

SOBORNOST

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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

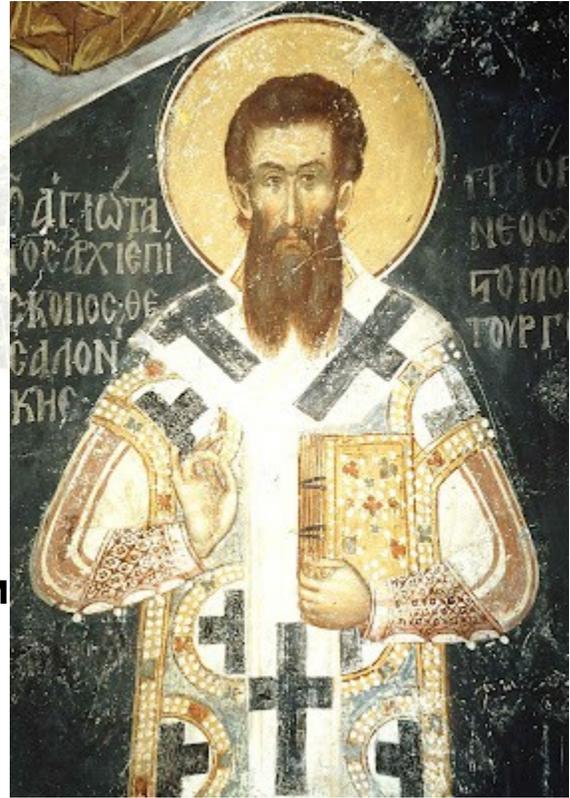
Saturday: Confession 4:30 PM

Great Vespers 5:00 PM

Sunday: Matins (Orthros) 8:45 AM

Sunday School 9:30 AM

Divine Liturgy 10:00 AM



March 20, 2022 – 2nd Sunday in Great Lent | St. Gregory Palamas

We experience the joy of the Resurrection of Christ to the degree in which we have prepared for it throughout Lent. It is by means of this preparation – the external fasting and increase in vigils, the internal repentance, confession, humility, and love – (It is by means of this preparation) that our hearts and minds are cleansed of passions and sins and are opened to perceive the Resurrection more fully, to enter into the reality of the Resurrection, a reality which alters everything we perceive and everything we are.

The Pedagogy of Lent

Each week, if not each day, we are instructed on how to correctly understand Lent and our place in it. There is a theme, a *leitmotif*, to each Sunday in Lent, the aim of which is to direct each of us in the way we should go. Whether we look for it or not, we are offered tools that, when used correctly, aid our spiritual growth. The reason for this is because we are combatants against the passions who seek to don armor appropriate for battle; we are runners in a race who desire not to be sated by food or weighed down by bulky and heavy clothing that impedes our stride.

The Sundays of Lent – The Three Sundays of Saints

There are three Sundays dedicated to Saints, two men and one woman, none of whom were born saints, but through the path described through the Lenten Services, they attained to that holiness, drawing near to perfection. St. Mary of Egypt is an example of repentance because it was through repentance that she exchanged a thoroughly dissolute life for the life of an earthly angel. St. John Climacus is the author of *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*, which details the spiritual life, from the hurdles faced by beginners, to the obstacles of the intermediate, to the narrow path of the perfect. He could only write such a manual because he had already navigated the same course and therefore wrote from experience.

Today is the Sunday of St. Gregory Palamas, whereon we commemorate St. Gregory as the defender of the Christian's experience of God. St. Gregory became involved in a confrontation wherein his opponent claimed that Christians (specifically hesychast monks) did not experience God directly. St. Gregory defended the opposite position and affirmed that this is how the Orthodox Church's theology came to be - by direct revelation from God to holy men and women in the Church whom the grace of God had transformed.

Each of these *Lives* describes someone who applied themselves to the ascetic life and, when assisted by the grace of God, had been transformed by God, as evident by the *Life* of St. Mary of Egypt and the knowledge of St. John disclosed in his familiarity with the spiritual landscape. It is the same in regards to the life of St. Gregory Palamas, who spoke and wrote plainly and unambiguously about the experience of God.

On the Significance of St. Gregory Palamas

The Theologian of the Experience of God

I. It is no coincidence that the Sunday of St. Gregory Palamas follows the Sunday of Orthodoxy on which the *Synodicon of Orthodoxy* is proclaimed (usually in a monastery where a bishop resides). The *Synodicon* is a text that articulates the truths of the Faith (doctrines), as well as the heretics and heresies that have arisen throughout the centuries. The *Synodicon* anathematizes the heretics and heresies and proclaims "Memory eternal!" to all those who have stood for the truth. The Sunday of St. Gregory Palamas affirms *how* these truths are known.

