

# SOBORNOST

**St. Thomas the Apostle Orthodox Church**

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*American Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Diocese*

*ECUMENICAL PATRIARCHATE  
OF CONSTANTINOPLE*

## SERVICES

**Saturday: Vespers 5 PM**

**Sunday: Matins 8:45 AM**

**Divine Liturgy 10 AM**

**June 5, 2022 – Sunday of the Fathers of the First  
Ecumenical Council | 7<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Pascha**



The monumental event we celebrate today needs little introduction. In the wake of the great persecutions of the first three centuries of the Church's life, after the pious emperor Constantine gave privileged status to the Christian Faith within the borders of the Roman Empire, the Church was troubled from within by a much more pernicious threat than pagan persecution. Arius, an influential presbyter in the most theologically influential church, the church of Alexandria, began trying to propagate his own subtle reasonings as the authentic teaching of the Apostles, claiming that Jesus, the Son of God, was not divine with the same divinity as God the Father. According to Arius, the Son was merely a creature—the highest of God's creatures, but a creature nonetheless. This opportunist famously spread his false teaching with catchy jingles that his followers would sing in the marketplace, with words like, "There was a time when he—that is, the Son—was not."

Every faithful Orthodox Christian, though they may be unable to refute all of Arius' theological subtleties and plausible scriptural quotations, ought to feel a visceral reaction to the magnitude of his blasphemy. We may not be able to articulate it clearly, but we should sense deeply and instinctively that our faith, and the promise of salvation it brings, is bound up entirely with the issue of the divinity of Jesus Christ our Savior—that our eternal fate hangs on how we answer the Lord's question to his disciples: *Whom do you say that I am?* (Mt. 16:15).

If we know this so well, we may wonder why Arius' teaching became so popular, how so many Christians were confused by it and led astray. But imagine trying to engage in theological dispute without the guidance of not only the first, but of any Ecumenical Council, and the significance of the holy event we remember today will become clear. We live and worship in the temple of God that these holy Fathers built, protected from false teachings by the sure signposts they have laid down for us. Without them, we would surely be just as lost as the many who were taken in by Arius' teaching.

But for the vast majority of our contemporaries, the matter at the heart of the First Ecumenical Council is not a live issue. It is a matter of puzzlement, rather, why religious doctrine would ever be considered so important. What difference does it make, after all? At the Council, there was only one letter—a single iota, the proverbial “jot”—that distinguished Orthodoxy from heresy. Even for many who call themselves Christians, such dogmatic disputes of no relevance—all that's important is just to love Jesus, or to follow the Bible. And among totally secular people, the same attitude is often broadened in scope to include all religions, so that, it doesn't matter what you believe, just as long as you're a “good person.” To such a mindset, it is insufferable arrogance to make definitive dogmatic statements; for who can claim to know absolute truth, if it even exists at all? To do so is nothing more than narrow-minded fanaticism that displays a lack of charity. This contemporary indifference to truth and tolerance of every falsehood always takes the guise of “love and compassion.”

We must bear in mind, then, the essential connection between the Nicene Faith that we hold so dear, and love—true love, love which is according to God. For such love is only possible through faith in Jesus Christ—true faith, right faith, faith in Christ as he is and as he revealed himself, and not faith in a false Christ, an antichrist. And in turn, all of the authentic dogmatic expressions of our faith were born out of a communion of love between the holy Fathers present at each Council, whose genuine spiritual fellowship allowed the Comforter, the Spirit of truth, to come into their midst and act, and guide them into all truth. To the blind and perishing world, nothing is more intolerable than this love and this truth, which it hates, and which it so ironically calls “hate.” But this should come as no surprise to us. *Do not marvel, says the Lord, if the world hates you; for it hated me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love his own, but since you are not of the world... therefore, the world hates you* (Jn. 15-19).

It is only fitting that before the solemn recitation of the Nicene Creed at every Divine Liturgy, we are exhorted with these words: “Let us love one another that with one mind we may confess Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, the Trinity, one in essence and undivided.” Here we repeat the crucial word that was at stake at the

Council of Nicaea, *homoousios*, consubstantial, of one and the same essence. The Church is constantly reminding us that we can only rightly confess the true faith if we heed the Lord's commandment to love one another; *for God is love*, and so *he who does not love does not know God* (1 Jn. 4:8). We cannot rest content with simply celebrating the salvific dogma that triumphed at the Council, honoring it in words and hymns only. We must strive to make this dogma our own, to apprehend it ourselves, by striving to fulfill the Lord's commandment of love. The world which is indifferent to truth will not be impressed by right dogmas. But, as the Lord says, *by this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you love one another* (Jn. 13:35).

