

# 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**

**Sunday School 9:30**

**Divine Liturgy 10:00 AM**

**September 18, 2022 – Afterfeast of & Sunday After the  
Elevation of the Cross | St. Eumenius, Bishop of Gortyna**

Saint Eumenius from the time of his youth was noted for his virtuous life. He strove to serve the One God and therefore he shunned worldly temptations. Concerned for the salvation of his soul, he distributed all his substance to the poor.

By the blessing of God Saint Eumenius was chosen as Bishop of Gortyna on the island of Crete. The saint, like a compassionate father, comforted his flock in their sorrows, and cared for the orphaned and indigent. His prayers were so strong before God that once, during a drought, he called forth abundant rain upon the earth.

Saint Eumenius wisely and zealously defended the Orthodox Faith against the Monophysite heresy. For his opposition to the heresy the saint was banished to the Thebaid, where he died in the seventh century. His body was then transferred and buried in Gortyna. *(from oca.org)*

**Today's Epistle Lesson – St. Paul's Letter to the Galatians 2:16-20 EOB**

Brethren, knowing that no one is justified by the works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, we believed in Christ Jesus, so that we might be justified by faith in Christ, and not by the works of the law, because no one will be justified by the



works of the law. But if, even though we desired to be justified in Christ, we were found to be sinners, does that mean that Christ is a servant of sin? Certainly not! Indeed, if I build up again those things which I [once] destroyed, I show that I am breaking the law. For I, through the law, died to the law, so that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ, and it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. I now live this life in the flesh, but I live [it] by faith in the Son of God who loved me and who gave himself up for me.

### **Today's Gospel Lesson – Mark 8:34-38: 9:1 EOB**

At that time, Jesus called the multitude to himself with his disciples and said to them, “Whoever wants to come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me. Indeed, whoever wants to save his life will lose it; and whoever will lose his life for my sake and for the sake of the Good News will save it. What does it profit if someone, to gain the whole world, loses a his life? For what will someone give in exchange for his life? Whoever will be ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man also will be ashamed of when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.” Jesus said to them, “Amen, I tell you that there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the Kingdom of God c come with power.”

## **A Word From the Holy Fathers**

The Cross of Christ is the great banner of our salvation, and the everlasting memory of it is most important for us. But the worries of life overwhelm us, and we easily forget about this most important thing. The Lord Jesus Christ perfectly knew the human heart, knew that it needed frequent reminders of the most important things, and He wisely took care that the instrument of our salvation, the Cross on which He gave His life for the sins of the world, was not forgotten amidst worldly fuss. His enemies, the Jewish high priests and scribes, who wanted to blot out the memory of Him, took down three crosses on Golgotha and buried them deep in the ground, covering them with a lot of earth. They did not know that it was inspired by the Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

And the Roman emperor Hadrian, not knowing anything about the buried crosses, ordered to build a temple on this place to the pagan goddess Aphrodite and by this quite reliably hid the Cross of Christ for three centuries.

When the terrible persecution of the Roman emperors against Christians ended, and the great Equal-to-the-Apostles Emperor Constantine put an end to paganism in the entire Roman Empire, then our Lord Jesus Christ put into the heart of Equal-to-the-Apostles Helen, his mother, the thought of finding His Cross and revealing it to the world.

By her order, the temple of Aphrodite was destroyed, the earth dug deep under it, and three identical crosses were found. Patriarch Makarios of Jerusalem ordered to stop the funeral procession passing by and lay three crosses on the deceased. By the resurrection of the dead, Christ God indicated His Cross. In front of a huge crowd of people, the Patriarch, who stood on an elevated place, elevated the Cross of Christ and lowered it when his hands weakened, and the people who gathered in multitudes ceaselessly sang with joy and trembling: "Lord have mercy! Lord have mercy! Lord have mercy!"

Thus, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself for the first time reminded the world of His Honorable Cross. And since then, for sixteen and a half centuries, the Holy Church on this great feast reminds us of the Cross of the Lord by exalting it on all sides at the all-night vigil.

And twice a year, on the Sunday of the Veneration of the Honorable Cross and on the first of August, as well as on the feast of the origin of the honorable tree of the Cross of the Lord, the Holy Church recalls the Cross by bringing it from the altar to the people and venerating it three times with universal singing: "We venerate Your Cross, Master, and your holy Resurrection we glorify."

Oh, how important is this threefold reminder of the cross of Christ! How easy it would be to forget about it without these reminders! For it is only about our bodily needs and earthly blessings that we never forget, but about the most important thing - about the indelible mark of the Cross of Christ on our hearts - we remember incomparably less, and the less we remember, the more we are busy with earthly affairs.

Therefore, weak and average Christians who do not set themselves the goal of their lives to become friends of Christ through the constant fulfillment of His commandments need more frequent reminders of the Cross of Christ. There are many such people in the small flock of Christ.

