

SOBORNOST

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American Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Diocese

**ECUMENICAL PATRIARCHATE
OF CONSTANTINOPLE**

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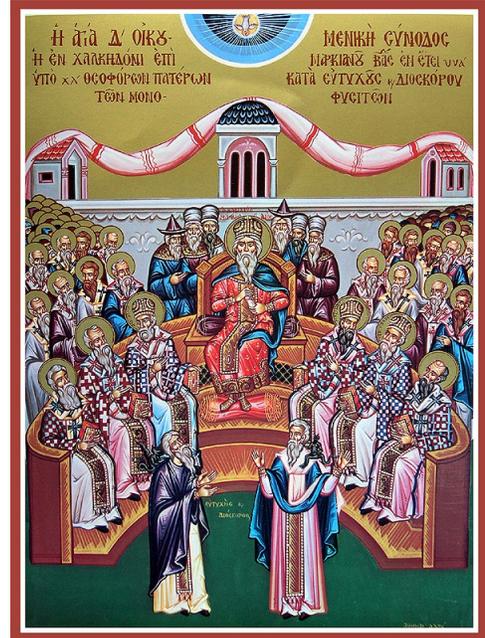
**Saturday: Confession 4:30 PM Great
Vespers 5:00 PM**

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

July 17, 2022 – 5th Sunday After Pentecost

Holy Fathers of the First Six Ecumenical Councils

The Church of the Councils: the "onslaught of the intellect and the potential of doubt



'That which we have seen with our eyes'

It is important to remember that a first generation of the Church's members knew Christ as a person, and some of them from very early days. Nazareth, Capernaum and Cana are little towns or villages distanced from one another by a few miles; it is not inconceivable that those who later became Christ's apostles and disciples had even met the Lord when he was a boy, a youth, a young man, and had thus discovered him in an exceptionally gradual manner. In due course we can see disciples gathering around him, discovering in him a unique friend, a guide and an adviser, then a leader. Eventually they are to discover him as he truly was: as God who had come to them, who had come into the world.

This progress reaches the kind of culmination to which the words of Philip point early in the Gospel of St John: 'We have found him of whom Moses and the prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth'. And what I said about its early stages may well explain the response of Nathaniel, 'Can there anything good come out of Nazareth?' For if you were to be told that somebody you have known practically from childhood, an inhabitant of a minute town round the corner from your village

is declared to be the Messiah, the Savior of the world, you would probably have reacted in much the same way.

The first disciples had such a direct experience of Christ, and it was important for the world that the first witnesses should be people who had been with him from the beginning, had step by step discovered him for who he was. Indeed, when Judas died his tragic death and the disciples wanted to elect an apostle to take his place, they made it quite clear that they wanted someone who had been with them from the beginning and gone through this gradual process of discovery. Thus they could all speak directly of Christ's days in the flesh as the days in the flesh of the incarnate God.

'That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you'.

The years passed, the apostles preached and proclaimed what they knew in the deepest and most personal way. Later — several decades later — the New Testament writings took shape. Fr Georges Florovsky once noted the importance of the fact that these scriptures were not produced as immediate, spontaneous, lyrical descriptions of what the disciples had undergone. Otherwise one could have doubted the validity of writings produced under the effect of strong emotion and deeply shaking events. Thirty, forty, sixty years later, these written testimonies appear as a mature reflection of people who had known Christ in the flesh, discovered the Christ of the Spirit and proclaimed an experience that could no longer be suspected of being merely an emotional response to friendship, love, bereavement or hallucination. Rather could it be seen as something deeply considered and true, not only autobiographically, but objectively. It could be seen as God's own truth about Christ.

With the passage of centuries these scriptures are received, are lived by, are experienced not only as the object of scholarship but as the means of communing in the experience which they convey. And not only they. To this day believers are able to assert, 'I know that God exists because I have met him': 'I know that Christ is risen, because within my experience I know the living Christ'. It may be through prayer, it may be at moments of particular illumination, it may be through the sacraments. One way or another, it is a direct conviction.