It may be confusing, though, to try to equate what we do with the results that St. Gregory indicates, which, to be clear, is the lot of only a few. The ascetic path is to be trodden by all Orthodox Christians, yet we all end up at different distances along that route for many reasons. As St. Gregory notes,

There is a starting point and perfection, and an intermediate stage in between. The grace of baptism... inaugurates this action in us, providing

remission of all our sins and of the guilt of the curse. Perfection will come with the resurrection of life for which believers hope, and the promise of the age to come. The intermediate stage is life according to Christ's gospel, by which the godly person is nourished, grows, and is renewed, making progress day by day in the knowledge of God, righteousness, and sanctification. Gradually he reduces and cuts away his eagerness for things below, and transfers his longing from what is visible, physical and temporary to what is invisible, spiritual, and eternal.

Although the type of knowledge St. Gregory highlights is loftier and more exalted than most of us will ever experience, the principle, which he also emphasizes, is also the same: by using the tools God has given us to live the ascetic life, Orthodox Christians come to know God by their experience of Him.

St. John Cassian describes these more common experiences which are had and notes that God *is* clearly perceived not only through nature and the grandeur of His creation or our marvel at His awareness of the number of grains of sand in the sea, but He is also recognized intimately and personally through His daily assistance and providence as is evident through the lives of the Saints, His rule over the nations, or when we contemplate with wonder His ineffable gentleness, His unwearying patience, and in the many ways he brings salvation to His children.

On the Christian's Experience of God

II. Moreover, why would we not come to know and experience God, even in some small way. Christ teaches us, His children, that we live in a reality in which He also lives. That is why, when we pray, He urges that we should not be discouraged and fainthearted but should pray always and not tire because our Father in Heaven hears our prayers (Luke 18.1-8). However, so that we do not think that the distance to Heaven is too far for us to traverse, Christ Himself says that to those who love Him, those who keep His commandments, will be loved by the Father, and the Father and the Son will come and make their abode with him (John 14.23). The Apostle Paul repeats the same saying that those who are spiritually minded are indwelt by the Holy Spirit and Christ (Rom. 8.1-9). Christ will be with us, even until the end of the age (Matt. 28.20). Therefore, we should expect times of solace and times of being aware of God's presence and help even despite long periods of dryness and silence.

On Verifying One's Experiences with Fathers

III. Continuing on the topic of the Christian's experience of God, perhaps you will not mind if we borrow a theme from last Sunday's homily and place it in a new context. We cannot add to the importance and warning that we stay far away from "knowing better" than our Fathers in the Faith and our spiritual fathers; they have

trod further and longer on the path than we have, and sometimes in a shorter period of time, and have been placed in their position by God to guide us and not to be abused by us. It is they who help us to determine the value, the weight, and the importance, or lack thereof, of our experiences, of what is from God and what is from the Devil.

Who, being deceived, or in prelest, or in delusion, knows that they are? Their first error, as our homilist noted, was to trust their own opinion. To not trust ourselves is an ascetic feat and is part and parcel of the Christian life.

St. Isaac the Syrian writes,

Many have accomplished mighty acts, raised the dead, toiled for the conversion of the erring, and have wrought great wonders; and by their hands have led many to the knowledge of God. Yet after these things, these same men who quickened others, fell into vile and abominable passions and slew themselves, becoming a stumbling block for many when their acts were made manifest. For they were still sickly in soul, and instead of caring for their soul's health, they committed themselves to the sea of the world in order to heal the souls of others, being yet ill in health; and they lost their souls and fell away from their hope in God.

St. Gregory Palamas addresses the same concern saying: "Trust those who have experience in the spiritual life because you will obtain a certain 'image' of the truth [by doing so]."

Conclusion

At Optina, there was a monk who struggled to get out of bed for the morning services. In time, the monk grew lazy and stopped trying and arrived whenever he wanted to. Despite much encouragement, persuasion, and admonishings, Elder Moses, who was the Abbot, could not convince this young monk to attend to this discipline. One morning, at the end of Matins, upon seeing that the young monk was not in his stasidi, the sickly elder, with swollen and bandaged legs, made the trek to the young monk's cell. Upon entering, with the young monk lying in bed, the elder prostrated himself before him, and as he did, the blood and pus that pooled in his boots which continuously seeped from his legs, poured out onto the floor. Such was the care and concern for this monk's soul.