The world needs nothing more desperately than for us to show forth this love, because iniquity abounds, and the love of many has grown cold. We live in uncertain times, without precedent in living memory. Our country grows ever more bitterly polarized politically, economically, and socially, with no signs of turning back. The unrest brimming just beneath the surface of our society shows itself, and if it is a harbinger of things to come, then we ought not to find Fr. Seraphim Rose's prediction far-fetched, that what began in Russia will end in America. But in the face of a global pandemic, civil unrest, wars and commotions, we should not give way to apocalyptic fears or indulge in wild speculations about the nefarious forces at work. Christ tells us not be troubled by such things, for *they must come to pass* (Mt. 24:6). *You know that in the world you shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world* (Jn. 16:33). And as the holy Apostle John assures us, *this is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith. Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God* (1 Jn. 5:4-5).

So let us cherish our faith, which we have inherited from the holy Fathers of the Nicene Council, and rooting and establishing ourselves in it, let us strive to make it living reality in and among ourselves; for the all-conquering grace of the Son of God, consubstantial with the Father, can overcome our passions and weaknesses and enable us to love according to the commandment of the Father. Then will be fulfilled in us the prayer of the Savior read in today's Gospel: *Holy Father, keep through your own name those whom you have given me, that they may be one, as we are*. Amen. (from [holycross.org](http://holycross.org))

### **Today's Epistle Lesson – The Acts of the Apostles 20:16-18, 28-36 EOB**

In those days, Paul had determined to sail past Ephesus in order not to spend time in Asia because he was in a hurry: if possible he wanted to be in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost. From Miletus, Paul sent a message to Ephesus and called to himself the presbyters of the Church. When they arrived, he told them, "You

yourselves know, from the first day that I set foot in Asia, how I was with you all the time.

Therefore, keep watch over yourselves and over the flock among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers! Be shepherds of the Church of God which he has purchased with the blood of his own [Son]. For I know that after my departure, vicious wolves will enter in among you and they will not spare the flock. From among your own group, men will arise who will speak perverse things in order to draw away the disciples after them. Therefore, keep watch! Remember that for a period of three years, I did not cease night and day to warn everyone with tears. Now, brethren, I entrust you to God, and to the word of his grace which is able to build up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified. I coveted no one's silver, or gold, or clothing. You yourselves know that these, [my] hands, served my needs and those who were with me. In all things, I have given you an example, that by this kind of hard work you should support the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, as he himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive!'" After saying these things, Paul knelt down and prayed with them all.

### **Today's Gospel Lesson – Saint John 17:1-13 EOB**

At that time, lifting up his eyes to heaven, Jesus said, "Father, the time has come! Glorify your Son, so that your Son may also glorify you. Even as you gave him authority over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him. This is eternal life: that they should know you, the only true God, and him whom you have sent, Jesus Christ. I have glorified you on the earth! I have accomplished the work which you have given me to do! Now, Father, glorify me with yourself with the glory I had with you before the world existed. I have revealed your Name to the people whom you have given me out of the world. They were yours, and you have given them to me; they have kept your word. Now, they have known that all things you have given me are from you. The words you have given me, I have given to them. They have received them and they have known for certain that I came forth from you, and they have believed that you sent me. I pray for them; I do not pray for the world, but for those whom you have given me, for they are yours. All things that are mine are yours, and yours are mine, and I am glorified in them. I am no longer in the world, but these are [still ] in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, keep them through your Name which you have given me, so that they may be one, even as we are [one]. While I was with them in the world, I protected d them in your Name. Those whom you have given me I have kept. None of them is lost, except the son of destruction, so that the Scripture might be fulfilled. But now I come to you, and I say these things in the world, so that they may have my joy made full in themselves.

