

SOBORNOST

St. Thomas the Apostle Orthodox Church

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American Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Diocese

*ECUMENICAL PATRIARCHATE
OF CONSTANTINOPLE*

SERVICES

Wednesday: Moleben to the Theotokos 6 AM

Friday: Moleben to the Cross 6 AM

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

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



July 3, 2022 – 3rd Sunday After Pentecost | Martyr Hyacinth of Caesarea, in Cappadocia, and those with him

Saint Hyacinth, a native of Caesarea in Cappadocia, was raised in a Christian family. The emperor Trajan made the boy his “cubicularius” (chamberlain), unaware that he was a secret Christian.

One day, while the emperor and his entourage were offering sacrifice to idols, the young Hyacinth remained at the palace, shut himself up in a small room, and prayed fervently to the Lord Jesus Christ. One of the servants overheard him praying and denounced him to the emperor. He said that although Hyacinth was entrusted with an imperial position, he did not honor the Roman gods, and was secretly praying to Christ.

Hyacinth was brought to trial before Trajan, who tried to persuade him to deny Christ and sacrifice to the deaf and dumb idols, but the holy martyr remained steadfast and declared that he was a Christian. He was whipped and thrown into prison, where the only food given to him was what had already been offered to the idols. They hoped that he would be overcome with hunger and thirst and eat it. Saint Hyacinth did not eat the food, and he died after thirty-eight days. When they came to torture him again, they found his dead body. The jailer saw two angels in

the cell. One covered the saint's body with his own garment, and the other placed a crown of glory on his head.

The twelve-year-old Hyacinth suffered for Christ in the year 108 in the city of Rome. Later, the saint's relics were transferred to Caesarea. Saints Diomedes, Eulampius, Asclepiodotus, and Golinduc also suffered with Saint Hyacinth. (*from oca.org*)

Today's Epistle Lesson – St. Paul's Letter to the Romans 5:1-10 EOB

Brethren, being justified by faith, we have a peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we also have our access by faith into this grace in which we stand. And we rejoice in hope of the glory of God! Not only this, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope. Hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us. For while we were still weak, at the right time, Christ died for the ungodly. Indeed, one will hardly die for someone righteous, but perhaps for a righteous person someone would even dare to die. But God entrusts his own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Even more so then, since we are now justified by his blood, shall we be saved from wrath through him! For if, while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, how much more shall we be saved by his life!

Today's Gospel Lesson – Saint Matthew 6:22-33 EOB

The Lord said, "The lamp of the body is the eye! If therefore your eye is sound, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eye is evil, your whole body will be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is the darkness! No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other; or else he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Mammon. Therefore, I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, wondering what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? See the birds of the sky: they do not sow, or reap, or gather into barns. Your heavenly Father feeds them! Are you not of much more value than they? Which of you, by being anxious, can add one moment to his lifespan? Why then are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow. They do not toil or spin, yet I tell you that even Solomon in all his glory was not dressed like one of these! But if God clothes the grass of the field which today exists and tomorrow is thrown into the oven in such a way, will he not much more clothe you, you of little faith? Therefore, do not be anxious, saying: 'What will we eat?', 'What will we drink?' or, 'What will we wear?' It is the Gentiles who seek after all these things, but

your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. Seek first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. ”

A Word From the Holy Fathers

Though confronted with the suffering of others, I have been dwelling on the infirmity of my own flesh. We must, by brothers, as I started to say, look after it as being our kinsman and fellow-servant. For, even if I have denounced it as my enemy for the distress it causes, still, I also embrace it as a friend because of Him who joined us together. And we must look after the physical needs of our neighbors, both the healthy and those consumed by the same ailment, no less than we do our individual persons. For we are all one in the Lord, rich or poor, slave or free, healthy or sick in body; and there is one head of all, Christ, who is the source of all things; and the same relationship that exists between the members of the body exists between ourselves, both as individuals and collectively. This is why we must not overlook or neglect those who have fallen victim to our common infirmity before us; nor should our contentment, because we enjoy physical well-being, exceed our distress that our brethren fare ill. It is incumbent upon us to believe that the welfare of our own bodies and souls lies in this one thing, loving regard for our fellow man.