But at the same time there was a watering down of the experience in the life of many. It is easy to understand that in the heroic times when the Church was persecuted, when to be a Christian was not only costly but entailed the risk of torture and death, only the few were Christians: those who were prepared on the ground of an experience they had lived, an experience which they could not deny without denying themselves. But when the Church was permitted to exist openly, and later became the Church of the empire, floods of people came into it who

would never have thought of joining the Church when it was a question of life and death. This dilution of commitment gave rise to several different factors.

On the one hand monasticism was born as a reaction against the anemic Christian society which was taking shape. It began as a protest not against the world, but against the Church which had become weak and unsure in many of its members. It involved an exodus away from the weaklings of the Church.

It was not an escape into the desert of people who were afraid of living in the city. It was a migration into the battlefield with Satan. It was an exodus of those who wanted to fight the true fight rather than live a comfortable life of devotion within the framework of religion while yet possessed of a secular world-outlook.

The 'onslaught of the intellect'

At that stage another phenomenon came to the fore. It was what Daniel-Rops has called the 'great onslaught of the intellect'. The intellect marks the period of the Councils. People submit the faith to the criteria of their intellectual acceptance or rejection. Is it possible to believe this and that? Is it possible to accept such and such realities testified by the apostles and proclaimed by the Church? Can one reasonably be a Christian?

On the lowest level, it could have been seen that way. On a higher level, for instance that of Arius, the problem was more complex and more earnest. For Arius was a man of great culture and of outstanding intelligence. And he submitted the Christian faith to the test of philosophical assessment. One may see that he is an outstanding example of what a heresy can be when the intellect is considered as empowered to judge revelation, to judge the formulations of those who possess an experience which the observer himself does not possess, either at all or to the same degree. For Arius, the problem was basically that God could not become man since an infinite God could never become the prisoner of finitude. God was eternal, and could not become the prisoner of time. And in those days (and I refer once again to Florovsky, since for me his word has enormous value) no Arius could resolve the problem. Indeed, it took centuries of philosophical and scientific reflection and research to arrive at a vision of time which can accommodate the notion of eternity and space. For the first scientific book I know which really faces the problem (Emile Borel, *Le temps et l'espace*) was only written at the turn of the century. Before that, there was no scientific or philosophical basis that would allow someone to make the distinction and yet to realize that there is no contradiction in eternity pouring into time and not being a prisoner of it, or in infinity being within space and not being limited by it. Time and space, eternity and infinity were simply different categories.

One could say that eternity and infinity are God, and all the rest are created. But it is possible to go further. There is a remarkable phrase of St. Maximos the Confessor in which, speaking of the Incarnation, he says that the divinity and the humanity in Christ are united to each other in the same way in which fire can pervade a sword plunged into a furnace. The sword enters the furnace cold and gray, without any brilliance; it emerges aglow with fire, resplendent. Fire remains fire, iron remains iron. But this is imagery that would not have satisfied Arius: an image does not provide an answer to a philosophical question. Nevertheless this kind of image is an adequate description of a direct experience; and in this lies its importance.

What we find in this period of the Councils is people who try to address the gospel proclaimed by the Church from the first days to their own time against the background of classical philosophy or of the various philosophies and mystery religions that had developed later. Some harm could have been done because some of the imagery could be compared with that of the gospel and could thus be used as an accusation that the gospel itself is simply a new mythology.

Doubts were engendered in the minds of many: is not Christianity simply a more elaborate and philosophically more acceptable myth, but still of the same kind (and as unreal) as the mythology of the various nations of the past? As philosophical thought developed, as philosophy taken from the ancient world acquired a new maturity, the intellect came to feel self-sufficient, no longer in need of being guided by God himself. Thus problems arose from the confrontation of a mature intellect with the problem of faith.