## A Word From the Holy Fathers

Brethren and fathers, all we human beings have eyes and ears; however it is not given to all to see and hear, but to those who in addition have a ear which obeys and an eye for looking. That is why the Lord says in the Gospels, ‘Those who have ears to hear, let them hear’ [Mat. 13:9]. While of those who are hard of hearing the Prophet says, ‘God gave them a spirit of compunction, eyes for not looking and ears for not hearing’ [Rom. 11:8]. We should surely then listen with understanding to the things that are read to us, not simple-mindedly or anyhow, so that we may not fall beneath the threat, but rather that we may be able to say, as it is written, ‘The Lord’s training opens my ears’ [Is. 50:5]. The one who hears like this is attentive and moved by compunction, as we sing in David’s Psalms, ‘Rejoice in the Lord, you just’ [Ps. 32:1]. Such a person considers everything here to be a passing shadow; considers everything to be rubbish, so that he may gain Christ [Cf. Phi. 3:8]. Just as he hears him saying to his Disciples, ‘I will not leave you orphans. I am coming to you. A little while, and the world sees me no longer. But you see me, because I live and you will live’ [John 14:18-19]. And again, ‘I am the vine and you are the branches’ [John 15:5]. And again, ‘You are my friends, if you do whatever I command you. I no longer call you servants, because the servant does not know what his lord does. But I have called you friends, because everything that I have heard from my Father, I have made known to you’ [John 15:14-15]. And again, ‘You have remained with me in my trials, and I make a covenant with you — an eternal covenant — that you may eat and drink for ever at my table in my kingdom’ [Luke 22:28-30]. When someone who loves God hears such words, they not only rejoice but also choose to die for Christ every day. This then was how all the Saints lived their lives, with statements such as these they gloried triumphantly of their longing for God. Jeremiah says, ‘I did not grow weary following you, Lord, nor did I desire any human day’ [Jer. 17:16]. David says, ‘What shall I give the Lord in return for all that he has given me? I will take the cup of salvation and call on the name of the Lord’ [Ps. 115:3-4], while the Apostle again says, ‘It has been given us by God not only to believe in Christ, but also to suffer for him’ [Phi. 1:29]. Similarly the Apostles, after they had been flogged, rejoiced, as Scripture says, ‘because they had been found worthy to be dishonored for the name of Christ’ [Acts 5:41]. In short each of the Saints with words like these reveals their love for Christ. And therefore, brethren, let us too hear obediently what is said and love our beloved God with love, always giving thanks for all the good things that he has done for us, that he chose us from the beginning for salvation by the sanctification of our profession here; that he gave us the grace to worship him with orthodox faith and not be carried astray. For how many have gone astray, utterly deceived ‘by human trickery, by villainy to the cunning of error’ [Eph. 4:14]! How

many are famished ‘not with a famine of bread or thirst for water, but a famine of hearing the word of God’ [[Amos 8:11](#)], as it is written! To us has been given, like a full table, the teaching of the Saints, whence one works the divine words like a goldsmith, another and another from here and from there sweetens by his utterances. It is opportune then to say with the Apostle, ‘If God is for, who is against us? For the One who did not spare his own Son, but handed him over for us all, how will he not with him also grant us all things? Who will bring a charge against God’s chosen one? It is God who justifies. Who then condemns? It was Christ who died, yet rather he was raised from the dead, who is also at the right hand of God and who also makes intercession for us’ [[Rom. 8:31-34](#)], to God the Father that is, and who will also bestow on us his eternal kingdom, for to him belong 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 78*

## **Also Commemorated Today: Hieromartyr Dorotheus the Bishop of Tyre**

Hieromartyr Dorotheos was born around 255 and was bishop of the Phoenician city of Tyre, during the time of the persecution against Christians under the emperor Diocletian (284-305). He had a deep knowledge of both the Old and New Testaments. As long as Diocletian and Licinius ruled, he was absent from Tyre due to the persecutions and went to Dyssopolis in Thrace. When these emperors died and Emperor Constantine the Great ceased persecutions against the Church, he returned to Tyre and shepherded the Church of God until the reign of Julian the Apostate (361-363).

Because the impious Julian the Apostate initially persecuted the Christians in secret, the divine Dorotheos heard of his wicked actions and departed once again for Dyssopolis in Thrace, hoping to escape the idolaters. However, he was arrested by officials of Julian, and his elderly body was subjected to diverse tortures, being one hundred and seven years of age at the time. Being thus tormented, he delivered his blessed soul into the hands of God, having previously compiled many beneficial writings in both Greek and Latin. (*from johnsanidopoulos.com*)

### **Saint Dorotheus of Tyre as a Model for Our Lives**

*By Protopresbyter Fr. George Papavarnavas*

Saint Dorotheos became Bishop of Tyre under Maximian in 303. When the great persecution of Diocletian broke out, upon request and pressure from his flock, he was persuaded to temporarily flee, so he went to Odyssopolis in Thrace. Later he

returned to his headquarters in Tyre under Constantine the Great, to be near his rational flock that loved him very much, and he pastored them with sacrificial love. He particularly cared for the poor and the sick and supported in every way those who were weak in faith. As a lover of learning he progressed in studying and writing. At a certain period of his life when he was in Rome, he followed and recorded the events concerning the martyrdom of the Holy Martyrs Aristarchos, Pudis and Trophimos. He also wrote about the lives and martyrdoms of many other martyrs. Saint Dorotheos had a martyric end under Julian the Apostate, at the age of 107, in Eastern Thrace.

