

# SOBORNOST

**St. Thomas the Apostle Orthodox Church**

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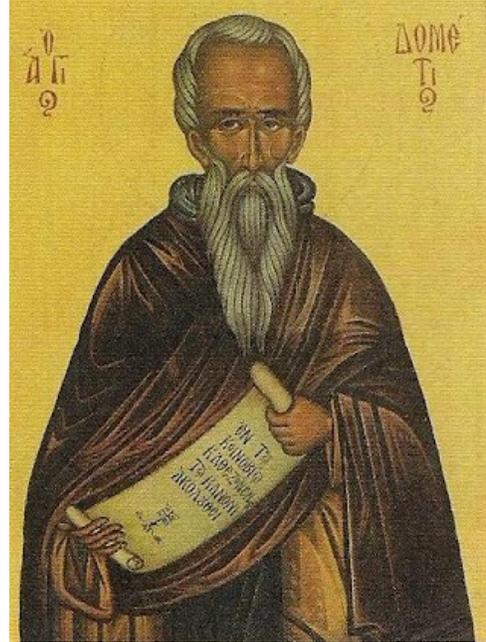
*American Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Diocese*

*ECUMENICAL PATRIARCHATE  
OF CONSTANTINOPLE*

## SERVICES

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

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



### **August 7, 2022 – 8<sup>th</sup> Sunday After Pentecost | Martyr Dometius of Persia | Afterfeast of the Transfiguration**

Saint Dometius was born during the reign of Constantine the Great in the year 318. He was from Persia. Having been catechized by a Christian named Abar and taught the faith of Christ, he abandoned his ancestral impiety and every other attachment to his relatives. Therefore he went to the city called Nisibis, which is found at the border between the land of the Romans and the land of the Persians. There the Saint entered a monastery, was baptized, was dressed in the monastic schema, and took on every struggle and asceticism.

However, due to the cooperation between the monks there with a wicked demon, he was slandered and therefore withdrew from there and went to the Monastery of the Holy Martyrs Sergius and Bacchus in the city of Theodosiopolis, and he followed the virtuous conduct of the Abbot and Archimandrite Urbil, of whom it is said that for sixty years he did not eat any cooked food, nor did he lie down on a bed, nor did he sit. By him he was elected to be ordained a Deacon. Because the Abbot considered elevating him to the office of Presbyter, when Saint Dometius understood this, he withdrew from there, and he went up a mountain, where the renowned one endured the heat of the summer and the cold of the winter, and the other miseries that come with the changes of the seasons.

Later he entered a man-made cave. Having remained there for a sufficient time, those who came to him he benefacted with miracles and healings, which he did in the name of the Lord. The unbelieving Greek pagans he turned from the error of the idols to the faith of Christ. When Julian the Apostate (361-363) learned of this when he went to Persia, he ordered for the Saint to be stoned to death. When those who went to stone him arrived, they found him chanting the Third Hour with his disciples. Thus with the density of the stones the defiled ones buried the athlete of Christ, together with his disciples, and in this way the three received the crown of the contest. Their Synaxis and Feast is celebrated in their Temple which is found beyond in Justiniana. *(from johnsanidopoulos.com)*

### **Today's Epistle Lesson – St. Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians 1:10-18 EOB**

Brethren, I beg you through the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ, to all speak the same thing and that there be no divisions among you. Instead, may you be perfected together in the same mind and opinion. As it is, those who are from Chloe's household have informed me concerning you my brethren, that there are quarrels among you. Now I mean this: that each one of you says, "I follow Paul," "I follow Apollos," "I follow Kephas," or, "I follow Christ." Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul? I thank God that I baptized none of you, except Crispus and Gaius, so that no one should say that I baptized you into my own name. (I also baptized the household of Stephanas; besides them, I do not know whether I baptized any other.) Indeed, Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach the Good News - not in wisdom of words, so that the cross of Christ would not be made void. For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are dying, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