The nature of doubt

Perhaps I should say a few words about the nature of doubt in this context. If you consider that your intellect is the criterion and that you have a right to submit all the data of revelation and all forms of experience to the judgment of the intellect, you are bound to condemn as unacceptable everything that does not fit within the categories of your intellect at the point of development it has reached at a given moment, and in the context of the culture which is yours at this particular time. Yet this is exactly the phenomenon before us. No longer is it the experience of the Church which is the object of this onslaught of the intellect. It is the scriptural text itself which may be taken to be faulty when it does not correspond to the intellectual expectations of the reader. The text can be reinterpreted or misinterpreted in ways which can be warranted perhaps by linguistics. But this is to forget that language forms part of a spiritual tradition and must be understood within this tradition and not outside it. Not surprisingly, it becomes a commonplace to attack the text of the Gospels, to argue that it is unsatisfactory,

that it must be understood in a way in which the Church never did understand it. Here, indeed, is something which is inherent to the human approach to truth, and at the root of any progress in thought or in experience.

Let me make a parallel between the doubt, or succession of doubts, which a fever can have, and the way in which a scientist confronts created reality. A scientist collects all the existing facts of which he is aware. To begin with they are disparate; they may belong together in any way. The scientist tries to group them and at a certain moment, when a number of facts are capable of being held together, a model is built that allows him to hold all these facts together and reason about in their totality. If the scientist is honest and creative, the first thing he will do is to ask himself whether his model holds, whether it is a model that has no intrinsic flaw within itself, whether it takes into account all the information possessed to date. If he is satisfied on these counts, his next move will be to look for new facts that will not fit in with his model and will explode it. For the aim of a scientist is not to create a model for which he will be remembered in the history of science. His aim is to create temporary models, hypotheses; models that *must* explode in order to enlarge knowledge and to contain new knowledge. Doubt in that respect for a scientist is a creative activity, an activity which is elating because the discovery that something does not fit in a preconceived or ready-made model allows him to discover reality on a wider scale and to see that reality unfolds wider and wider, deeper and deeper, making it possible for him to discard one hypothesis after the other, one model after the other. For him reality is unshakable and cannot be lost because the model is exploded.

What is tragic in the doubt which we find in a believer is that instead of saying that the model of God, of creation, of the Church, of man which satisfied him fifty years ago no longer satisfied him, can no longer satisfy his intellectual and spiritual development, he makes an either/or decision: either to retrench himself in the old or to abandon his former position altogether. Whereas the developing person who rejects the model he earlier had of God or the creation when confronted with the depths and range of science or of philosophy, is proceeding with something not only legitimate but essential. By contrast, a believer who at the age of eighteen or eighty would remain faithful to a model adequate for an eight-year-old would be spiritually and mentally backward, incapable for communing with all the vastness, depth and greatness of God and of his creation.

Doubt, creative and destructive

Doubt, then, is legitimate. It is a creative, an important part of the discovery of the depths of God and the vastness of man and of the created world. But doubt in which only the intellect is used to judge the past model or the past experience is a

doubt that will be destructive. Moreover, it will be destructive not only of the model, but of the very possibility of believing in the objective reality which is the object of our contemplation, our communion or our quest. And this is what I feel did happen in the period of the Councils. It is what we find in Arius, it is what we find in all the subsequent heretics: an intellectual problem does not correspond to an anemic, insufficient spiritual experience, and the vigor of the intellect kills the abortive spiritual experience.

What we find in the Church is the contrary. It is the primacy of the experience which must be contemplated with all the powers of man, his intellect, his heart and all the powers at his disposal. I remember two definitions of theology which are entirely alien to what theology is in all its fullness. An introductory phrase in someone's *Christian Dogmatics* reads, 'Theology is to God what ornithology is to birds'. But this is exactly what it is not. First of all, God is no bird. You cannot catch him in the garden or in the field. You cannot take a film of him. You cannot go around him to see what he looks like from the side and from the tail end. And, what is perhaps even more serious, you cannot make a post-mortem. So you cannot know God and do theology in the way in which you can do ornithology. Another definition of theology I came across some thirty years ago states, 'Theology consists in drawing from scripture all the conclusions one can intellectually draw'. Far from it. Theology is an increasing knowledge of God through communion. It is an act of sharing in God's life, discovering it from within this communion and sharing, and so proclaiming it — nothing less. It involves speaking of God from within the knowledge of God.