– St. Gregory the Theologian, *Oration 14.8*

"I Was Born a Christian, and a Christian I Will Die" (Homily for the Sunday of the Neomartyrs Under the Turks)

By Metropolitan Seraphim of Kastoria

Saint Nikodemos the Hagiorite, praising the chorus of Holy Neomartyrs, whose Synaxis our Holy Church celebrates today, says the following in the Service he composed in their honor:

"As noetic luminaries, the divine Neomartyrs of Christ have risen upon us, and without error they lead towards the straight path of salvation by His commandments."

The Neomartyrs are luminaries, namely stars, who rose in the firmament of the Church during the terrible winter of slavery. They are the new athletes of Christ. They are the thrilling preachers of the Divinity of Christ. They are the champions of piety and the opponents of impiety. They are the partakers of the Lord's sufferings and His imitators and followers. They are the triumphant victors against the three great enemies: the flesh, the world and its rulers, as Saint Nikodemos writes in his Encomium.

All these persons presented a more consistent and more effective resistance against the occupiers. They sacrificed themselves for the enslaved race to survive. Thus, in those four hundred years, they revived the Christian tradition of martyrdom and confession. By their sufferings they made evident the words of Christ: "Whosoever confesses Me before men, I will confess before My Father in the heavens." And this confession, which was recorded by the Angels, sought to reject the occupiers and was an immediate confirmation of the Orthodox faith.

And I, my brethren, wanted to convey today to your love, a characteristic feature of all these holy figures, known and unknown, who with boldness stand before the Throne of the Slain Lamb. It is the feature of fighting to preserve the Orthodox faith. The Apostle Paul refers to this fighting to his disciple Timothy: "Fight the good fight of the faith." This was experienced by the same Apostle to the Nations, with success, with many victories, yet "through glory and dishonor, bad report and good report; genuine, yet regarded as impostors; known, yet regarded as unknown; dying, and yet we live on; beaten, and yet not killed; sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; poor, yet making many rich; having nothing, and yet possessing everything." Therefore at the end of his earthly course he exclaimed: "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day – and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for His appearing."

This fight for the faith was made present by the multitude of the chorus of Holy Neomartyrs.

First, they fought against the various passions which sought to dominate within their souls and lead them to destruction. How many things were they offered by the conquerors: riches, glory, honor and pleasure, in order to loot the treasure of their faith! And their response to all these challenges of the conquerors was amazing: "I was born a Christian, and a Christian I will die!"

Second, they fought against sin in all its forms, which affects the purity by which God made us and drags us into wickedness and misery. Sin hurts the image of God, removes gentleness, and alienates people from the presence of grace. One does not "battle against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, the rulers of the darkness of this world, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in heavenly places." This is why these persons, with a firm will and having on their lips the name of Christ, followed the advice of the Apostle Paul: "Remember Jesus Christ who rose from the dead,... according to my preaching." Thus they subjugated every enemy and adversary and arrived at the glorious end in triumph

both in this life, and especially in eternal life, thereby enjoying the ineffable joy and bliss of Paradise.

Third, the fighting spirit which characterized the Holy Neomartyrs, resulted in the confession of their faith in the person of Christ that led to their martyric death. They had amazing stability in the Orthodox Christian teachings and traditions. They had admirable perseverance during inhumane and terrible torture, to which they became subject by their persecutors, and they remind us of the martyrdoms of the ancient Martyrs of our faith. They had forbearance, forgiveness and at the same time prayed for their torturers.

This spirit of faith and confession, and the bloodbath that watered the earth and adorned their martyric relics, particularly stimulates our suffering people, dripping with the dew of revitalization in the wilderness of slavery to the suffering souls of the slaves, so that they did not bend to the constant threats and persecutions of the conquerors. Their presence, as Saint Nikodemos writes, was an aura of revitalization to those who fainted every time under the yoke of the fall. "It is a miracle for one to see in the heart of the winter spring flowers, in the deepest night the sun of the day, in the palpable darkness the brightest lights, and in the time of slavery to see freedom and in the time of illness to see the supernatural power of God."

The Holy Neomartyrs, who were martyred during the four hundred years and like a heavenly cloud cover our long-suffering country, come to us today to remind us of the debt we owe them for the treasures of our faith. This faith is not a theoretical teaching, nor an intellectual theory. Faith is life! And this life is associated with true life, which is Christ. If there is true communion with God, then we will find ourselves in an actual state of liberation. Away from God one is fragmented, internally and externally, with conflicts, divisions and schisms.

