helen it was found miraculously? When did this great event take place? It took place in 326 A.D. on March 6th. And why don't we celebrate with the ringing of bells and a great celebration this wondrous and grand and bright event of our faith?

This subject, my beloved, hides a truth, a liturgical and spiritual truth. Please listen: March 6th falls in the period of Great Lent, because, as our people say: "March is never absent of Lent". And during Lent a Divine Liturgy is not allowed, except on Saturdays and Sundays. Why? Because Lent has a mournful character - we are going to the Passion of Christ in Holy Week - and the Divine Liturgy is joyful, having a resurrectional character. Therefore, we cannot celebrate a Divine Liturgy on March 6th, because usually this day falls on a weekday, and without a Divine Liturgy we cannot have a celebration.

But we can't also lose this feast of the discovery of the Honorable Cross so we can venerate it with brilliance in our Church. Listen, my Christians, what our Church has done: when an important feast falls within Great Lent, that the Church wants to set before us, then it takes it from the day on which it is honored - because this day is on a weekday - and it transfers it to a Sunday of Great Lent, on which a Divine Liturgy can take place.

The theology of the Cross and the theology of the Theotokos are two great mysteries that summarize our entire faith. And this is because both of these are great, which is why they are paralleled: whatever is said about the Cross is said about the Panagia, and whatever is said about the Panagia is said about the Cross! I will refer to one or two examples: What is the Cross? It is a tree which has a deep root below ground, the tree that has as a sweet fruit Divine Communion and beneath the shadow of this tree rest the children of the Cross. And of our Panagia

we similarly say: "Rejoice, tree with fruit of gladness, from which believers feed; Rejoice, wood with leaves of shade, by which many are covered!"

The Cross was also that key that opened Paradise. For thousands of years Paradise was closed, but with the crucifixion of our Christ, like a key it opened Paradise, and the first to enter it was a sinner, a very sinful man, the thief. And of our Panagia we similarly say: "Rejoice, you who opened Paradise; Rejoice, the key of Christ's Kingdom!"

I told you, my Christians, that the Cross generally contains our entire faith. Listen to an interpretation of Saint Kosmas Aitolos regarding the Cross. The three fingers, with which we do our Cross, proclaims the Holy Trinity: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. By uniting these fingers we proclaim that the three Divine Persons are consubstantial.

"Trinity, consubstantial and inseparable". By placing our hand on our head and then our stomach we proclaim that Christ descended from the heavens into the Stomach of our Panagia and was incarnated. He became man for us. This is the First Coming of Christ down to earth. And by putting our hand to the right and left shoulder we proclaim the Second Coming of Christ as if we are silently praying: My Christ, at Your Second Coming, when You will judge the world, place me on Your Right, in Paradise, and not on Your Left in Hell.

You see, then, my Christians, that when we do the sign of the Cross we proclaim the Holy Trinity, our Panagia, and the First and Second Coming of our Christ. Even by the movement of the Cross we proclaim our faith in the crucifixion death of Christ, by which our salvation came.

My Christians, all of you should have a Cross on you. Before you sleep at night do a cross over your pillow three times and say: "In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit". I will also tell you something else: whatever thing you get and place in your home, great or small, cross it. This is what they did in the olden days, our holy grandmothers, who also crossed with the candle of Pascha the lintel of the door of the house. Their entire house had crosses and this is why it was blessed and the Cross of Christ protected it.

I pray that you, my Christians, will have courage in your lives and take strength from the Almighty Honorable Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

With many prayers, Metropolitan Jeremiah of Gortynos and Megalopolis

(Translated by John Sanidopoulos)

The Rules of Fasting

On weekdays (Monday to Friday inclusive) during the seven weeks of Lent, there are restrictions both on the *number* of meals taken daily and on the *types of food* permitted; but when a meal is allowed, there is no fixed limitation on the *quantity* of food to be eaten. **On weekdays in the first week**, fasting is particularly severe. According to strict observance, in the course of the five initial days of Lent, only two meals are eaten, one on Wednesday and the other on Friday, in both cases after the liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts. On the other three days, those who have the strength are encouraged to keep an absolute fast; those for whom this proves impracticable may eat on Tuesday and Thursday (but not, if possible, on Monday), in the evening after Vespers, when they may take bread and water or perhaps tea or fruit-juice, but not a cooked meal... At the meals on Wednesday and Friday *xerophagy* is prescribed. Literally this means 'dry eating'. Strictly interpreted, it signifies that we may eat only vegetables cooked with water and salt, and also such things as fruit, nuts, bread and honey. In practice, octopus and shellfish are also allowed on days of xerophagy; likewise vegetable margarine and corn or other vegetable oil, not made from olives. But the following categories of food are definitely excluded: *Meat; animal products (cheese, milk, butter, eggs, lard, drippings); fish (i.e., fish with backbones); oil (i.e., olive oil) and wine (i.e., all alcoholic drinks)*.

On weekdays (Monday to Friday inclusive) in the second, third, fourth, fifth and sixth weeks, one meal a day is permitted, to be taken in the afternoon following Vespers, and at this one meal xerophagy is to be observed. **During Holy Week:** On the first three days there is one meal each day, with xerophagy; but some try to keep a complete fast on these days, or else they eat only uncooked food, as on the opening days of the first week. On Holy Thursday one meal is eaten, with wine and oil. On Great Friday those who have the strength follow the practice of the early Church and keep a total fast; those unable to do this may eat bread, with a little water, tea or fruit-juice, but not until sunset, or at any rate after [the Burial Service] at Vespers. On Holy Saturday there is one meal after the Liturgy of St. Basil, with wine but not oil.