May we have the same care for our own souls and that of our neighbor; and may we know what is that one thing needful in our lives, direct all of our energies on attaining that, and taste the fruit of our labors.

THROUGH THE PRAYERS OF ST. GREGORY PALAMAS, LORD JESUS CHRIST HAVE MERCY ON US. AMEN. (*from holycross.org*)

The Mystical Journey of the Christian, Through the Desert, Towards the Resurrection and Pentecost (2 of 5)

By Metropolitan Hierotheos of Nafpaktos and Agiou Vlasiou
(continued from Part 1) **"On the Development of Intrusive Thoughts"**

Intrusive thoughts [logismoi] are the initial suggestions that develop into a sin and passion, which is why an ascetic gives great importance in not developing intrusive thoughts.

"The first stage [of intrusive thoughts] is when some spiritual influence approaches from without, which may, to begin with, be quite vague and shapeless. The initial stage in formation is the appearance in the field of man's inner vision of an image - and as this does not depend on one's will, it is not regarded as a sin. Images in some cases appear to take on visible form, while others are mostly products of the mind, but more often it is a combination of the two. As visible images also generate some thought or other, ascetics label all images 'intrusive thoughts' [logismoi].

The man who is not in thrall to the passions can recognize the force of an intrusive thought and yet remain completely free from its power. But if there is some 'place' in one - some suitable soil for the development of the intrusive thought the thought will strive to take possession of one's psychic being - of the heart, the soul. It achieves this because it prompts a feeling of the delight to be afforded by one or another passion. The delight figures 'temptation'. But even the fleeting pleasure, though it testifies to man's imperfection, is not yet to be reckoned as sin. It is only a 'proposal' for sin.

The further development of a sinful intrusive thought can be portrayed roughly as follows: the mind is attracted by the delectation to be afforded by the passion, and this is an extremely important and crucial moment because the fusion of mind with tempting ideas provides fertile soil for passion. If the mind does not by an exercise of the will tear itself away from the suggested delights but continues to dwell on them, it will find itself pleasantly attracted, then involved and finally positively acquiescent. After that, the ever-increasing delight in the passion may take possession of - make captive - mind and will. Lastly, the whole strength of the one enslaved by passion is directed to a more or less determined actualization of sin, if there are no outside impediments or, where there are, to seeking ways of getting round them.

Such captivity may happen once only and never recur if it had come about because of the inexperience of someone engaged in the ascetic struggle. But if the enchantment repeats itself, passion becomes second nature, and then all man's natural forces are at its service."

One observes here the subtle analysis that takes place in the development of intrusive thoughts in combination with images, the imagination, pleasure, the mind, sympathy, consent, and this analysis shows an experienced man in this subtle internal struggle, a great ascetic theologian.

Because this is the development of an intrusive thought that becomes sin and passion, the ascetic must face it at the stage he comes to understand this developmental course. In order to avoid sin "it is essential to stay the mind in prayer in the heart."

"Shutting the doors of his heart, stationing his mind on guard like a sentinel, unfettered by imagination and cogitation but armed with prayer and the Name of Jesus Christ, the ascetic striver embarks on the struggle against all external influence, all thoughts from without. This is the essence of mental vigilance. Its purpose is to contend against the passions."

This analysis shows not only the knowledge of the development of intrusive thoughts, but also the knowledge of its treatment.

3. "The Start of Spiritual Life - Struggle Against the Passions"

"When he succumbs to satanic influence man suffers the loss of his godlike freedom and falls away from divine life. The ascetic label for this state is 'passion'. The term implies, on the one hand the idea of passiveness and servitude, and, on the other, that of suffering in the sense of disintegration and death."

The deprivation of the divine life is what is characterized as passion, which in reality is the unnatural movement of the energies of the soul. Thus, passions are not interpreted externally and morally, but theologically, it is when the ascetic is defeated in his movement towards the being in the likeness of God, that is, in deification, and this means that he is deprived of a share in the divine life.

"The passions possess a power of attraction but no passionate image or thought can ever enter and take root in the soul without man's consent." All matters, both in the unnatural state of man and in his supernatural state, presuppose the synergy of man, in the first case the synergy of man under the influence of the devil and the intrusive thought, in the second case the synergy of man with the Grace of God.

