

SOBORNOST

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American Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Diocese

*ECUMENICAL PATRIARCHATE
OF CONSTANTINOPLE*

SERVICES

Wednesday: Lay Vespers 6:30 PM

Saturday: Confession 4:30 PM

Great Vespers 5:00 PM

Sunday: Matins (Orthros) 8:45 AM

Sunday School 9:30 AM

Divine Liturgy 10:00 AM

January 22, 2023 – 32nd Sunday After Pentecost

Apostle Timothy of the Seventy

By Protopresbyter Fr. George Papavarnavas

The Apostle Timothy was a disciple of the Apostle Paul. He was born in Lystra of Lycaonia of a Greek father and Judean mother. Very early on his father departed this temporary life and Saint Timothy grew up with his mother Eunice and his grandmother Loida, who raised him with the pure milk of faith and taught him from his childhood to pray and study the word of God. When the Apostle Paul passed through Lystra he acknowledged the spiritual gifts of the young Timothy and saw him as a worthy missionary worker. He took him on his second apostolic journey and later placed him in Ephesus, to shepherd the flock of that Local Church as its Bishop. The Apostle Paul sent him two epistles, which can be found in the New Testament. They are wonderful texts of advice which should be studied by all believers, but especially by spiritual shepherds.

After the martyric end of the Apostle Paul in Rome, the Apostle Timothy continued his pastoral work in Ephesus until his own martyric end. According to tradition, he was martyred by angry pagans because he criticized their orgies during a series of celebrations of Artemis in Ephesus.



In his two epistles to Saint Timothy, the Apostle Paul gives him advice for his personal advancement, but also for the advancement of his flock. He writes among other things: "...*nourished on the words of the faith and of the good teaching that you have followed*" (1 Tim. 4:6). He teaches him to be nourished on the words of the faith and the good teaching which he has followed, that he may hence be in a position to nourish as a good shepherd his reasonable flock.

The word of God is truly spiritual food that sustains and strengthens while relaxing and comforting man, but it is also living spiritual water that cools and quenches the thirst of the soul. Of course, this is when it is transmitted clearly and without distortion, because today, like it was in the time of the Apostle Timothy, and as it is in every era, heretics exist who distort the faith and with spiritual food they offer spiritual poison.

In today's age of overconsumption human societies are plagued mainly by spiritual hunger. Although many spiritual books are currently circulating and many sermons heard, in almost every part of the earth, spiritual hunger still exists: "There will be a famine of hearing the word of the Lord" (Amos 8:11). On the one hand because the majority of people unfortunately do not study, a fact of which many factors are responsible, such as television, the loosening of morals, indifference to spiritual life because of the abundance of material goods, etc. On the other hand, because most of the time, even where there abound books and sermons, that which is offered as the word of God and spiritual food is nothing but a theology of the passions. Namely, passionate human words that do not have the power to comfort, support and cause regeneration in people.

We live in an age where secularism has taken dangerous proportions and devours the marrow of Orthodox theology and life. Many sermons are, alas, colorless, odorless, tasteless and anything but the word of God. Also, words about God are one thing, but the word of God is another, the latter being the fruit of experience and the vision of God. And if the preacher of divine words does not have much personal experience and expertise, then he has the ability to "exploit" the experience and expertise of the God-seeing Saints, and he must do this and not offer his own thoughts and reflections, because there is the possibility of making serious mistakes. And certainly no one has the right to play with their own salvation, as well as the salvation of others. "So it is necessary to emphasize how it is possible for anyone to carry out the purpose of their life and obtain their salvation, in what way and by what method they should follow" (Metropolitan Hierotheos of Nafpaktos).

"For God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but of power and of love and of a sound mind" (2 Tim. 1:7). He urges the Apostle Timothy to rekindle the flame of

the gift of God, given to him by the laying on of hands of the Apostle Paul, because God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but power and love and soundness of mind.

There is a widespread impression among many people that all those who struggle to experience God's will in their lives are timid, antisocial, cut off from society, losers of life who are without the strength to cope with everyday life and its problems. But what takes place is quite the contrary, because one needs to have at their disposal great bravery, inner strength and spiritual manliness to renounce one's own will, to live in obedience to the will of God, and to live with virginity, purity and soundness of mind in the difficult and adverse conditions of the world, whether it be in marriage or as an ascetic in the desert with voluntary deprivation, with asceticism and prayer, far from beloved faces, "alone except for God". "To pray for the entire world is like spilling blood" (Saint Silouan the Athonite).

