

SOBORNOST

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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 14, 2022 – 9th Sunday After Pentecost | Holy Prophet Micah | Forefeast of the Dormition

The Troparion of the Forefeast invites us to gather on this day in gladness, for the Theotokos is about to depart from earth to heaven:

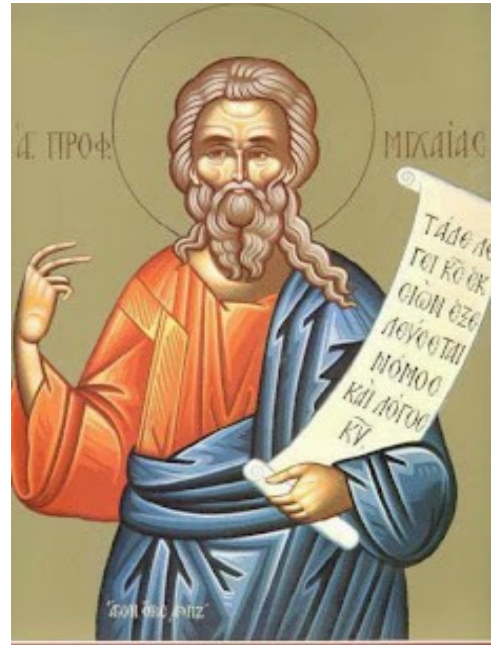
Dance with joy, O peoples! / Clap your hands with gladness! / Gather today with fervor and jubilation; / sing with exultation. / The Mother of God is about to rise in glory, / ascending from earth to heaven. / We ceaselessly praise her in song as truly Theotokos.

(from oca.org)

Holy Prophet Micah as a Model for our Lives

By Protopresbyter Fr. George Papavarnavas

The Prophet Micah was born in Moresheth, which is why he is called "the Moreshite". He belonged to the tribe of Judah and is among the twelve lesser prophets. Micah lived in Jerusalem from 748-696 B.C. during the reigns of kings Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, when the Kingdom of Judah suffered from continuous invasions from the Assyrians. He was almost a contemporary of the Prophet Isaiah. His book, written in the Hebrew language, is distinguished for its eloquence and clarity of phrases and consists of seven chapters. The first three



chapters announce the destruction of Samaria. In the next two he prophesied the incarnation of the Word of God, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity.

"But you, Bethlehem Ephratah, though you are little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of you shall come forth to Me He who is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting" (Micah 5:2).

"He will stand and shepherd His flock in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord His God. And they will live securely, for then His greatness will reach to the ends of the earth" (Micah 5:4).

In the final two chapters the Prophet rebukes the people of Israel, urges them to repent, and in a form of questions he reminds them how to walk in their lives. He says:

"And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God" (Micah 6:8).

This reminder is certainly timeless and timely.

The Prophet Micah did not hesitate to rebuke the excesses of King Ahab, which is why he was persecuted many times. Eventually he was arrested and hanged by his son, King Joram. His body was collected by his relatives and buried in Moresheth.

His life and disposition gives us the opportunity to highlight the following:

First, most prophets in the Old Testament had a martyric death. This is testified in their synaxaria, but also by Christ Himself, Who told the Scribes and Pharisees - after the harsh "woes" addressed to them - the following:

"Therefore I am sending you prophets and wise men and teachers. Some of them you will kill and crucify; others you will flog in your synagogues and pursue from town to town. And so upon you will come all the righteous blood that has been shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah son of Berekiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar. I tell you the truth, all this will come upon this generation. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing" (Matt. 23:34-37).

This indicates that the lot of God's people in this world are tribulations and martyrdom. But the tribulations of the just are not without comfort, for they are overshadowed by the uncreated Grace of God, which consoles them, strengthens them and redeems them, as the Prophet David stresses:

"A just man may have many troubles, but the Lord delivers him from them all... the Lord redeems his servants" (Ps. 34:19, 21).

It also shows that all those who do not love the Light, because by it all wicked works done "in secret" are manifested, cannot tolerate the pure and illumined message of love proclaimed by the prophets of all ages. This is why they fight against all those who "rightly teach the word of truth", and in various ways they try to silence and eliminate it. Yet there is the "chosen word", the "new Israel", the "holy people of God", who are, as Saint Symeon the New Theologian says, "those who have been baptized and those confirmed in the faith". In other words, all those who have been baptized and struggle in the Church to live justly, compassionately and apply willingly the commandments of Christ. They consist of the "little leaven" which leavens the "whole lump", as well as the spiritual salt that keeps society from rotting and decaying.

Second, in the Old Testament the Prophet Micah urges the people to be just, to love and to live according to the will of God. And in the New Testament Christ blesses those who hunger and thirst for justice, and He even taught that perfect love embraces ones enemies. Indeed, He identified this with the keeping of His commandments, saying: "He who has my commandments and keeps them, loves Me". Justice, compassion and the keeping of the commandments of God are tied together, because he who loves God and keeps His commandments, loves others, as well as all of creation, and struggles to be just. Besides, the justice of God is identical with His love, and when we say that God is just, we mean that God is love. If God was just in the legal sense of the term, then all of us would be punished daily, since we continuously sin and none would remain alive on earth.