Unrealized potential

We are confronted with such problems in the period of the Councils. But has the Church of the Councils come to an end? I think not. It has not come to an end because the same onslaught of the intellect, the same onslaught of the godless approach to divine things, has continued throughout the ages. It is in action nowadays, within the Church and from without. And if we ask ourselves about heresies and heretics, what their position vis-a-vis the Church is, I would like to point out two things. First, the Church was right in condemning the heresies. But the Church which condemned the heresies from within an experience and a certainty often did so without explaining why this heresy could not be acceptable on the intellectual, rather than the spiritual plane. What I said about Arius, and the fact that in his time the distinction between time and eternity, space and infinity, was not philosophically and scientifically mature, allows people in our days to reason in the same terms. For the Church has not taken advantage of what philosophy and science have discovered and understood about these categories, has not explained what an Athanasius could not explain in his time in scientific or

philosophical terms. And that could apply to every other heresy. Thus there is a task for people of our time who are conversant with philosophy or steeped in scientific knowledge. They have to reconsider the ancient heresies and ask themselves whether there is some sort of answer that can now be given from a point of view which is not simply the experiential point of view of the early centuries. For however intellectually mature that was, it failed to solve the problem on the level of the questioner who came from outside.

Secondly, in order to be balanced in our judgment of heresies, we should realize that the Church has been treating heresies in different way at various epochs. There is a remarkable article published more than half a century ago in *The Christian East* by Metropolitan Antonii Khrapovitskii, one of the narrowest traditional theologians of the Russian Church. Writing on the heresies, and in a manner contrary to what one might expect from him, he notes that the Church took an ever increasingly lenient attitude to successive heresies throughout the ages (allowing for certain exceptions when an ancient heresy was resurrected under some new guise). And he argues that one can explain this in two different ways. Either one says that the Church's sensitivity to what was true or wrong had diminished, and therefore that the Church, being less and less perceptive, accepted with ever more leniency the successive heresies. This he rejects wholeheartedly, and I think we all can and should reject it. Alternatively, the early heresies rejected elements of the Christian faith that were essential to the very existence of the Christian truth. To deny the divinity of Christ, to deny the humanity of Christ, were two heresies that denied everything that stood under the vocable of Incarnation and all that it means in terms of the nature of God, of the love of God, of the providence of God, of the nature of man, of the vocation of man, of the destiny of mankind and of the cosmos. Therefore such heresies were to be rejected without any kind of compromise as not being Christianity at all. But Antonii says that as the centuries went by, heresies attached to statements that did not hit at the very heart of the Christian faith. The monothelite discussion, or other more recent heresies of the West or of the East, were such as still accepted essentials which allow those who held them to be considered Christian. And Metropolitan Antonii uses a phrase which I find interesting: in his view every subsequent heresy or group of heretics took away with them an ever increasing amount of Christian truth and weakened it by the incompleteness of their vision of what was left. Thus were subsequent heresies more Christian and less destructive of the kernel of Christianity. So modern heresies, whichever they are - I would quote the theology of the papacy as one - would still be encompassed by the vision of the undivided Church. And this despite the fact that the teaching introduced something that was profoundly untrue as to the nature of the Church.

The Christian in his confrontation with the world

So we must again give thought to that with which we are confronted. We are confronted in the modern age with atheism. We are confronted with non-Christian religions. We are confronted with Christian heresy. We are confronted within the Church with ignorance of our faith and with an anemic experience of the faith we hold. And all that we must examine most attentively with the same determination, courage and vision as the early Councils and the early Fathers of the Church faced their own experience. The expression they gave to this experience is something for us to heed: the way in which they could convey this experience in a way understandable to heretics or to outsiders without losing anything of the content or the quality of the message.