Today, when our values have been smuggled, and the traditional social fabric of our country has changed, and the Holy Mysteries (such as Baptism and Marriage) have lost their sanctity and in our own way we have altered them into simple joyful ceremonies; today, when our relationship with God and the Church is limited to a formal presence; the Holy Neomartyrs overemphasize that we should not accept a reconciliation with sin, as well as any other derogation and irresponsibility in our interpersonal relationships that move us away from the Truth and complicates our lives, and ultimately leads to spiritual death and the loss of eternal life.

I pray that the intercessions of the Holy Neomartyrs will strengthen us in these difficult times, in order that we may engage them and fight the good fight of the faith. *(from johnsanidopoulos.com)*

St. Gerasimos the New of Megalo Chorio

When St. Gerasimos was born he was given the name George, and he grew up in the village of Megalo Chorio near Karpenisi. At the age of eleven, he left his village with his older brother Athanasios for Constantinople to work. Soon afterwards Athanasios returned to his village and left George with a relative who owned a grocery store.

One day, while carrying a copper tray with dishes full of yogurt on his head, George fell and the dishes with yogurt broke and scattered. Afraid of what the owner would do to him, George set out to return to the shop, crying along the way.

But before he arrived at the shop, a Muslim woman saw him from the window of her house. She went out to him and offered him sympathy, comfort and assistance. While he was in her house, her husband was preparing two of his sons for circumcision. In appreciation for the hospitality, George agreed to become a Muslim when it was suggested to him by the husband, who also promised to adopt him and even allow him to visit his home whenever he wished.

George remained in the Muslim household for two years when the husband, suspicious of the affection his wife had for George, gave him a Muslim official with whom George toured Bulgaria and Bosnia before returning to Constantinople.

After a short time had passed, George realized his great sin of apostasy. He then left Constantinople and returned to his home village of Megalo Chorio. He remained in the village for three years attending church services faithfully. When he heard a monk named Gerasimos was returning to the Holy Mountain, George decided to accompany him. On the Holy Mountain, George went to the Skete of Saint Panteleimon where the elder Kyrillos resided who was from the area of Karpenisi and who agreed to become his spiritual father.

Kyrillos taught George how to pray properly and in general outlined a spiritual discipline for him which included reading the book *New Martyrology* written by St. Nikodemos the Hagiorite.

After a year, George asked to be tonsured a monk, but his elder thought it was too early; he had to train for at least two, if not three years before he could formally become a monk. Upon hearing this, George broke out in tears. In fact, he cried daily for three entire months. Seeing his zeal, his elder agreed that perhaps the time had indeed arrived. So on the Second Sunday of Great Lent, George was tonsured a monk and given the name of Gerasimos.

Three days after the service of tonsure, Gerasimos asked his elder permission to become a martyr. But this permission was withheld as being premature. Gerasimos spent the next three years touring the Holy Mountain, visiting various monasteries.

At the end of this time he asked permission to visit his mother and relatives. This was granted. But instead of going back to the village of Megalo Chorio, Gerasimos returned to Constantinople and went to the house of his Muslim stepfather.

Because of the passage of so much time and the change in his appearance, Gerasimos initially had difficulty being admitted to the house. Finally he was taken to his stepfather before whom Gerasimos stood and said:

Because of my naivete and youth I accepted your cunning words as well as those of your wife, and you made me into a Muslim when I was an Orthodox Christian. Now I have come to confess the truth. Then I was young and naive, I was fooled, but now I have come of age and I have been able to distinguish the light from the darkness. I confess that I was born an Orthodox Christian and an Orthodox Christian I will die.

The Muslim was thunderstruck with Gerasimos' words, but he fought back his anger and began flattering Gerasimos. He kept Gerasimos in his house for three days, offering him riches and other rewards. But Gerasimos remained firm in his adherence to the Orthodox Christian faith.

Seeing Gerasimos' steadfastness, his Muslim stepfather said to him, "Go to some other place and live, but until you leave the city, say you are a Muslim so that your life might not be in danger, for I feel sorry for your youth and I do not want to see you die. You have been my son."