### **Today's Gospel Lesson – Saint Matthew 14:14-22**

At that time, Jesus went out and saw that there was a great crowd. He had compassion on them and healed their sick. When evening came, his disciples came to him and said, "This place is deserted, and the hour is already late. Send the crowds away so that they may go into the villages and buy food for themselves." But Jesus said to them, "They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat." They replied, "We only have here five loaves and two fish!" Jesus said, "Bring them to me." Having instructed the crowds to sit down on the grass, he took the five loaves and the two fish. Looking up to heaven, a he blessed, broke and gave the loaves to the disciples, and the disciples distributed it to the multitudes. And so, everyone ate and was satisfied. His disciples gathered up twelve baskets full of what remained left over from the broken pieces. Those who ate were about five thousand men, besides women and children. Immediately after

this, Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and told them to go ahead of him to the other side, while he would send the crowds away.

## A Word From the Holy Fathers

Brethren and fathers, since we have been counted worthy to celebrate the forefeast of the divine Transfiguration, from this then let us compose an instruction, discharging our duty in a few words. On the one hand, all the feasts of the Lord expound the mysteries of his sojourn in the flesh, such as that he was born, that he was baptized, that he was crucified, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day, that he was taken up in glory; while the mystery of the Transfiguration hints at the restoration in the age to come. For in the same way that 'his face blazed like the sun, while his garments became white as light' [[Matt. 17:2](#)], in the same way he will come from heaven like lightning, with power and great glory to judge the universe. And as Peter, James and John were with him on the holy mountain, so the elect will be with him in the kingdom of heaven, enjoying his ineffable manifestation as God and inexpressible joy. And who is adequate for all this? Who is worthy to attain that joy? Who else but one whose way of life is pure and undefiled? For since our God is pure, or rather the highest light, he comes to the pure, and as he has placed a pure soul in us, he will also ask it from us pure. For since it has been made according to God's image and likeness, that is to say as a figure of the divine beauty, it has also shared in that beauty. And knowing this the poet speaks thus, 'Lord, by your will you granted power to my beauty' [[Psalm 29:8](#)], that is to say to the beauty of the soul, lest, having turned away towards the ugly passions of sin and become disfigured, it fall from God and his divine rewards. Since therefore it is agreed that our soul should be like this, lovely and beautiful, and that we should give it back to God like a pledge on the last day, the day of resurrection, I beg and urge that we love this beauty and carefully guard this loveliness, not turning back to the fair things of the present age or to the beauties of flesh and blood. They are not beauties, but idols of beauty; they are rather corruption and change. And this we can learn from the end of things, for one who today is outstandingly beautiful and fair of face is tomorrow cast into a tomb, stinking and abhorrent. So there is nothing fair and loveable but exemplary virtue, which should be our chief pursuit, my brothers. But if admittedly it frequently happens that the soul grows slack and is defiled by unseemly thoughts -- for who will boast that they have a pure heart? -- let it be quickly made clean again and brought back to its former condition, lest by delaying in evil it gives birth to death. And let no one ever say that they cannot be made clean again, stained as they are by many sins, when they listen to the One who said, 'Though your sins are like scarlet, I will make them white as snow. Though they are like crimson, I will make

them white as wool' [Is. 1:18]. Do you see God's ineffable love for humankind? Not only has he promised to purify, but to bring the one who repents to the pinnacle of loveliness. And examples are manifest.