We should accordingly also face atheism with more understanding than is often done. For atheism - the loss of God that kills - is rampant outside the Church. It is also rampant within it to the extent to which death has power over us. When Christ identified with mankind, he identified not only with the limitations of a created world, the distortions of the fallen world, the consequences of sin, the needs of mankind in being tired, hungry and thirsty. He accepted to share with us, and not us individually but with mankind in its totality, the loss of God that kills. And when on the Cross he cried, 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me', he measured in a way in which no atheist ever has or will what it means to be without God and die of it.

So if we look at the surrounding world, the alien world, the pagan world, but particularly at the atheist world, we must realize that even this world is not outside of the sacrificial, tragic, crucified experience of Christ. And we must realize that our vocation is to understand from within Christ something which the godless world cannot understand about itself. This makes us into another and different Church of the Councils.

We do not hold ecumenical councils, we are far too disorderly and too divided. But each and every Christian, each parish, diocese, denomination, is confronted with the same problem as the undivided Church when it had to face the outer world, heretical, pagan or godless. And we also need to go beyond condemnation of it in order to achieve its salvation.

Met. Anthony of Sourozh

Today's Epistle Lesson – St. Paul's Letter to the Hebrews 13:7-16 EOB

Brethren, remember your leaders, those men who proclaimed the word of God to you. Considering the results of their conduct, imitate their faith. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever. Do not be carried away by all sorts of strange teachings. It is good that the inner person should be strengthened by grace, not by

food which is of no profit to those who are so preoccupied by it! We have an altar from which those who offer divine service [in] the holy tabernacle have no right to eat. For the bodies of those animals (whose blood is brought into the holy place by the high priest as an offering for sin,) are burned outside of the camp. This is why Jesus suffered outside of the gate, so that he might sanctify the people through his own blood. Let us therefore go out [of the city] to him who is outside of the camp and let us bear his disgrace. For we do not have here [below] an enduring city, but we seek the one that is to come. Through him, [Jesus], let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, g the fruit of our lips which confessed his Name. But do not forget to do what is good and to share because God is well pleased with such sacrifices.

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

At that time, Jesus, lifting up his eyes to heaven, 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

Let us believe that God is the Maker and Creator of all things – for how could the whole have come into existence if someone did not give it substance and form? - and also include Providence, whose role it is to bind and keep this whole together, since one who creates necessarily also makes provision for his creation. The

alternative is to assume that the whole proceeds under its own power and will, like a ship in the storm, founder and break up amid the turmoil of matter and revert to its original chaos and disorder. And let us have faith that our – call him what you will, Maker or Shaper – gives especial attention to our affairs even if our lives take an adverse turn quite unintelligible to us, perhaps for the purpose of having us admire, through our difficulty of comprehension, the reason that transcends all things. For everything that is easily grasped is easily despised, but what is beyond us increases our admiration in proportion to our difficulty in apprehending it; and everything that exceeds our reach whets our desire.

– St. Gregory the Theologian, *Oration 14.33*

Also Commemorated Today: Great Martyr Marina of Antioch in Pisidia

Marina was born in Southern Anatolia, specifically from Antioch in Pisidia, at the end of the third century during the reign of Claudius II (268-270). She was the only daughter of noble pagan parents. When she was five years old her mother died (some sources say she died shortly after childbirth), and since her father, Aidesios, was too busy carrying out his duties as a pagan priest to care for her properly, he turned her care over to a woman who happened to be a Christian.

This nanny lived in a small town about fifteen miles from where Marina was born. Away from her father's idols and blasphemous practices her nanny taught her about the Christian Faith. As Marina increased in age, more so did she advance in knowledge, understanding, and compassion. Her faith in the Living God was so great that she desired the difficult path of Martyrdom. She told her father that she wished to become a Christian and to never marry so as to live a life of virginity. Her father despised her for her faith and disowned her as his daughter.