Those who have learned to feed on the pure milk of the faith from the living breast of the Church rather than spoiled substitutes, will acquire spiritual antibodies, spiritual health, courage, valor and true manliness. *(from johnsanidopoulos.com)*

Today's Epistle Lesson – St. Paul's First Letter to Timothy 1:15-17 EOB

My son Timothy, this saying is faithful and worthy of all acceptance: that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners of whom I am the first. This is how I obtained mercy, so that in me as 'the first,' Jesus Christ might show all his patience as an example for those who would believe in him for eternal life. Now, to the eternal King, immortal, invisible, to God who alone is wise, be honor and glory unto ages of ages. Amen.

Today's Gospel Lesson – Saint Luke 18:35-43 EOB

At that time, as Jesus was approaching Jericho, a certain blind man sat by the road, begging. Hearing a crowd going by, he asked what this meant. People told him that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by. He began to cry out, "Jesus, you son of David, have mercy on me!" Then, those who led the way rebuked him, ordering him to be quiet. But the blind man cried out all the more, "You son of David, have mercy on me!" Standing still, Jesus commanded that the blind man be brought to him. When the man had come near, Jesus asked him, "What do you want me to do?" The man replied, "Lord, that I may see again!" Jesus said to him, "Receive your sight. Your faith has healed you." Immediately, the man received his sight and began to follow Jesus, glorifying God. When all the people saw this, they praised God.

A Word From the Holy Fathers

In today's Gospel reading, you heard the story of the miraculous healing of a blind man in Jericho by our Lord Jesus Christ. Did you pay attention to how persistently, how intensely he asked the Lord for healing? He asked, he cried out, he begged, and the apostles of Christ forbade him to shout so as not to disturb the Lord. And the Lord called him and restored his sight.

Do you remember how persistently the pagan Syro-Phoenician woman begged the Lord Jesus Christ for the healing of her possessed daughter? Do you remember with what perseverance the bleeding woman sought healing from Him, hoping that with one touch of His clothes she would receive healing? Aren't these all examples for us? Is it not a teaching that when we are in need of the grace of God, we must insistently, earnestly cry out to Him, ask, beg, until we receive it; in the perseverance of their prayer, be like the blind man of Jericho, the Syro-Phoenician woman, and the bleeding woman.

This is the first thing I wanted to tell you. And now let's deepen our thoughts and ask ourselves why our Lord Jesus Christ did so many healings of the sick? Everyone who carefully reads the Gospel knows that all the miracles of Christ were aimed at alleviating human suffering. He healed the blind, the lame, cleansed the lepers, healed all the sick who came to Him in multitudes. He fed a huge number of hungry people with five loaves and two fish.

And if any of you have ever read the Muslim Quran, you must have been struck by the deep difference between the miracles of Christ and those that Muslims attribute to their prophet Muhammad. Oh, how little resemblance; oh, how much distance in the miracles of Muhammad. How strange they are, how unnecessary, how useless they are for people!

Our Lord Jesus Christ in His miracles showed His love for people, His pity for the suffering, the unfortunate, always tried to alleviate their suffering. This is important, remember this. But perhaps someone will ask: "But is the circle of human calamities limited only by disease and hunger? Are there not enough evils and misfortunes, and sufferings, and torments that depend on the imperfection of the social and state system, on the injustice of this system?" Oh yes, we know what countless disasters people have experienced at all times, in all countries, under all governments, for this very reason. And you ask why our Lord Jesus Christ did not pay attention to these disasters, why in His earthly activity there was nothing similar to the deeds of the great reformers, great legislators who sought to eradicate social untruth, to put an end to the suffering of people dependent on this untruth. I will answer this question for you.

You know that immediately after being baptized in the Jordan, the Lord Jesus Christ was led by the Spirit into the wilderness and spent forty days there without food or drink, preparing for His greatest ministry. And there, when on the fortieth day He was hungry, Satan took advantage of this. He knew that a long-starving person loses his will power, loses the ability to resist, and therefore he waited until the fortieth day, and when the Lord Jesus Christ became hungry, then he approached Him with his devilish temptation.

I will not talk about all three temptations, I will dwell on only one - the last and most powerful one. "Again, the devil took him up into an exceeding high mountain, and showed him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; and he said unto him, 'All these things will I give you, if you will fall down and worship me'" (Matt. 4:8-9). Do you understand the essence of this temptation, its power and danger? Satan offered Him power, indivisible, absolute, complete power over all the kingdoms of the earth, if only He would bow to him.

Of course, the Lord rejected this temptation as well. Why was it rejected? Because Satan offered the power that every government has. And no state power can in any case do without coercion, without violence. It forces obedience with its laws, punishes for non-fulfillment, severely punishes - forces, coerces, and not even the best, most perfect power can act without coercion. Coercion is a necessary attribute of state power. But the Lord, did He want to act by coercion? Oh no, oh no! He did not want to, He rejected any power associated with coercion.