"The starting-point of spiritual life is the struggle against the passions. If this struggle only meant renouncing worldly pleasures, it would be easy. The second stage in the struggle is more difficult - when passion, unsatisfied, starts to torment one with all kinds of infirmity. Here the ascetic needs great and continuous patience, since the salutary consequences of resistance to the passions are not quick to ensue."

Apart from the passions, which are the development of intrusive thoughts and torment man, there are also the so called "blameless passions", which are various needs such as food, sleep and so on, "that left unsatisfied curtail life." "For brief periods the ascetic may ignore these needs, and if they start to threaten with illness and the ascetic is ready to face death rather than give in, God takes even more care of him. This courageous determination is imperative." It is like a flame of fire which an ascetic keeps within his soul without showing all of its power.

"Plunged deep in the heart, the mind by being absorbed in prayer detaches itself from every image, not only visual but mental, too, and in this state of purity is deemed worthy to stand before God... When the soul is deemed worthy of the coming of divine light, she then genuinely lives life eternal - that is, God Himself. And where God is, there is a freedom impossible to describe in words, because man is then beyond death and fear... All weep and lament who have known in Christ the primordial fairness of man when they return from the ineffable spiritual banquet in the deep recesses of the heart, and see the world bereft of beauty and glory." So repentance develops naturally as a gift.

The whole development that takes place in this book about the passions presupposes the great spiritual experience of the author in the knowledge of the internal processes, not only of the passions, but also of their treatment. This is a work of highly knowledgeable spiritual surgery.

- Translated by John Sanidopoulos. (*from johnsanidopoulos.com*)

Today's Epistle Lesson – St. Paul's Letter to the Hebrews 1:10-2:3

In the beginning, "You, Lord, in the beginning laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of Your hands. They will perish, but You remain; and they will all grow old like a garment; like a cloak You will fold them up, and they will be changed. But You are the same, and Your years will not fail." But to which of the angels has He ever said: "Sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool"? Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation? Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away. For if the word spoken through angels proved steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just reward, how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard *Him*?

Today's Gospel Lesson – Saint Mark 2:1-12

At that time, Jesus entered Capernaum after *some* days, and it was heard that He was in the house. Immediately many gathered together, so that there was no longer

room to receive *them*, not even near the door, and He preached the word to them. Then they came to Him, bringing a paralytic who was carried by four *men*. And when they could not come near Him because of the crowd, they uncovered the roof where He was. So when they had broken through, they let down the bed on which the paralytic was lying. When Jesus saw their faith, He said to the paralytic, “Son, your sins are forgiven you.” And some of the scribes were sitting there and reasoning in their hearts, “Why does this *Man* speak blasphemies like this? Who can forgive sins but God alone?” But immediately, when Jesus perceived in His spirit that they reasoned thus within themselves, He said to them, “Why do you reason about these things in your hearts? Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, ‘*Your* sins are forgiven you,’ or to say, ‘Arise, take up your bed and walk’? But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins”—He said to the paralytic, “I say to you, arise, take up your bed, and go to your house.” Immediately he arose, took up the bed, and went out in the presence of them all, so that all were amazed and glorified God, saying, “We never saw *anything* like this!”

A Word From the Holy Fathers

Brethren and fathers, fasting is good if it possesses its own special characteristics, which are to be peaceable, meek, well-established, obedient, humble, sympathetic and all the other forms of virtue. But the devil hurries to suggest the opposite to fasters and to make them insolent, angry, bad-tempered, puffed up, so as to produce hurt more than gain. But let us not be ignorant of his plans, but continue our path peaceably, gently, meekly and steadfastly *bearing with one another in love*, knowing that this is what is acceptable to God; for though you bend your neck double like a hoop and smother yourself with sackcloth and ashes, if these qualities are lacking to you, you would not be well-pleasing to him. Because while fasting batters and wastes the body, it clears the soul and makes it flourish. *For as much as our outer nature is perishing*, it says, *by so much the inner is being renewed day by day*. And *Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding weight of glory*. So that looking at the recompense, let us bear the toils of virtue with long-suffering, *giving thanks to the God and Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light. He has delivered us from the power of darkness and translated us into the kingdom of the Son of his love.... For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to his glorious body, according to the working by which he is able even to subdue all things to himself*. And so, my brothers, let us rejoice and be glad as we repudiate every pleasure. *All flesh is grass, and all human glory like the flower of the grass. The grass withered and the*

flower faded, but the work of virtue endures for ever. Is anyone among you suffering? as the brother of God says, Let him pray. Is anyone sad? Let him sing psalms. Is anyone tempted by evil passion? — since the tempter is always at work — let him endure patiently as he listens to the one who says, Blessed is the one who endures temptation; for when he has been proved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love him. If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them, said the Lord, to whom be glory and might, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, now and for ever and to the ages of ages. Amen.