A new governor named Olymbrios was elected for the region and in time began a persecution against all Christians in the area. One day he caught a glimpse of the very beautiful fifteen year old Marina with her nanny. The Imperial Governor Olymbrios, seeing her great beauty, desired her for his wife. When asked her name, homeland, and faith, Marina answered: "My name is Marina; I am the offspring of Pisidia; I call upon the Name of my Lord Jesus Christ." Upon learning that she was a Christian, Olymbrios tried to dissuade her by flatteries, and by threats of torture.

"Nothing Will Separate Me From Christ"

Marina frankly replied to the man: "Have no vain hope for me, O governor, that I might cower before any number of torments. Nothing will separate me from Christ - neither affliction, famine, fire, sword, nor any other harsh tribulation - not even a

violent and very painful death. Think not that you will entice me with honors, gold or other wealth, because all these things are perishable and temporal.

"The soul, by the grace of God, is immortal and desires eternity. For this reason, we, the Christians, wisely disdain these fleeting luxuries and enjoyments. We endure the sorrow and distress of the day that we might attain to everlasting life and eternal rest after our repose. If you think that I lie, here I am, try me, so you will know by deed the truth. Strike me, slay me, burn me, suffocate or test me with ten thousand torments. As much as you will worsen the punishment, so much more will Christ glorify me in the future life and blessedness.

"Many times in this life Christ grants us a small consolation as a pledge of that future exaltation. He draws us out of the depths of the sea, or rescues us from fire, or saves us from other torments, to your shame and condemnation. Therefore, I do not sorrow in this transient life. Readily I give my body to death, for my deathless God and Master, as the Sinless One, out of love for me, was crucified."

This rejection infuriated the governor and he put her to harsh torture so all the beauty of her body was disfigured. Not only the public sorrowed and wept and suffered due to her troubles but even the governor himself, unable to bear the horror of these tortures, hid his face in his hands. As broken up and destroyed as her body was, more so was her soul renewed and brighter.

"Great Is Your Faith, Marina"

Unshaken, she prayed with thanksgiving that the Lord count her worthy to be tormented for His love. As they tortured her, the Saint was looking up to heaven, and prayed: "To You, O Lord, I lift up my soul. O My God, I trust in you; let me not be ashamed; let not my enemies triumph over me. Indeed, let no one who waits on you be ashamed. Let those be ashamed who deal treacherously without cause. Show me your ways, O Lord. Teach me your paths. Lead me in your truth and teach me, for You are the God of my salvation. On You I wait all day. Remember, O Lord, Your tender mercies and Your loving kindnesses, for they have been from of old. For I withstand these pains because I confess Your holy name. Send Your mercy and compassion to me so my grief will become joy."

As the Saint was chanting and praising the Lord, the soldiers were beating her so severely that her flesh was torn and her blood flew profusely. The Archangel Michael, then, appeared to her and said to her: "Great is your faith, Marina. Have more strength, for it is by your good confession that your soul will survive, and you will gain the holy baptism."

The ruler ordered that Marina be thrown in prison. While she prayed there the Archangel Michael again came to comfort her and healed her of all her wounds.

Seeing this the governor was amazed. He told her that he was sure then that she was a great magician. She said: "I am not a magician, but I am a worshiper of Jesus Christ. Now your defiled helpless idols have been exposed."

The ruler was enraged. He ordered to saw her flesh with iron saws, and to cut her skin with knives. When he thought that she was dead, he ordered his soldiers to put her body back in prison until she rotted. Archangel Michael appeared to her again, strengthened her, and repeated what he said to her before. He, then, Crossed her, cured her and disappeared.

The Hammer of Saint Marina

A malicious demon, beholding that his servant, Olymbrios, could not vanquish one young woman and make her fall down before the idols of demons, became desperate and wished to test her himself. Taking on a dark and dragon-like guise, a demon appeared to Marina in the prison to frighten her. Fearlessly Christ's athlete seized him by the hair and, finding a hammer, beat him to the ground, completely humbling him. A great light appeared and illuminated the entire prison. All of Marina's wounds were completely healed and not even a trace of scarring remained on her body. It is for this reason that Saint Marina often holds a hammer and is sometimes depicted beating on a demon in her icons.