The sacred hymnographer, in the Dismissal Hymn composed for Saint Dorotheos, briefly describes his entire life and conduct as follows:

Dorotheos, wise hierarch of Christ, you received the light of wisdom as a gift from the Father of lights. You increased the talents given to you, blessed one, and in your old age contested beyond the bounds of nature. And now, O Hieromartyr, you even intercede for our souls.

The life and conduct of Saint Dorotheos gives us the opportunity to highlight the following:

First, "You increased the talents given to you, blessed one." Saint Dorotheos had the talent, namely the gift of the love of learning and wisdom, but he worked hard and thereby multiplied it. He did not hide it under the earth like the lazy servant of the parable of Christ, but what is important is that he cultivated and increased it, because all people have gifts, but, alas, not everyone uses them and cultivates them. The utilization of our gifts, which we all have, is associated with our true love for God and humanity, along with diligence and the willingness to selflessly give.

One of our hymns chanted during Holy Week, specifically during Matins of Holy Tuesday, urges us to work spiritually for the cultivation and multiplication of our talent, namely the gift we received from God, and at the same time indicates the way this cultivation and multiplication will take place. It also refers to the spiritual fruit enjoyed by all those who work in the prescribed way. The hymn is as follows:

Come, you faithful, let us work zealously for the Master; for he distributes His wealth to His servants. Let each of us according to his ability, increase our talent of grace. Let one be adorned in wisdom through good works; let another celebrate a service of splendor; let another faithfully communicate the word to the ignorant; let another distribute his wealth to the poor. Thus, we increase what has been entrusted to us, and as faithful stewards of the grace given, we may be accounted worthy of our Master's favor. Make us worthy, O Christ our God, in your love for mankind.

As is known, in the parable of the talents, Christ describes the diligent as good workers, while the one who hid his talent below the earth He calls wicked and lazy. The first two are praised and are invited to enter into God's kingdom, while the latter are criticized and condemned.

Second, "and in your old age contested beyond the bounds of nature." The sacred hymnographer calls the spiritual struggles of Saint Dorotheos supernatural, because the Saint was martyred in profound old age at 107 years old. This is very important because at that age physical strength leaves a person, and even spiritual strength is weakened, unless one has attained spiritual perfection, so that they are empowered by the uncreated Grace of the Triune God, who dwells in their entire existence, their soul and body. When a person is united with God, through the Grace of asceticism, prayer and the sacramental life, they are renewed within, refashioned as the eagle of his youth, according to the sacred Psalmist. That is, just as the outer man, namely the body, corrupts, so does the inner man, namely the soul, become renewed and the spiritual powers are reinforced and become stronger. That is why today, as in all eras, there are people who are young in age who have become aged, and are in no mood to work, physically or spiritually, and there are elders who are young at heart, with great internal strength and spiritual prowess, who thirst for life and have a great desire to create and offer. The latter do not feel frustration, insecurity and loneliness, because they have internal completeness. They don't feel like veterans of life, because they know very well from personal communion with the personal God of the Church, that life never ends. Earthly life has an ending, but not life which is eternal and without end. Once, a monk, who was in the last moments of his earthly life, asked how he now feels when faced with death, and he replied calmly: "Here with God and there with God, everywhere is good." The struggle to increase the gift of God leads to spiritual perfection, creating internal completeness, spiritual prowess and peace of soul. (*from johnsanidopoulos.com*)

## **St. Boniface, Archbishop of Mainz**

Our father among the saints Boniface (c. 672 - June 5, 754 or 755), the Apostle of the Germans, born Winfrid or Wynfrith at Crediton in Devonshire, was a missionary who propagated Christianity in Germany during the 8th century. His feast day is celebrated on June 5, the day of his repose.

He was of good family, and it was somewhat against his father's wishes that he devoted himself at an early age to the monastic life. He received his theological training in the Benedictine monasteries of Adescanastre, near Exeter and Nursling between Winchester and Southampton, under the abbot Winbert, taught in the

abbey school and at the age of thirty became a priest. He wrote the first Latin grammar produced in England.