– St. Theodore the Studite, Catechesis 59

Offer Your Confession As Though It Were the Last Time

Another day of repentance and confession! Once again, we will unroll before the Omniscient One the gloomy scroll of our deeds; again, we hear from Him forgiveness for everything we have done, and we will go to our homes justified! So inexhaustible is the mercy of our Lord to us! His righteousness could completely reject our present repentance; His righteousness could tell us that, having offered repentance so many times and having received forgiveness as often, we cease not to offend it with our sins; it remains for His righteousness to cease having mercy upon criminal and evil slaves in vain, but to arm itself against them with judgment and execution. But it won't act this way with us: We are before the throne of this Righteousness now, and we shall find the same love and forgiveness!

Do you feel it, O sinful soul? Do you feel that you have long since deserved hell a hundred times over, but Paradise and the Kingdom will be opened to you again? Take care that this mercy not be shown to you for the last time!

Indeed, my brethren, there is none on earth who could tell us for sure that our present confession won't be our last. This belongs only to Him in Whose right hand are *the keys of hell and of death* (Rev. 1:18), in Whom we all *live, and move, and have our being* (Acts 17:28). But in order to protect us from carelessness, He Himself was pleased to proclaim to us in His Gospel that the day and hour of both His coming to us and our departure to Him must remain a mystery to us. After this, everyone who values the salvation of his soul, bringing his confession now, must bring it as though he were doing so for the last time in his life.

How would we confess were we on our deathbed? We would confess with the deepest contrition of spirit and unrepentant disgust for sin, which would then lose all fascination for us; we would confess completely, concealing nothing—for what is there to hide before death? We would confess with firm determination to no longer deviate to the side of lies and iniquity, for then the necessity of a pure and holy life for man would be opened up before us in full force.

Let us behave now just as we would on our deathbed. Let us reveal to Him Who is Omniscient our entire heart and soul, all the secrets of our passions and sinful desires. May the mercy of God behold all the wounds and rot of our inner man. It will see them only to then heal them in a more lasting way. Having received forgiveness of sins, let us immediately banish them not only from our lives and actions, but from our very imagination and memory. Let them remain the portion of our enemy, who encouraged us to sin and rejoiced when we transgressed the commandment of the Lord.

Having vowed before the Holy Cross and Gospel to lead a pure and good life, let us repeat this oath to ourselves morning and evening, in hours of joy and sorrow, in the church of God and at home, sitting at table and taking a rest, that the work of our salvation might never leave our memory and might become the main work of our lives.

And to affirm ourselves in this necessary labor, to protect ourselves from new temptations in life, from new attacks from the passions, let us take from the holy analogion the memory of death on our path in life; for it is not in vain that the Wise one said: *Remember your end, and you shall never sin* (Sir. 7:36). Amen. - St. Innocent of Kherson

Prayer of St. Ephrem the Syrian

O Lord and Master of my life! Take from me the spirit of laziness, despair, lust for power, and vain talking. (*prostration*)

But give to me, Your servant, the spirit of purity, humility, patience, and love. (*prostration*)

Yes, Lord and King, grant me to see my own sins and not judge my brother. For blessed are You, forever and ever. Amen. (*prostration*)

O God, cleanse me, a sinner. (*bow*) (x12)

O Lord and Master of my life! Take from me the spirit of laziness, despair, lust for power, and vain talking. But give to me, Your servant, the spirit of purity, humility, patience, and love. Yes, Lord and King, grant me to see my own sins and not judge my brother. For blessed are You, forever and ever. Amen. (*prostration*)

[This prayer is said, sometimes with only the first three prostrations, in virtually every weekday Lenten service. I encourage you to say the prayer during your weekday morning and evening prayers during this time of fasting and increased prayer. – Ed.]

Also Commemorated Today: Saint Cuthbert, Wonderworker of Britain

Saint Cuthbert, the wonderworker of Britain, was born in Northumbria around 634. Very little information has come down to us about Cuthbert's early life, but there is a remarkable story of him when he was eight.