Baptized in Water and in Blood

The demented governor tortured her the next day by fire and water but Marina endured it all as if not in her own body. The ruler gave his orders to tie her to a pole and burn her. They did. Then he ordered that they tie her hands and legs, and put her in boiling water. When she was in the water, St. Marina looked up to heaven and said: "O God who dwells in heaven, I ask You to untie me, and to make this water a baptism for me. Dress me with the robe of salvation through it. Take away from me the old man and put on me the new man. Make me, with this baptism, worthy to inherit the life eternal, and make my faith steadfast." A great earthquake then shook the place, Marina's ties were loosened, and she immersed herself in the water three times in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. She came out of the water praising God. A voice came from heaven, and all the people who were gathered there heard it. The voice said: "You are blessed, Marina. You were baptized, and became worthy of the crown of virginity." Many of those who witnessed these events declared their faith, became Christians and were baptized. The ruler ordered all of them to be killed. They were beheaded, and gained the wreath of martyrdom. It is estimated that they numbered in the thousands.

Seeing that he could not overcome the Saint, the wicked governor finally sentenced Marina to death by beheading. She was beheaded at the age of fifteen in the time of

Diocletian (284-305), but is numbered with the armies of martyrs, and remains alive in soul and power in heaven and on earth. The sufferings of the Great Martyr Marina were described by an eyewitness of the event, named Theotimos.

Up until the taking of Constantinople by Western crusaders in the year 1204, the relics of the Great Martyr Marina were in the Panteponteia Monastery. According to other sources, they were located in Antioch until the year 908 and from there transferred to Italy. Now they are in Athens, in a church dedicated to the holy Virgin Martyr. Her venerable right hand was transferred to Mount Athos, to the Vatopaidi monastery. However, atop Mt. Langa in Albania overlooking Lake Ochrid, there is a monastery dedicated to St. Marina with a portion of her miraculous relics. Countless miracles have occurred and still occur in this monastery, whose witnesses are not only Christians but many Muslims as well. So much did the Turks have respect for this holy place that they never dared disturb either this holy place or the property of this monastery. At one time a Turk was the guardian of the monastery.

Saint Marina is especially invoked for deliverance from demonic possession and cures innumerable diseases including cancer.

Saint Marina As A Role Model For Young Women

What a role model for Orthodox Christian young women today! This 15 year old girl was raised a pagan, had a mother that died when she was young, her father shunned her for accepting Christ and desiring virginity, she rejected a life of marital happiness and love to live for Christ and abide in His love, she further rejected all the fame and fortune and worldly comforts associated with nobility, for her strong resolve in following Christ she was tortured brutally, she endured a demonic manifestation and temptations courageously, and finally she was tortured and martyred ruthlessly yet with a joyful heart with a desire to imitate the Saints.

Most teenagers today would probably find the early tragedies of Marina's life demoralizing, but her love for Christ overcame all her insecurities and strengthened her against all the temptations every teenage girl faces. She could have lived any type of life she wanted, but she chose a path that brought her supreme joy that no worldly happiness could ever surpass.

And now Saint Marina lives forever and is one of Orthodoxy's most powerful and beloved Saints. She still answers prayers, cures illnesses by the grace she received in enduring bravely for Christ, and is a notable vanquisher of demons. Saint Marina was no damsel in distress, but a true female heroine.

Before there was a Hollywood female heroine, there was Saint Marina the Vanquisher of Demons. Those are fiction, but her story is real and her miraculous

icons and relics are a testimony to this besides her many visitations to the faithful. Her superpower was her faith and the grace of the Holy Spirit. There could be no better female teenage role model, as she herself imitated the Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary who it is said also bore Christ at the age Saint Marina was martyred.