[This material is taken from the introduction to The Lenten Triodion. In modern practice, the above rules tend to be somewhat relaxed, and they have always been relaxed for children and the infirm. Fast as you are able, and consult Fr. Joseph as needed. As you eat less physical food, it is important to increase your intake of spiritual food – prayer and reading scripture and the fathers of the Church. Also keep in mind the words of Christ: “When you fast, do not be like the hypocrites, with a sad countenance. For they disfigure their faces that they may appear to men to be fasting. Amen, I say to you, they have their reward. But you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, so that you do not appear to men to be fasting, but to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.” (Mat. 6:16-18) – ed.]

Social Team for March 13

Team 1 is up next week - Hanbury, P. Blaydoe, Chumak. Thank you!

Help People in Need

As things in Ukraine have changed rapidly this week, all of us at IOCC have been fervently praying for everyone affected.

The core of IOCC's work has always been responsibly and effectively offering humanitarian aid. As of today, I can share with you that we've been in touch with partners in Ukraine and across the region. Our immediate response will consist of:

- Supporting basic needs, like supplying fuel and generators
- Providing flashlights, batteries, and candles

I invite you to do three things to help today:

- First and foremost, pray for everyone affected.
- Share this update with friends and loved ones so they know how the Orthodox community in the US is responding.
- Support IOCC's efforts with a gift to our [International Emergency Response Fund](#), which allows us to respond quickly and effectively to help those in need.

Thank you for your prayers and your faithful support of IOCC's mission.

Yours in Christ,



Constantine M. Triantafilou

January & February Treasurer's Report

Glory to Jesus Christ! Thanks to God's mercy and your dedication and generosity, for January we saw donations totaling \$14,582 against expenses of \$12,705. In February we had donations of \$14,806 against \$13,111. To God be the Glory!

Herman, Treasurer

CAMP NAZARETH SUMMER CAMP 2022
The time for Summer Camp is Rapidly Approaching!!! The clock is ticking!!
REGISTER ONLINE STARTING MARCH 15, 2022
@ 6PM (Eastern Time)!!!

Dates for the Summer Camping Program

Week 1: Sunday, July 17 – Saturday, July 23, 2022 – Pittsburgh, Mid-Atlantic, Tri-State and Washington D.C. Deaneries

Week 2: Sunday, July 24 – Saturday, July 30, 2022 – New England, NY, NJ, Florida and Canada Deaneries

Week 3: Sunday, July 31 – Saturday, August 6, 2022 -- Johnstown, Pocono, Southern Tier, Youngstown and Chicago Deaneries

Science and Nature Camp: Sunday, August 7 – Saturday, August 13, 2022

BEFORE you register, please read the information below carefully!!!

Register Online Starting March 15, 2022 @ 6pm (EDT)

Register at – campnazareth.org

Registration for Camp will be on a **First-Come First-Serve Basis!!** Once capacity for a given week is filled, all other campers will be put on a waiting list.

\$20 Early Bird Discount Per Child!!!!

(one-time only, not per week)

Must Register & pay by May 1, 2022!!!!

Online Registration **MUST** be complete AND payment must be submitted by May 1 in order to qualify for the Early Bird Discount.

Registration will close on **June 1, 2022 @ 12pm!**

Important Information Re: 2022 Diocesan Summer Camping Program

- 1.** A camper must be 8 years old **BY** the beginning of their camping week **AND** must have completed 2nd Grade in order to register for Camp!!!
- 2.** We are planning to have Camp at full capacity, which means up to 16 campers in each cabin.

3. **You must register by June 1, NO EXCEPTIONS!** Once registration has concluded on June 1, no one will be able to register for Camp. No exceptions!!
4. **Registration will be done on a First-Come First-Serve basis.** Once we've reached the limit, the rest of those registering will be put on a Waiting List. If a spot opens up, those on the Waiting List will be contacted, again on a First-Come First-Serve basis.
5. Because of the number of Male and Female Counselors and the number of cabins Camp has, the maximum number of females or males attending any one week will be 80. Once that limit has been reached for males or females, the rest will be put on the Waiting List.
6. **VERY IMPORTANT: You may ONLY register for 1 Week!!!** It does not have to be your Deanery's Week, but you may only register for 1 Week! You may NOT register for multiple weeks. Exception: Any camper whose Senior Year it is, may register for multiple weeks. The Science and Nature Camp is NOT included as 1 Week. In other words, a camper may attend 1 Diocesan Camping Week **AND** the Science and Nature Camp as well.

Once you register, Camp will email you instructions, including the Physical Form and other necessary information.

Also, those who are of age (at least 18 by the beginning of the Summer Season and have completed High School) are encouraged to be part of the Camp's Summer Staff. This is a wonderful opportunity for you to get involved in this vital and meaningful Diocesan apostolate, form lasting friendships, and use your God-given talents for the benefit and up-building of our Church. We have worked with a number of students to design internship positions that help them earn credit in their program of study as well. Staff Applications can be found on the Camp's website campnazareth.org. **Staff applications are due by March 15.** If you have any questions, please contact Fr. Stephen Loposky at 724-662-4840 or campnazareth@acrod.org.

Follow Our Diocese On-Line

Diocesan Website: <http://www.acrod.org>

Camp Nazareth: <http://www.campnazareth.org>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/acroddiocese>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/acrodnews>

You Tube: <https://youtube.com/acroddiocese>

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, Roberta Corson, Jon Church, Tina Crull, Mary Diane David, Howl family, Andrew Kinn, Kopan family, Valentina Makowelski, Susan Matula, Anna Meinhold, David & Kathryn Newman, John Reece, Mary Reed, Rose Song, Dcn. Nectaros & Ia, Mother Virginia Marie & the Carmelite Nuns of Port Tobacco, and those in need of our prayers. (Please advise Fr. Joseph of changes.)