One day one of the people came up to Him and said to Him: "Master! tell my brother to share the inheritance with me." And He said to the man, "Who appointed me to judge or divide you?" (Luke 12:13-14). He needed another power: He was looking for another power, He wanted to rule over free human hearts. People are created with free will, they can choose their own path in life as they like: either the path of truth and suffering for the truth, the path of mercy, the path of love, or the path of rejecting all truth and serving their lusts and passions, they can choose the path of sin. God does not force anyone to choose this or that path, for He gave us free will. And precisely because we were created with free will, Christ does not want to influence us by coercion, to influence us in the way that state power does.

He, as God, could by heavy punishments force all people to obey Him; could force everyone to leave the path of evil and unrighteousness, could destroy even the devil himself, but He does not want to force us. He seeks free, loving submission to Himself. He seeks in the hearts of men faith in Him and love for Him. If he finds faith and love, then by His Divine grace He saves such a person. Our Lord and God Jesus Christ once said the most important words that none of you will forget: "... out of the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications,

thefts, false witness, blasphemies ...” (Matt. 15:19). He says that the source of all our actions, good and evil, is our heart, and knowing this, He wanted to purify the hearts of people.

Through His great apostle Paul, He says, “Do you not know that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?” (1 Cor. 3:16). Your hearts, according to the will, according to the desire of the Savior, must be temples of the Holy Spirit, your hearts must be pure, full of love for God, full of hatred for all evil. And such fully cleansed hearts can correct all social calamities. And with the best political and social system, with the best and just laws, there are a large number of people with impure, evil hearts. They are only afraid of coercion, they are afraid of punishment, but they don't want to obey good, just laws, they try to get around them, and the demons teach them how to get around even just laws. And until human hearts are corrected, this will inevitably be repeated.

Those who are perplexed why Christ did not care about social disasters, rejected political power, I ask those who think about what I say. Don't you know that the Lord has always taught mercy, pity, compassion, love, don't you know that at the Last Judgment He will judge by one sign: whether they did deeds of mercy and love or did not do them. This is the only measure by which the All-Righteous Judge will be guided. And the Christians of the apostolic times perceived the teaching of Christ precisely in this way. They were full of sorrow for the disasters experienced by their needy brethren, full of sorrow for social inequality. And these ancient Christians took care with all their might that there would be no inequality, no poverty. They sold their estates and brought the proceeds to the feet of the apostles for distribution among those in need. They were all one soul and one heart, and there were no needy among them.

Is this not a cure for social injustice? Yes, of course, the only radical healing, for only when people are imbued with pity, mercy for their brethren who are in need, when all people are united by Divine love, only then will the calamities of social injustice, social inequality be cured. Only then will the life of people be blessed, when in all their aspirations all people will be guided by the law of love, the law of truth.... It was precisely evil and untruth that Christ wanted to eradicate in human hearts. With His call to love and mercy, to compassion for the unfortunate, He wanted to heal social ailments. You see that the opinion of some that Christ was indifferent to the injustice of social relations is unjust. No one with such great depth felt this untruth as He, no one so ardently wanted to eradicate it. But He knew that there was only one way to do this - the correction of the human heart. This is the task of our life - to correct our hearts and purify them so that no unrighteousness comes out of them. And only then will the holy truth reign in relations between people, when the hearts of all of them become sources of love,

and not malice, selfishness and envy. In this great work of cleansing our hearts, may the One Who Guides the Heart help us. Amen.

– St. Luke (the Surgeon) of Simferopol, *Homily on the 14th Sunday of Luke, Delivered on January 27, 1952*

The Relationship Between Clergy and Laypeople

We make a distinction between Clergy and laymen. That there is such a distinction and it belongs to the whole Tradition of the Church, no one can deny. But on this point too we cannot overvalue one category at the expense of the other. Nothing of the sort constitutes the Orthodox mindset. Nor can we consider that only the Clergy are obligated to keep all the Laws and Traditions of the Church, while the laymen have some mitigations. It is a fact that the Clergy have more duties and obligations in relation to salvation and other things, but all have the duty to keep God's Law.

We can say that the Church's system of government is synodal. This should not be interpreted in the sense of democracy. Some people say that the Church's system of government is democratic. This is not so, because there is a distinction of gifts and ministries. The Church's system of government is synodical, in the sense of hierarchy; that is to say, it is hierarchical. This is seen in the Apostle Paul's letter to the Corinthians. The Apostle says: "And God has appointed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues" (1 Cor. 12:28). Thus there is a hierarchy in the Church. Each person knows his gift, fulfills the service which God assigned, and all work together for the edification of the Body of Christ. The image of the Body of Christ is very characteristic!

The Clergy are ordained to serve and minister to the people. It is a gift from God for someone to shepherd, and it is a gift to be shepherded towards one's salvation. Moreover, the basis of the sacramental priesthood is what is called spiritual priesthood, which laymen too can have. Everyone can have spiritual priesthood, because it is connected with the whole spiritual life, which is experienced through both the Sacraments and asceticism. According to the Fathers, the person has spiritual priesthood who has developed his noetic energy, and of course, who prays for the whole world. And we know that this spiritual priesthood will make a man worthy of enjoying the Kingdom of God.