To this Gerasimos answered, "I thank you for granting me life and for your permission to live as an Orthodox Christian. But what you have said to me, to say that I am a Muslim until I leave the city, is impossible. On the contrary I shall become a town crier and proclaim my faith in Jesus Christ."

Hearing this the Muslim handed him over to the shiek who had taught him the Muslim faith, but even he could do nothing to make Gerasimos change his mind. Hence Gerasimos was turned over to the kazaskir to be punished. Standing before him, Gerasimos confessed with boldness that he was an Orthodox Christian, calling Muhammad a false prophet, a spinner of myths, and a polluter.

After hearing this, the Muslims in the courtroom were ready like blood-thirsty lions to pounce on Gerasimos, but they were stopped by the kazaskir who ordered Gerasimos beaten with bull-whips. But Gerasimos remained firm in his faith in Jesus Christ, glorified God, and castigated the infidels.

Gerasimos was then thrown into prison where heavy weights were placed on his chest. He remained this way for days, and then he was brought before the kazaskir once more who said to him, "Have you come to your senses or do you stubbornly remain in the faith of Christ?"

Gerasimos replied, "I look upon your punishments as joy, for they brighten my soul. I will never deny my sweetest Jesus Christ even if you inflict upon me tens of thousands of deaths."

Hearing this, the kazaskir became very angry and immediately sentenced Gerasimos to death. But even on the way to the execution, Muslims continued in their attempts to make Gerasimos renounce his faith in Jesus Christ and accept the Muslim religion.

Reaching the place of execution, Gerasimos deliberately knelt facing east and said, "Remember me, Lord, when You come into Your kingdom." The executioner saw this and turned Gerasimos around, but he turned to the east once more. This made the executioner so angry he struck Gerasimos with his sword and severed his head from his body. Thus Gerasimos was martyred for the love of Jesus Christ at the age of 25 on July 3rd in the year 1812.

His relics were taken by fellow Orthodox Christians who paid much money for them. He was then buried in the monastery on the island of Proti near Constantinople. Three years later Gerasimos' relics as well as those of Elder Kyrillos were taken to the Monastery of Prousou near Gerasimos' village of Megalo Chorio. From there, in 1971, his relics were transferred to a magnificent temple that bears his name in his village which was built by the residents. (*from johnsanidopoulos.com*)

St. Nectaria, Schema-nun, of Russia

Little is known to us of the monastic life of St. Nectaria. To understand what little there is is possible only through an acquaintance with her life in the world.

St. Nectaria's father, Count Boris Petrovich Sheremetiev, was a close friend and collaborator of Tsar Peter I. At the same time he was true to the best qualities of the Russian past and to the discipline of the Orthodox Church. He was devoted to the Tsar without fear or flattery. The Tsar, in turn, valued and respected him for his lofty spiritual and intellectual gifts, while the people loved him for his generosity and kindness. Upwards of fifty needy people a day were fed at his table. At his estate of Borisovk in the vicinity of Poltava, he founded the St. Boris-Tikhvin Convent in accordance with a vow given before the Battle of Poltava. His second wife, Anna Petrovna, was the widow of the Tsar's uncle, Lev Kirillovich Narishkin. She was very attentive to the moral upbringing of her daughter Natalia, who referred to her as "my gracious mother." Natalia was only 14 when her mother died, and she wrote that this grief was "the beginning of my troubles." She had already lost her father, who died in 1719 when she was only five years old.

Natalia Borisevna grew up to be worthy of her parents. After her mother died she spent two years in complete seclusion in the home of her brother Peter. At 16, she became betrothed to a handsome man, 22 year-old Prince Ivan Alexeevich Dolgoruky, a favorite of Tsar Peter II and the brother of the Tsar's fiancée, Princess Catherine, who showered Ivan with all kinds of favors. Natalia became acquainted with Ivan only after their betrothal, but she came to love him, as she herself wrote, for his "sincere and pure-hearted love." The imperial family, as well as ambassadors and society's most illustrious representatives, attended their engagement on December 24, 1729.