But there are others in this flock who, together with the apostle Paul, can say: "The world has been crucified to me by the Cross, and I to the world" (Gal. 6:14). The Cross made such an amazing and indelible impression on them that they forever forgot about the world, about its lusts and charms. Blessed are these great men who have become friends of Christ. They do not need to be reminded of the Cross of Christ, for they never forget it.

But there are countless people who also do not need to be reminded of the Cross of Christ, because they do not believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and are completely indifferent to the great Christian relic - the Cross of the Lord - or even hate and trample on it, since Christ prevents them from going their own way.

And you, servants of God, do not be ashamed by the increase in unbelief, for the Lord and our God Jesus Christ spoke about it in His terrible prophetic word: “When the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?” Take comfort in His other great prophecy that even the gates of hell will not prevail against His Church.

With a good and pure life, constant prayer and, above all, the fulfillment of the commandments of Christ, become closer and closer to Him. And then the radiant Cross of Christ will be indelibly inscribed on your hearts. May this be with you all by the grace and mercy of our great God and Savior, our Lord Jesus Christ, to Him be glory and power with His Beginningless Father and the Most Holy Spirit forever and ever. Amen.

– St. Luke of Simferopol, *Homily Three on the Elevation of the Cross*

### **Spiritual Counsels of St. Romylos**

My brothers and fathers, let us keep a pure conscience toward our neighbor, and let us preserve a heart pure from evil thoughts which tend to corrupt the miserable soul. But we cannot obtain this unless we have the soul's three parts according to nature. I speak of these three parts: Reasonable, Spirited and Appetitive. For the all-good God has put these things into the soul of man, just as if they were a fortress or citadel, so that man, using them according to nature and as it pleases God, may live his life peacefully and without passion, as our holy fathers instructed us through their wise and holy teaching and even more so through their deeds.

The Theologian said to set your spirit only against the Serpent through which you fell. Direct all your desires toward God, not toward anything treacherous or perilous. Let reason preside over all, and do not let the better be drawn down by the worse. Rather, whenever we arm the Spirit against its perceptible enemies, that is, against demons or passions, as the holy man said, but also against all those things which go contrary to the salvation of the soul, then we act according to nature. In this way we are able to love God and our neighbor with our entire soul as the Holy Gospel teaches (Mk 12:30-31).

When Reason moves contrary to nature, we grow angry with our brothers, giving precedence to an earthly desire within us, hedonism perhaps, or glory or greed. Hence, there arises anger, vindictiveness, envy of one's neighbor and, in the end the product of envy, murder.

And when we preserve the Appetite according to nature and as it was given to us by God, we eagerly desire the eternally good things which no eye has ever seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of impassioned and bodily man conceived, and which God has prepared for those who love Him (1 Cor 2:9). And for these things we

endure all bodily and spiritual suffering, undertaking with delight such virtuous acts as fasting, vigilance, poverty, purity of the body, and incessant prayer. To put it simply, day and night we practice everything which contributes to the salvation of the soul. When the Appetite moves contrary to nature and in a beastly fashion, we behave most irrationally, as the Scriptures say: “But man does not abide in honor: He is like the beasts that perish” (Ps 48:12). And from this we desire earthly and ephemeral things, luxury and glory, gold and silver, and the impurity which comes from them, and because of these we grow angry with men, as it has been said, and going astray we are always vindictive.

Since Reason, which is the rational part of the soul, was set over everything to preside over them as if it was the ruler, when it guards the gift: given to it by God according to His image and likeness, man lives his life always thinking good things. He chants and prays, he studies and reads, and his delight lies in the law of the Lord (Ps 1:2), day and night, thinking good things about every pious man. But if Reason should turn aside from the better things, need one speak of what irrationality fills man? Talkativeness, slander, abuse and all kinds of sinful acts will dominate the insensibility of his reason, even if one, in his insensibility, believes that he is living sinlessly.

He who has the said three parts of the soul according to nature possesses a safe and sound conscience which indicates good and evil to him, like a natural law given to man from the beginning. And it advises man to preserve good and to throw off evil. Because of this we will be (rewarded for our good deeds and) justly punished for the evil ones as rational and free men. Therefore, every demonic assault customarily attacks these three things. We are not blamed because of the attack; rather, we receive a reward from God for being virtuous if we, from the beginning, cast away the seeds sown by the devil. But if we, from the first assault, accept these hostile seeds, we will come to an alliance with the devil, and from there to a pact. From this we are led to evil acts, and therefore we shall be justly condemned, as has been foretold.

## **The Holy Martyrs Sophia and Irene of Egypt**

*The heads of Irene and Sophia were cut off, they beheld You who are peace beyond comprehension O Word.*

The Holy Martyrs Sophia and Irene were from Egypt and were beheaded for confessing Christ during the reign of Emperor Aurelian (270-275), when Claudius was governor in Egypt. They are commemorated the day after the Holy Martyr



Sophia and her daughters Faith, Hope and Love. There is an Athonite fresco with a scene of their martyrdom from 1547 at Dionysiou Monastery.