Maybe most young women won't have to go to such extreme tortures for their faith, but to be a faithful Christian in our society today will inevitably invite public ridicule, peer pressure, misunderstanding, unflattering stereotypes, insults and all sorts of temptations. Even in the midst of these types of "tortures", the example of Saint Marina can be a model on how to courageously endure and be strong. Young Marina's confident faith and great love for God should serve as an inspiration to look beyond all vanity of this life and focus on that which truly matters. (*from orthodoxyouthresources.com*)

Holy Martyr Speratus and Companions at Carthage

The earliest Christian text in the Latin language appears to be little more than a court record, commonly called the *Passion of the Scillitan Martyrs*. Six Christians from the unknown North African town of Scilli though twelve in all, were brought before their provincial governor in Carthage. They were put to trial according to the procedure known to us from the letters of Pliny the Younger (Letter 10.96). Although the hearing and the subsequent passing of sentence took place behind closed doors (in secretario), the record must have been acquired and copied by other Christians. Only at the end is there evidence that a Christian redactor added to the original text.

When Praesens, for the second time, and Claudianus were the consuls, on the seventeenth day of July, at Carthage, there were set in the judgment hall Speratus, Nartzalus, Cittinus, Donata, Secunda and Vestia.

Saturninus the proconsul said: "You can win the indulgence of our lord the Emperor, if you return to a sound mind."

Speratus said: "We have never done ill, we have not lent ourselves to wrong, we have never spoken ill, but when ill-treated we have given thanks; because we pay heed to our emperor."

Saturninus the proconsul said: "We too are religious, and our religion is simple, and we swear by the genius of our lord the Emperor, and pray for his welfare, as you also ought to do."

Speratus said: "If you will peaceably lend me your ears, I can tell you the mystery of simplicity."

Saturninus said: "I will not lend my ears to you, when you begin to speak evil things of our sacred rites; but rather swear by the genius of our lord the Emperor."

Speratus said: "The empire of this world I know not; but rather I serve that God, whom no man has seen, nor with these eyes can see. I have committed no theft; but if I have bought anything I pay the tax; because I know my Lord, the King of kings and Emperor of all nations."

Saturninus the proconsul said to the rest: Cease to be of this persuasion."

Speratus said: "It is an ill persuasion to do murder, to speak false witness."

Saturninus the proconsul said: "Be not partakers of this folly."

Cittinus said: "We have none other to fear, save only our Lord God, who is in heaven."

Donata said: "Honor to Caesar as Caesar: but fear to God."

Vestia said: "I am a Christian."

Secunda said: "What I am, that I wish to be."

Saturninus the proconsul said to Speratus: "Do you persist in being a Christian?"

Speratus said: "I am a Christian. And with him they all agreed."

Saturninus the proconsul said: "Will you have a space to consider?"

Speratus said: "In a matter so straightforward there is no considering."

Saturninus the proconsul said: "What are the things in your chest?"

Speratus said: "Books and epistles of Paul, a just man."

Saturninus the proconsul said: "Have a delay of thirty days and bethink yourselves."

Speratus said a second time: "I am a Christian." And with him they all agreed.

Saturninus the proconsul read out the decree from the tablet:

Speratus, Nartzalus, Cittinus, Donata, Vestia, Secunda and the rest having confessed that they live according to the Christian rite, since after opportunity offered them of returning to the custom of the Romans they have obstinately persisted, it is determined that they be put to the sword."

Speratus said: "We give thanks to God."

Nartzalus said: "Today we are martyrs in heaven; thanks be to God."

Saturninus the proconsul ordered it to be declared by the herald: "Speratus, Nartzalus, Cittinus, Veturius, Felix, Aquilinus, Laetantius, Januarina, Generosa, Vestia, Donata and Secunda, I have ordered to be executed."

They all said: "Thanks be to God."

And so they all together were crowned with martyrdom; and they reign with the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, for ever and ever. Amen. (*from johnsanidopoulos.com*)

Social Team for July 24

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