Where there is true love, which is identical with sacrifice, justification is exceeded. Conversely, when love is reduced or lost then each of us tries to find our justification. For example, a mother that loves her child does not seek her own justification, but she sacrifices herself for the child, even though she has become embittered by the child in one way or another, because true love covers all things and endures forever. Also between spouses, when love ceases to exist, then they resort to justice and each tries to find their own justification.

The preaching of justice, love and obedience to the Triune God, the Church and the ecclesiastical institution, in a society dominated by machinations, scheming, dishonesty and self-interest certainly provokes reactions. But it takes root, blooms and bears fruit where there is a good disposition, humility and sincerity.

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

Today's Epistle Lesson – St. Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians 3:9-17 EOB

Brethren, we are God's co-workers! You are God's field, God's building. According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder, I laid a foundation, and another builds on it. But let everyone be careful how he builds on it! As it is, no one can lay any other foundation than the one that has already been laid, which is Jesus Christ. But as one builds on that foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, or stubble; each person's work will be revealed. Certainly, the Day will make it manifest, because it is revealed in fire; and the fire will test everyone's work. If what someone has built on the foundation remains, then a reward shall be received. On the other hand, if someone's work is burned, it will be lost, but that person shall be saved, as through fire. Do you not know that your bodies are a sanctuary of God, and that God's Spirit lives in you? If anyone destroys God's sanctuary, God will destroy him because God's sanctuary is holy, and this is what you are!

Today's Gospel Lesson – Saint Matthew 14:22-34 EOB

At that time, 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. After he had sent the people away, he went up into the mountain by himself in order to pray. When evening came, he was there alone. But the boat was now in the middle of the sea, distressed by the waves, because the wind was against it. In the fourth watch of the night, Jesus came to them, walking on the sea. When the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were troubled and said, "It is a ghost!" and they cried out in fear. But at once, Jesus spoke to them, saying "Take heart! It is I. Do not be afraid." Peter answered him and said, "Lord, if it is you, tell me to come to you upon the waters." And Jesus said, "Come!" Peter stepped down from the boat and walked on the waters to come to Jesus. But when he saw that the wind was strong, he became afraid and beginning to sink, he cried out, saying, "Lord, save me!" Immediately, Jesus stretched out his hand, took hold of Peter, and said, "You of little faith, why did you doubt?" When they got up into the boat, the wind ceased. Those who were in the boat came forward and expressed adoration to him, saying, "You are truly the Son of God!" When they had crossed over the lake, they arrived in the land of Gennesaret.

A Word From the Holy Fathers

To do justice to the holy celebrations proclaimed for today, my friends, our words call for the sound of the trumpet, for the voice of the horn sounding out more loudly and echoing to the ends of the earth; yet I fear they must be borne by the weak instrument of our own voices. Still, the queen and mistress of the world cares

little for honor, and may well accept our short, poor discourse, offered here in her service, as graciously as the long and splendid works of great orators. For she is moved by the prayers of those who have asked me to speak, since she values true goodness, after all, and looks only at our intentions.

But come, gather around me, everyone under heaven – all you hierarchs and priests, monks and people of the world, kings and rulers, men and women, young men and maidens, of all nations and tongues, of every race and every people – change your clothes for the robes of virtue, wrap yourselves in them as in “bright garments fringed with gold” [Psalm 44.13 LXX], and come with hearts rejoicing to celebrate the festival of the burial and the passing [into glory] of Mary, the Mother of the Lord. For she has gone away from here and draws near the eternal mountains, she who is the true Mount Sion, where God was pleased to dwell, as the Psalmist's lyre sings [Psalm 131.14 LXX]. Today she who was heaven on earth is wrapped in a cloak of incorruptibility; she has moved to a better, more blessed dwelling-place. Today the spiritual moon, shining with the light of God, has come into heavenly conjunction with the “Sun of righteousness,” eclipsing her temporary home in this present life; rising anew in His home, she is radiant with the dignity of immortality. Today that ark of holiness, wrought with gold and divinely furnished, has been lifted up from her tabernacle on earth and is borne towards the Jerusalem above, to unending rest; and David, the ancestor of God, poet as he is, strikes up a song for us and cries, “Virgins” – meaning souls – “will be led to the King” – to you, O God – “behind her” [Psalm 44.14 LXX].

Now the Mother of God shuts her material eyes, and opens her spiritual eyes towards us like great shining stars that will never set, to watch over us and to intercede before the face of God for the world's protection. Now those lips, moved by God's grace to articulate sounds, grow silent, but she opens her [spiritual] mouth to intercede eternally for all of her race. Now she lowers those bodily hands that once bore God, only to raise them, in incorruptible form, in prayer to the Lord on behalf of all creation. At this moment her natural form, radiant as the sun, is hidden; yet her light shines through her painted image, and she offers it to the people for the life-giving kiss of relative veneration, even if the heretics are unwilling. The holy dove has flown to her home above, yet she does not cease to protect those below; departing from her body, she is with us in spirit; gathered up to heaven, she banishes demons by her intercession with the Lord.