One tradition says that after being beheaded, a Christian picked up their relics and deposited them in her house, where many miracles were performed. Emperor Constantine was informed of it, and had the relics of Saint Irene transferred to Constantinople and built a large church in her honor. The Bollandists, in their commentary on the *Roman Martyrology*, pointed out that, in Constantinople, in the Church of Hagia Sophia, there existed, as one of its dependencies, the Church of Saint Irene. (*from johnsanidopoulos.com*)

### **St. Romylos of Ravanica**

Saint Romylos was born in 1300 in the Danubian town of Vidin to pious parents, a Greek [Roman] father and a Bulgarian mother. In holy Baptism he was named Rajko ['Man of Paradise']. From his early years he displayed a desire for learning and his teachers, amazed at his wisdom and prudence, called him 'child elder'. When he became a man, in order to avoid the marriage his parents had planned for him, he departed in secret to a monastery in the region of Trnovo. There, after the canonical testing, he was clothed in the small schema with the name Romanos, and served with great reverence in the church as ecclesiarch.

At the same time Saint Gregory of Sinai (Apr. 6) withdrew with his disciples from the Holy Mountain and came to reside at Paroria (Strandzha), at the Byzantine-Bulgarian border. When Romanos heard about this teacher of noetic prayer and the hesychastic life, he asked for a blessing from his abbot to place himself under his guidance. He took with him another brother, Hilarion.

Saint Gregory received them with great joy and, since Romanos was powerful, with a strong constitution, he assigned to him the hardest and most burdensome duties, which he fulfilled with absolute obedience. He hauled wood and rocks from the mountain, water from the river which flowed in the foothills, and prepared clay for the dwellings. At the same time he served in the kitchen and the cellar of the monastery and had the care of the infirm brothers. The nursing of one aged monk was entrusted to him, sick and cranky, who because of his illnesses had to eat only fresh fish. Romanos served that difficult elder with wondrous meekness and long-suffering, and fished in the river for him. In wintertime, when the water was frozen, he would brake the ice and with bare feet in the frigid water he would fish with a net. In this way Romanos became a martyr in will, since he sacrificed his life at each moment for the love of neighbor.

With the death of the sick elder and of Saint Gregory, Romanos, whom everyone called 'Kaloromanos' ['Good Romanos'], submitted together with Hilarion to another elder. Bandits, however, who pillaged in those parts and tyrannized the

monks, obliged them to withdraw to Stara Zagora in Bulgaria, where their elder soon reposed.

From that time Romanos submitted to Hilarion, because he was greater in years. When the Bulgarian Tsar John Alexander (1331-1371) prosecuted the bandits, they returned to the desert quietude of Paroria, in order to converse with God through noetic prayer. By the virtues, which had become to them second nature, and unceasing prayer Romanos was vouchsafed by God to receive many gifts, particularly the gift of ever-flowing tears.

Later with the blessing of Hilarion he withdrew into perfect solitude, in order to indulge without distraction in divine visions. Since he lived for many years in this way, he was clothed in the great schema with the name Romylos. The Turks however in their raids destroyed the monastery, and Saint Romylos with his disciple Gregory fled to the Holy Mountain, where they settled at Melana, near the Great Lavra. The Athonite monks soon recognized his virtues and visited him for the profit of their souls. They cut off however his beloved hesychia, and he was obliged to withdraw to a more secluded cell, in the foothills of Athos.

At that time, after the defeat of the Serbo-Bulgarian general John Uglesha by the Ottomans and his death at the Battle of the Hebrus (also know as the Battle of Maritsa [or Chernomen], 1371), there followed the invasion of irregular Ottoman troops into Thrace and Macedonia. Then many monks, fearful of the general insecurity of the times, left the Holy Mountain. Thus spurred on, Saint Romylos too departed to Avlona [Valona or Vlorë], Alabania. During the time that he lived there he reformed the perverted morals of the inhabitants and taught them the true Faith, because they had departed far from Christianity. Longing however for hesychia, he departed for the Monastery of the Theotokos, at Ravanica in Serbia. This place was his final earthly residence, because after a little time he went to the Lord. His tomb, in which his disciples placed his much-exercised body, gives off an unspeakable fragrance, for it continually produces many miracles and healings for those who approach in faith. *(from johnsanodopoulos.com)*

### **Social Team for September 24**

Team 4 is up next week - Samouris, Kopan, Connell. 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, Fr. Nectarios & Ia, Mother Virginia Marie & the Carmelite Nuns of Port Tobacco, the suffering people of Ukraine, the newly reposed servants of God Metropolitan Kallistos Ware, Sarah Comfort and BJ Weber, and those in need of our prayers. (Please advise Fr. Joseph of changes.)