As a child, Cuthbert enjoyed games and playing with other children. He could beat anyone his own age, and even some who were older, at running, jumping, wrestling, and other exercises. One day he and some other boys were amusing themselves by standing on their heads with their feet up in the air. A little boy who was about three years old chided Cuthbert for his inappropriate behavior. "Be sensible," he said, "and give up these foolish pranks."

Cuthbert and the others ignored him, but the boy began to weep so piteously that it was impossible to quiet him. When they asked him what the matter was, he shouted, "O holy bishop and priest Cuthbert, these unseemly stunts in order to show off your athletic ability do not become you or the dignity of your office." Cuthbert immediately stopped what he was doing and attempted to comfort the boy.

On the way home, he pondered the meaning of those strange words. From that time forward, Cuthbert became more thoughtful and serious. This incident reveals Saint Cuthbert as God's chosen vessel (2 Tim. 2:20-21), just like Samuel, David, Jeremiah, John the Baptist, and others who, from an early age, were destined to serve the Lord.

On another occasion, he was suffering from an injured knee. It was quite swollen and the muscles were so contracted that he limped and could scarcely place his foot on the ground. One day a handsome stranger of noble bearing, dressed in white, rode up on horseback to the place where Cuthbert was sitting in the sun beside the house. The stranger asked courteously if the boy would receive him as a guest. Cuthbert said that if only he were not hampered by his injuries, he would not be slow to offer hospitality to his guest.

The man got down from his horse and examined Cuthbert's knee, advising him to cook up some wheat flour with milk, and to spread the warm paste on his sore knee. After the stranger had gone, it occurred to him that the man was really an angel who had been sent by God. A few days later, he was completely well. From that time forward, as Saint Cuthbert revealed in later years to a few trusted friends, he always received help from angels whenever he prayed to God in desperate situations.

In his prose *Life of Saint Cuthbert*, Saint Bede of Jarrow (May 27) reminds skeptics that it is not unknown for an angel to appear on horseback, citing 2 Maccabees 11:6-10 and 4 Maccabees 4:10.

While the saint was still young, he would tend his master's sheep in the Lammermuir hills south of Edinburgh near the River Leader. One night while he was praying, he had a vision of angels taking the soul of Saint Aidan (August 31) to heaven in a fiery sphere. Cuthbert awakened the other shepherds and told them what he had seen. He said that this must have been the soul of a holy bishop or some other great person. A few days later they learned that Bishop Aidan of Lindisfarne had reposed at the very hour that Cuthbert had seen his vision.

As an adult, Saint Cuthbert decided to give up his life in the world and advanced to better things. He entered the monastery at Melrose in the valley of the Tweed, where he was received by the abbot Saint Boisil (February 23). Saint Cuthbert was accepted into the community and devoted himself to serving God. His fasting and vigils were so extraordinary that the other monks marveled at him. He often spent entire nights in prayer, and would not eat anything for days at a time.

Who can describe his angelic life, his purity or his virtue? Much of this is known only to God, for Saint Cuthbert labored in secret in order to avoid the praise of men.

A few years later, Saint Eata (October 26) chose some monks of Melrose to live at the new monastery at Ripon. Among them was Saint Cuthbert. Both Eata and Cuthbert were expelled from Ripon and sent back to Melrose in 661 because they (and some other monks) refused to follow the Roman calculation for the date of Pascha. The Celtic Church, which followed a different, older reckoning, resisted Roman practices for a long time. However, in 664 the Synod of Whitby determined that the Roman customs were superior to those of the Celtic Church, and should be adopted by all. Saint Bede discusses this question in his *HISTORY OF THE ENGLISH CHURCH AND PEOPLE* (Book III, 25).

Saint Cuthbert was chosen to be abbot of Melrose after the death of Saint Boisil, guiding the brethren by his words and by his example. He made journeys throughout the surrounding area to encourage Christians and to preach the Gospel to those who had never heard it. Sometimes he would be away from the monastery for a month at a time, teaching and preaching. He also worked many miracles, healing the sick and freeing those who were possessed by demons.

In 664, Cuthbert went with Saint Eata to Lindisfarne, and extended his territory to include the inhabitants of Northumberland and Durham. Soon Saint Eata appointed Cuthbert as prior of Lindisfarne (Holy Island). At that time both monasteries were under the jurisdiction of Saint Eata. While at Lindisfarne, Saint Cuthbert continued

his habit of visiting the common people in order to inspire them to seek the Kingdom of Heaven.