David was a prophet and, when he fell into the crime of adultery and murder, he did not give up, but after he had swiftly had recourse to repentance, he received the grace of prophecy once again. Manasseh perverted Israel for fifty two years, but when he repented, he too found salvation. The prince of the Apostles, after his denial, by the medicine of tears took up again the burden of the apostolate. Mary of Egypt, to pass over the numberless others, had reached the uttermost limit of debauchery, but once she had come to a remarkable repentance, she attained the highest degree of virtue. So there is no excuse for claiming incapacity for someone who chooses to be saved, unless they are insensible or bent on death. But we hear the words, 'Why would you die, house of Israel?' [Ez. 18:31], and why do we choose everlasting death rather than immortal life that is set before us? Our good Master cries out each day, 'Come to me all you that toil and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest' [Matt. 11:28]. And we are unwilling to get rid of the heavy load of our sins. The same Master cries, 'I am the light of the world. One who follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life' [John 8:12]. But we turn to the opposite, proclaiming by our actions, 'We do not want to know your ways' [Job 21:14]. All that remains is for us to hear, 'Walk by the light of your fire and the flame you have kindled' [Is. 50:11]. And Scripture says, 'Those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God' [Gal. 5:21]. But God forbid that such things should be said of us. 'For you are my friends, says the Lord, if you do all that I command you' [John 15:14]. So then, let us do all that we have been commanded, that we may be worthy to be called friends, to inherit the kingdom of heaven, in Christ our Lord, to whom be glory and might, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, now and for ever, and to the ages of ages. Amen.

– St. Theodore the Studite, *Chatechesis 20*

## **Also Commemorated Today: Saint Theodora of Sihla**

Saint Theodora of Sihla, who is one of the greatest of Romania's women ascetics, was born in the village of Vânători in Neamts County in the first half of the seventeenth century, and was one of the two daughters of Stephen Joldea and his wife.

In her youth, Saint Theodora experienced a great trial in her family. Her sister, Marghiolitsa, died in a tragic way. This event deeply affected the saint. At this time, the thought of abandoning the world blossomed in her heart. She wished to

do penance for her parents, for her sister, and for herself. Her grieving parents, however, did not agree with her decision, because now Theodora was their only child. They pleaded with her, and, at the proper time, they married her to a young man who was working in their vicinity, and who went frequently to venerate the holy sites. After entering into a lawful marriage, they lived together in her husband's house.

Since Saint Theodora and her husband did not have any children, they both decided to enter monasteries in the Buzau valley. Her husband went to the Skete of Poiana Mărului, where he was tonsured with the name Eleutherios. He was also found worthy of ordination to the holy priesthood. Saint Theodora also received the monastic tonsure in the Skete of Poiana Mărului. In just a few short years, she advanced in obedience, prayer, and asceticism, acquiring the grace of unceasing prayer of the heart. She also had to endure many temptations from the Enemy.

When the Buzau valley was invaded by the Turks, Saint Theodora fled to the mountains with her Spiritual Mother, Schema-nun Paisia. They lived for several years in fasting, vigil and prayer, enduring cold, hunger, and other trials from the devil. When her Spiritual Mother fell asleep in the Lord (sometime between 1670 - 1675), Saint Theodora was led by God to the mountains of Neamț. After venerating the wonderworking Neamts Icon of the Mother of God (June 26) at the monastery, she was told to seek the advice of Hieromonk Barsanuphios of Sihăstria Skete. Seeing her desire for the eremetical life, and recognizing her great virtues, he gave her Holy Communion and assigned Hieromonk Paul as her Father Confessor and spiritual guide.

Father Barsanuphios advised Mother Theodora to go and live alone in the wilderness for a year. "If, by the grace of Christ, you are able to endure the difficulties and trials of the wilderness, then remain there until you die. If you cannot endure, however, then go to a women's monastery, and struggle there in humility for the salvation of your soul."

Father Paul searched in vain for an abandoned hermitage where the saint might live. Then they met an old hermit living beneath the cliffs of Sihla. This clairvoyant Elder greeted them and said, "Mother Theodora, remain in my cell, because I am moving to another hermitage." Father Paul left the nun on Mount Sihla, blessing her before he returned to the Sihăstria Skete. Saint Theodora lived in that cell for thirty years, glorifying God. Strengthened with power from on high, she vanquished all the attacks of the Enemy through patience and humility. She never left the mountain, and never saw another person except for Father Paul, who visited her from time to time to bring her the Spotless Mysteries of Christ and the supplies she needed in order to survive.

Saint Theodora made such progress in asceticism that she was able to keep vigil all night long with her arms lifted up toward heaven. When the morning sun touched her face, she would eat some herbs and other vegetation to break her fast. She drank the rain water which she collected from a channel cut into the cliff, which is still known as Saint Theodora's spring. After Father Paul's repose, she remained solely in God's care.