Long ago, death took charge of the world through our ancestor Eve; but now it has engaged in combat with her blessed daughter and been beaten away, conquered by the very source from whom it had received its power. Let the race of women rejoice, then, for it has received glory in place of shame! Let Eve be glad, for she is under a curse no more, having produced in Mary a child of blessing. Let the whole

of creation jump for joy, drinking the mystical flood of incorruption from that virgin spring and putting an end to its mortal thirst. These are the things we celebrate today, this is the subject of our solemn song: Mary provides it for us – the root of Jesse who bore the flower Christ; the rod of Aaron with its sacred bud; the spiritual Paradise containing the tree of life; the meadow alive with the fragrance of virginity; the blooming vine, cultivated by God, which became the ripe grape flowing with life, the high, exalted cherubim-throne of the universal king; the home full of the glory of the Lord; the sacred veil of Christ; the bright land of sunrise. She has fallen asleep in peace and righteousness – fallen asleep, I say, but she is not dead! She has passed on from us, yet she does not cease to protect her people.

– St. Theodore the Studite, *Encomium on the Dormition of the Theotokos*

Also Commemorated Today: New Martyr Nazarius, Metropolitan of Kutaisi-Gaenati, and his companions, of Georgia

Metropolitan Nazarius of Kutaisi-Gaenati was born in 1872 in the village of Didi Jikhaishi in Imereti. His forefathers belonged to a long lineage of clergy, and the future metropolitan was nurtured in the Church from the earliest years of his youth.

Nazarius (known in the world as Joseph) received his education at Kutaisi Theological School. In 1892 he graduated with honors from Tbilisi Seminary and began to serve in the Church, first as a deacon and later (from February 9, 1893) as a priest. In 1904, after a series of personal tragedies (first his wife died, then his two daughters), Nazarius was tonsured a monk. On November 4, 1918, he was enthroned as Metropolitan of Kutaisi.

The years 1922 to 1923 marked a difficult period in the history of the Georgian Church. The Bolsheviks razed twelve hundred churches, destroyed much of the Church's wealth, burnt many rare manuscripts, and persecuted spiritual leaders—particularly Georgian nationalists.

On February 10, 1921, following the Red Army's invasion of Georgia, the treasures of the Sioni and Svetitskhoveli Cathedrals were carried away to Kutaisi for safekeeping. Patriarch Leonid gave his blessing for four boxes of holy objects to be buried under the porch at Metropolitan Nazarius's residence, which was located on the grounds of the Bagrati Cathedral.

After the Bolsheviks secured their occupation of Georgia, they discovered where the treasures had been buried and arrested Metropolitan Nazarius. They accused him of agitating against the government and concealing the possessions of the Church. During the court proceedings the metropolitan was asked for whom he had hidden the treasure, and he answered, "For the Church and the Georgian people!"

The court sentenced Nazarius to the most severe punishment—execution by a firing squad—but the sentence was subsequently rescinded. In the end, the Bolsheviks imprisoned the hierarch and confiscated his personal belongings.

In April of 1924 Metropolitan Nazarius received amnesty and was released after two years in prison. He returned to his diocese, which was undergoing many trials. He was not permitted to return to his own residence, but was obliged to live with his brother, while his former home was transformed into a storage facility.

On August 14, 1924, a delegation from the village of Simoneti came to the metropolitan to request that he consecrate their local church. At the appointed time, the metropolitan arrived in Simoneti with his retinue and consecrated the church. That night, a group of Chekists (Soviet security agents) broke into the house where Metropolitan Nazarius and his entourage were staying, bound and beat them, and then dragged them to the village council. Without an investigation, the Troika (a Soviet extraordinary council of three judges) sentenced to death Metropolitan Nazarius and four other clergymen—Priest Herman Jajanidze, Priest Hierotheos Nikoladze, Priest Simon Mchedlidze, and Archdeacon Besarion Kukhianidze. A layman, Axalmotsameni, was also sentenced to death. They were shot to death in the Sapichkhia Forest.

In 1994, with the blessing of Catholicos-Patriarch Ilia II, the full Ecclesiastical Council of the Georgian Church resolved with one accord to canonize Metropolitan Nazarius and the clergymen who were martyred with him. At the same time, the council canonized all the Orthodox Christians who, for their Faith and the independence of their homeland, became victims of the totalitarian regime. They were proclaimed the “New Martyrs of the Georgian Church.” (*from oca.org*)

Social Team for August 21

Team 7 is up next week - Howl, Hood, Dee Jubb, Charlotte F. Thank you!

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Diocesan Website: <http://www.acrod.org>

Camp Nazareth: <http://www.campnazareth.org>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/acroddiocese>

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You Tube: <https://youtube.com/acroddiocese>

In Your Prayers – Please Remember... His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch BARTHOLOMEW, His Eminence Metropolitan GREGORY, Fr. Joseph & Family, His Grace Bishop Neofitos of Nyeri & Mt. Kenya, 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.)