In 716 he set out on a missionary expedition to Frisia, intending to convert the Frisians by preaching to them in their own language, his own Anglo-Saxon language being similar to Frisian, but his efforts were frustrated by the war then being carried on between Charles Martel and Radbod, king of the Frisians. He returned to Nursling.

Winfred again set out in 718, visited Rome, and was commissioned in 719 by Pope Gregory II, who gave him his new name of Boniface, to evangelize in Germany and reorganize the church there. For five years he labored in Hesse, Thuringia and Frisia, and on November 30, 722, he was elevated to bishop of the German territories which he would bring into the fold of the Roman Church.

In 723, Boniface felled the holy oak tree dedicated to Thor near the present-day town of Fritzlar in northern Hesse. He built a chapel from its wood at the site where today stands the cathedral of Fritzlar, and later established the first bishopric in Germany north of the old Roman Limes at the Frankish fortified settlement of Büraburg, on a prominent hill facing the town across the Eder river. The felling of Thor's Oak is commonly regarded as the beginning of German Christianization. In 732, he traveled again to Rome to report, and Gregory II conferred upon him the pallium as archbishop with jurisdiction over Germany. Boniface again set out for Germany, baptized thousands and dealt with the problems of many other Christians who had fallen out of contact with the regular hierarchy of the Catholic church. During his third visit to Rome in 737/38 he was made papal legate for Germany. In 745, he was granted Mainz as metropolitan see.

After his third trip to Rome, Boniface went to Bavaria and founded there the bishoprics of Salzburg, Regensburg, Freising, and Passau. In 742, one of his disciples, Sturm (also known as Sturmi, or Sturmius), founded the abbey of Fulda not too far from Boniface's earlier missionary outpost at Fritzlar. Although Sturm was the founding abbot of Fulda, Boniface was very involved in the foundation. The initial grant for the abbey was signed by Carloman, the son of Charles Martel.

The support of the Frankish Mayors of the Palace (maior domos) and later, the early Pippinid and Carolingian rulers, was important to Boniface's program of forcible conversion. The Christian Frankish leaders desired to defeat their rival power, the Heathen Saxons, and to take the Saxon lands for their growing empire. Boniface's destruction of the indigenous Germanic faith and holy sites was an important part of the Frankish campaign.

Boniface balanced this support and attempted to maintain some independence, however, by attaining the support of the papacy and of the Agilolfing rulers of

Bavaria. In Frankish, Hessian and Thuringian territory, he implanted the dioceses of Büraburg, Würzburg and Erfurt. He also organized provincial synods in the Frankish Church, and maintained a sometimes turbulent relationship with the king of the Franks, Pepin, whom he may have crowned at Soissons in 751. By appointing his own followers as bishops, he was able to retain some independence from the Carolingian rulers, who most likely were content to give him leeway, as long as Christianity was imposed on the Saxons and other heathen folk by whatever means.

He had never relinquished his hope of converting the Frisians, and in 754 he set out with a small retinue for Frisia. He baptized a great number, and summoned a general meeting for confirmation at a place not far from Dokkum, between Franeker and Groningen. Instead of his converts, however, a group of armed inhabitants appeared who slew the aged archbishop. His remains were eventually buried in the abbey of Fulda. The forcible conversion of Germany up to the Elbe river was completed by Charlemagne, who destroyed Saxon independence in the last decades of the 8th century. *(from johnsanidopoulos.com)*

### **Social Team for June 12**

Team 5 is up next week - Vallandingham, Tony Papadakis, Andrew and Katy. Thank you!

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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, Bennett family, Tatyana & Slava Chumak & family, Luke & Marlena Cooper, Roberta Corson, Jon Church, Tina Crull, Mary Diane David, Marlene Doukas, Linda A. Georgiev, Sandi Hebel, Howl family, Helen P. Janowiak, John M. Janowiak, Andrew Kinn, Kopan family, Helen, Brian, Luke and Mia Mahony, Valentina Makowelski, Susan Matula, Anna Meinhold, David & Kathryn Newman, Bobby Nutter & family, Nicholas Pavlik, Weston Perry & family, John Reece, Mary Reed, Marge Rusnak, Rose Song, Dcn. Nectarios & Ia, Mother Virginia Marie & the Carmelite Nuns of Port Tobacco, the suffering people of Ukraine, and those in need of our prayers. (Please advise Fr. Joseph of changes.)