When Turks attacked the villages and monasteries around Neamts, the woods became filled with people from nearby villages and refugees from the monasteries. Some nuns discovered Saint Theodora's cell and she told them, "Remain here in my cell, for I have another place of refuge." Then she moved into a nearby cave, living there completely alone. At night she would rest a little on the flagstones, which still can be seen to this day. An army of Turks discovered the cave, and were about to kill the saint. Lifting up her hands, she cried out, "O Lord, deliver me from the hands of these murderers." The wall of the cave opened up, and she was able to escape into the woods.

As Saint Theodora grew old, she was completely forgotten and there was no one to care for her. Placing all her hope in God, she continued her spiritual struggles, and reached great heights of perfection. When she prayed her mind was raised up to Heaven, and her body was lifted up off the ground. Like the great saints of earlier times, her face shone with a radiant light, and a flame came forth from her mouth when she prayed.

Eventually her clothes became mere rags, and when her food ran out, she was fed by birds just as the Prophet Elias (July 20) was. The bread that they brought to her came from the Sihăstria Skete. Seeing the birds come to the Skete and then fly away with pieces of bread in their beaks, the Hegumen sent two monks to follow them, thinking that some ascetic was living there and that God was providing food for him. Night fell as they walked toward Sihla, and they lost their way in the woods. They decided to wait for daylight, and so they began to pray. One of them climbed a tree and looked for a place where someone might be living. Suddenly, they saw a bright light rising up into the sky, and went to investigate. As they approached, they saw a woman shining with light and levitating above the ground while she prayed.

Sensing their presence, Saint Theodora said, "Brethren, do not be afraid, for I am a humble handmaiden of Christ. Throw me something to wear, for I am naked." The monks were amazed when she addressed them by name. Then she prayed: "I thank Thee, O Lord, that Thou hast heard me." She said to the monks, "Brothers, I have lived for many years in these parts, and, behold, it has been forty days since I prayed for God to send me a Confessor to come and impart unto me the Holy

Mysteries of our Lord Jesus Christ, because it is almost time for me to depart from this life. So, please, go straight to the Skete and ask Father Hegumen to send Father Anthony and Hierodeacon Laurence to me tomorrow morning with Holy Communion.”

They asked her how they could find their way to the Skete at night, for they did not know the way. She said that they would be guided to the Skete by a light which would go before them.

The next day at dawn, Father Anthony went to Sihla with the deacon and two other monks. When they found Saint Theodora, she was praying by a fir tree in front of her cave. She made a Confession of her entire life to Father Anthony, and then she received the Holy Mysteries of Christ and gave her soul to God. Her last words were, “Glory to God for all things.’ The monks buried Saint Theodora in her cave with great reverence sometime during the first decade of the eighteenth century.

News of her death spread quickly, and people came from all over to venerate her tomb. Her holy relics remained incorrupt, and many miracles took place before them. Some kissed the relics; others touched the reliquary, while others washed in her spring. All who entreated Saint Theodora’s intercession received healing and consolation.

Saint Theodore’s former husband, Hieromonk Eleutherios, heard that she had been living at Sihla, and decided to go there. He found her cave shortly after her death and burial. Grieving for his beloved wife, Eleutherios did not return to his monastery, but made a small cell for himself below the cliffs of Sihla. He remained close to her cave, fasting, praying, and serving the Divine Liturgy. He lived there for about ten years before his blessed repose. He was buried in the hermits’ cemetery and the Skete of Saint John the Baptist was built over his grave.

Saint Theodora’s relics were taken to the Kiev Caves Monastery between 1828 and 1834. There she is known as Saint Theodora of the Carpathians. Our Venerable Mother Theodora was glorified by the Romanian Orthodox Church on June 20, 1992. *(from oca.org)*

### **Social Team for August 14**

Team 6 is up next week - Cooper, M. Blaydoe, Roberta Corson, Mary V. 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, Sarah Comfort, 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.)