"In my spiritual immaturity" she wrote, "it seemed to me that the rest of my life would go on like this. I didn't know that in this world there is nothing enduring. My happiness was short-lived; it lasted only from December 24 to January 18. For these 26 days I suffered for the next 40 years." On January 18 Emperor Peter II died from smallpox. When she heard the news, Natalia fainted. When she came around, she repeated, "Alas, I am lost! I am lost!," as though foreseeing her fate. Her fiancée came to her, and together they mourned the death of the Tsar. They vowed to remain "inseparable until death." Through the window Natalia tearfully watched the funeral procession. Soon thereafter the new Empress Anna triumphantly entered Moscow.

Natalia's foreboding proved justified. The Empress's favorite, the Baltic nobleman Biron, was an enemy of the couple, and they opposed his coming to Russia. He was a cruel and vengeful man. Rumors began circulating that Ivan and Natalia were to be exiled. Natalia was advised to break off her engagement should her fiancée become victimized. She later wrote, "What kind of conscience would allow me to eagerly follow after him when he enjoyed a high position and then to reject him in his misfortune? I couldn't accept such counsel, and made up my mind to live or die together with him. Through all manner of adversity I remained faithful to my husband, and now I will tell the plain truth: in the midst of all these misfortunes I never regretted having followed him. God is my witness: loving my husband, I bore everything and supported him as much as lay within my power....What has become of well-wishers, of friends? They have all left us to please the new favorite..."

Two elderly relatives accompanied Natalia from Moscow to the Dolgoruky's nearby property. The young couple were married in the local village church. They planned to go to Moscow to visit their relatives, but a decree came ordering the entire family to a distant village, 800 miles from the capital. After a difficult journey lasting three weeks, they arrived at the village, halfway to their assigned place of exile, but it was not long before an officer and soldiers rode up and placed guards with bayonets at all the exits to the village. The captives were then ordered

to Berezov in distant Siberia. Of those close to her, Natalia was accompanied only by her old French governess. In Berezov they were confined in a stockade; allowed out only to go to church, and were forbidden all correspondence and visitors.

Unfortunately, Natalia's notes ended with her arrival in Berezov. She lived there for 11 years. She had children, but they all died in infancy except two, Dimitri and Michael, who eventually returned with their mother to Moscow.

In 1739 tragedy again struck the family. As a result of a false denunciation, Natalia's husband, Ivan, was taken to Novgorod where he was quartered. He died courageously, as a Christian. When they cut off his right hand he said; "I thank Thee, O Lord." As they cut off his left leg he continued, "for Thou hast granted me," concluding, when his left hand was severed, "to know Thee, O Lord!"

Natalia learned of her husband's fate only when Empress Elizabeth Petrovna, who ascended the throne in 1741, restored her freedom and her former rank. Over her husband's grave Natalia erected a church dedicated to the Nativity of Christ. In St. Petersburg she settled in her brother Peter's house. The Empress tried to comfort her with invitations to the court, but Natalia ignored them all. In society Natalia was even more unhappy. In 1753, after her youngest son had married, she finally retired to the Kiev-Florovsky Convent. There, at the age of 45, she was tonsured and given the name Nectaria, and in 1767, having prepared herself through monastic labors, she took the great schema. It is said that before her tonsure she threw her engagement ring into the Dnieper River.

"The next entry in her notes," writes her biographer Archimandrite Leonty, "makes evident the writer's Christian sensibilities and indicates the purpose which she had in writing about her sorrowful life: 'Lord, give me strength', writes Natalia Borisevna, 'to explain my misfortunes, that I might describe them for those who want to know, and for the consolation of those in sorrow, so that, remembering me, they would be comforted. For I was one who spent all my days in misfortune and experienced everything: persecution, exile, poverty, separation from loved ones, everything imaginable. I do not boast of my endurance; rather, I boast in the Lord's mercy, in that He granted me strength to endure, even now. It is impossible for a mortal to bear such bitter ordeals unless he is strengthened from above by the power of the Lord. Just consider my upbringing and my present state.'..."

Her grandson, Yaroslav Governor Ivan Michailovich Dolgoruky, writes in his memoirs how as a child his parents took him to visit his grandmother at the Florovsky Convent. The memory of the profound peace which surrounded her remained with him for life. She was always surrounded by many people.

Nectaria fell asleep in the Lord on July 3, 1771, and was buried at the entrance to the Cathedral of the Kiev-Caves Lavra. (*from antiochian.org*)

Social Team for July 10

Team 1 is up next week - Hanbury, P. Blaydoe, Chumak. 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.)