Though some of the monks preferred their negligent way of life to the monastic rule, Saint Cuthbert gradually brought them around to a better state of mind. At first he had to endure many arguments and insults, but eventually he brought them to obedience through his patience and gentle admonition. He had a great thirst for righteousness, and so he did not hesitate to correct those who did wrong. However, his gentleness made him quick to forgive those who repented. When people confessed to him, he often wept in sympathy with their weakness. He also showed them how to make up for their sins by doing their penances himself.

Saint Cuthbert was a true father to his monks, but his soul longed for complete solitude, so he went to live on a small island (Saint Cuthbert's Isle), a short distance from Lindisfarne. After gaining victory over the demons through prayer and fasting, the saint decided to move even farther away from his fellow men. In 676, he retired to Inner Farne, an even more remote location. Saint Cuthbert built a small cell which could not be seen from the mainland. A few yards away, he built a guest house for visitors from Lindisfarne. Here he remained for nearly nine years.

A synod at Twyford, with the holy Archbishop Theodore (September 19) presiding, elected Cuthbert Bishop of Hexham in 684. Letters and messengers were sent to inform him of the synod's decision, but he refused to leave his solitude. King Ecgfrith and Bishop Trumwine (February 10) went to him in person, entreating him in Christ's name to accept. At last, Saint Cuthbert came forth and went with them to the synod. With great reluctance, he submitted to the will of the synod and accepted the office of bishop. Almost immediately, he exchanged Sees with Saint Eata, and became Bishop of Lindisfarne while Saint Eata went to Hexham.

Bishop Cuthbert remained as humble as he had been before his consecration, avoiding finery and dressing in simple clothing. He fulfilled his office with dignity and graciousness, while continuing to live as a monk. His virtue and holiness of life only served to enhance the authority of his position.

His life as Bishop of Lindisfarne was quite similar to what it had been when he was prior of that monastery. He devoted himself to his flock, preaching and visiting people throughout his diocese, casting out demons, and healing all manner of diseases. He served as a bishop for only two years, however.

Once, Saint Cuthbert was invited to Carlisle to ordain seven deacons to the holy priesthood. The holy priest Hereberht was living in solitude on an island in that vicinity. Hearing that his spiritual friend Cuthbert was staying at Carlisle, he went to see him in order to discuss spiritual matters with him. Saint Cuthbert told him

that he should ask him whatever he needed to ask, for they would not see one another in this life again. When he heard that Saint Cuthbert would die soon, Hereberht fell at his feet and wept. By God's dispensation, the two men would die on the very same day.

Though he was only in his early fifties, Saint Cuthbert felt the time of his death was approaching. He laid aside his archpastoral duties, retiring to the solitude of Inner Farne shortly after the Feast of the Lord's Nativity in 686 to prepare himself. He was able to receive visitors from Lindisfarne at first, but gradually he weakened and was unable to walk down to the landing stage to greet them.

His last illness came upon him on February 27, 687. The pious priest Herefrith (later the abbot of Lindisfarne) came to visit him that morning. When he was ready to go back, he asked Saint Cuthbert for his blessing to return. The saint replied, "Do as you intend. Get into your boat and return safely home."

Saint Cuthbert also gave Father Herefrith instructions for his burial. He asked to be laid to rest east of the cross that he himself had set up. He told him where to find a stone coffin hidden under the turf. "Put my body in it," he said, "and wrap it in the cloth you will find there." The cloth was a gift from Abbess Verca, but Saint Cuthbert thought it was too fine for him to wear. Out of affection for her, he kept it to be used as his winding sheet.

Father Herefrith wanted to send some of the brethren to look after the dying bishop, but Saint Cuthbert would not permit this. "Go now, and come back at the proper time."

When Herefrith asked when that time might be, Saint Cuthbert replied, "When God wishes. He will show you."

Herefrith returned to Lindisfarne and told the brethren to pray for the ailing Cuthbert. Storms prevented the brethren from returning to Inner Farne for five days. When they did land there, they found the saint sitting on the beach by the guest house. He told them he had come out so that when they arrived to take care of him they would not have to go to his cell to find him. He had been sitting there for five days and nights, eating nothing but onions. He also revealed that during those five days he had been more severely assailed by demons than ever before.

This time, Saint Cuthbert consented to have some of the brethren attend him. One of these was his personal servant, the priest Bede. He asked particularly for the monk Walhstod to remain with him to help Bede take care of him. Father Herefrith returned to Lindisfarne and informed the brethren of Cuthbert's wish to be buried on his island.

Herefrith and the others, however, wanted to bury him in their church with proper honor. Therefore, Herefrith went back to Cuthbert and asked for permission to do this. Saint Cuthbert said that he wanted to be buried there at the site of his spiritual struggles, and he pointed out that the peace of the brethren would be disturbed by the number of pilgrims who would come to Lindisfarne to venerate his tomb.

Herefrith insisted that they would gladly endure the inconvenience out of love for Cuthbert. Finally, the bishop agreed to be buried in the church on Lindisfarne so the monks would always have him with them, and they would also be able to decide which outsiders would be allowed to visit his tomb.

Saint Cuthbert grew weaker and weaker, so the monks carried him back into his cell. No one had ever been inside, so they paused at the door and asked that at least one of them be permitted to see to his needs. Cuthbert asked for Wahlstod to come in with him. Now Wahlstod had suffered from dysentery for a long time. Even though he was sick, he agreed to care for Cuthbert. As soon as he touched the holy bishop, his illness left him. Although he was sick and dying, Saint Cuthbert healed his servant Wahlstod. Remarkably, the holy man's spiritual power was not impaired by his bodily weakness. About three o'clock in the afternoon Wahlstod came out and announced that the bishop wanted them to come inside.

Father Herefrith asked Cuthbert if he had any final instructions for the monks. He spoke of peace and harmony, warning them to be on guard against those who fostered pride and discord. Although he encouraged them to welcome visitors and offer them hospitality, he also admonished them to have no dealings with heretics or with those who lived evil lives. He told them to learn the teachings of the Fathers and put them into practice, and to adhere to the monastic rule which he had taught them.

After passing the evening in prayer, Saint Cuthbert sat up and received Holy Communion from Father Herefrith. He surrendered his holy soul to God on March 20, 687 at the time appointed for the night office

Eleven years later, Saint Cuthbert's tomb was opened and his relics were found to be incorrupt. In the ninth century, the relics were moved to Norham, then back to Lindisfarne. Because of the threat of Viking raids, Saint Cuthbert's body was moved from place to place for seven years so that it would not be destroyed by the invaders.

Saint Cuthbert's relics were moved to Chester-le-Street in 995. They were moved again because of another Viking invasion, and then brought to Durham for safekeeping. Around 1020 the relics of Saints Bede (May 27), Aidan (August 31), Boisil (February 23), Aebbe (August 25), Eadberht (May 6), Aethilwald (February 12), and other saints associated with Saint Cuthbert were also brought to Durham.

The tomb was opened again on August 24, 1104, and the incorrupt and fragrant relics were placed in the newly-completed cathedral. Relics of the other saints mentioned above were placed in various places around the church. The head of Saint Oswald of Northumbria (August 5), however, was left in Saint Cuthbert's coffin.

In 1537 three commissioners of King Henry VIII came to plunder the tomb and desecrate the relics. Saint Cuthbert's body was still incorrupt, and was later reburied. The tomb was opened again in 1827. A pile of bones was found in the outer casket, probably the relics of the various saints which had been collected seven centuries before, then replaced after the Protestant commissioners had completed their work.

In the inner casket was a skeleton wrapped in a linen shroud and five robes. In the vestments a gold and garnet cross was found, probably Saint Cuthbert's pectoral cross. Also found were an ivory comb, a portable wood and silver altar, a stole (epitrichilion), pieces of a carved wooden coffin, and other items. These may be seen today in the Dean and Chapter library of Durham Cathedral. The tomb was opened again in 1899, and a scientific examination determined that the bones were those of a man in his fifties, Cuthbert's age when he died.

Today Saint Cuthbert's relics (and the head of Saint Oswald) lie beneath a simple stone slab on the site of the original medieval shrine in the Chapel of the Nine Altars, and Saint Bede's relics rest at the other end of the cathedral. The relics and the treasures in the Library make Durham an appropriate place for pilgrims to visit.

(from oca.org)

Social Team for March 27

Team 3 is up next week - Edgington, Kish, Barzykin, R&C Wright. 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

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. Nectarios & Ia, Mother Virginia Marie & the Carmelite Nuns of Port Tobacco, the suffering peopl of Ukraine, and those in need of our prayers. (Please advise Fr. Joseph of changes.)