Thus there should be no quarrel between Clergy and laymen. The Clergy receive the priesthood as a ministry and a sacrifice on the cross and the laymen accept the Clergy as fathers in order to be reborn into a new life.

I shall not go on to mention further distinctions which, unfortunately, we make in our spiritual and ecclesiastical life. The malevolent man, who is split, splits up the united life of the Church. As far as a man is impure, so far he is also in pieces; as far as he is purified of passion so far he is catholic. He is made catholic when he knows and experiences the whole truth. The whole way of life, which we see in the Holy Scripture and the tradition of the Church, is valid for all men. We can all attain deification.

We must make a constant effort to reach the catholic way of life, to experience the catholicity of the Church.

- By Metropolitan Hierotheos of Nafpaktos and Agiou Vlasiou (*from johnsanidopoulos.com*)

Pray for our priests!

Prayer is powerful, and we need more priests in our Diocese. So, this year, Metropolitan Gregory is asking that each one of us pray daily that we have more vocations to the priesthood. He also wants us to pray by name for our clergy and seminarians--they aren't sick! The clergy that we are to pray for are: Fr. Peter Paproski, Fr. Photios Parks, and Deacon Robert Conjelko. The seminarians are: Thomas Kovalak, Nicholas Woroby, Seamus Murray, Thomas Slosky, Samuel Loposky, Timothy Paproski, Nicholas Fong, and Nicolas Laliberte. We started this two years ago, and we already have more seminarians! I can't wait to see what happens next!

Prayer for vocations

Master of all, You promised us, "I will be with you always, even until the very end of the world," and You have taught, "I will build My Church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Mindful of this pledge, we beseech Your great goodness to inspire men to the Holy Priesthood, the service of Your Holy Orthodox Church, so that she may properly be able to fulfill Your will for Your people in this age. There are children to baptize, the sick to heal, and the dying to care for. There is the Bread of Life to distribute, and the Word of God to teach. There are sins to forgive, and charity to be done in Your Name. Send Your Church in this hour and in every age "vessels of clay" to be instruments of Your presence. Hear us, O Lord, and have mercy.

Prayer for the priesthood

O Lord Jesus Christ, Good Shepherd of Your sheep, light the fire of ardent love in the hearts of all Your priests, that they may ever and in all things seek only Your glory. Remember especially, Lord, our Metropolitan Gregory, and our spiritual father Joseph, who are laboring in Your vineyard for the salvation of all those whom You have entrusted to them. Remember also, O Lord, our priests Fr. Peter Paproski, Fr. Photios Parks, and Deacon Robert Conjelko, and seminarians

Thomas Kovalak, Nicholas Woroby, Seamus Murray, Thomas Slosky, Samuel Lopusky, Timothy Paproski, Nicholas Fong, and Nicolas Laliberte. Make their lives as holy as the word they preach. Keep them from being discouraged. Hear their prayers for our salvation. Give them wisdom and courage to proclaim Your truth. Make them priests after Your own heart. For You are a merciful God who loves us, and to You we give glory, together with Your eternal Father and Your all-holy, good and life-giving Spirit, now and ever and forever. Amen.

Ven. Wendreda, Hermitess of March, Cabridgeshire

St. Wendreda was the daughter of seventh-century King Anna, one of the earliest Christian kings. At a time when Christianity was putting down roots among the Anglo-Saxon peoples of England, St. Wendreda and her sisters, Etheldred and Sexburga, were enthusiastic missionaries spreading the Gospel of Christ.

Shunning the life of a princess, Wendreda dedicated herself to healing. She eventually settled in a small settlement called Merchford, where some humble fisherman resided. Her sister, Etheldred, went on to found the monastery at Elyl, while her other sibling, Sexburga, became abbess of a monastery in Minster.

Later, Wendreda founded a community at March, Cambridgeshire, dedicated to healing. She passed peacefully into the heavenly kingdom, and her relics, enshrined in gold, were buried in the Ely Cathedral.

However, in 1016, the relics were carried off in battle in the hopes they would bring victory. At the Battle of Ashingdon, the conquering Danish king, a pagan, seized the relics, but soon was converted to Christianity. He took the relics to the Canterbury Cathedral where they rested for the next 300 years.

In 1343, St. Wendreda was returned to March and enshrined in the church dedicated to her memory. The St. Wendreda Church stands to this day, and is world famous for its magnificent double-hammer beam roof along with 120 carved angels. (*from antiochian.org*)

Also Commemorated Today

Monk-martyr Anastasius the Persian (628).

Venerable Macarius, abbot of Zhabyn (1623).

New Hieromartyrs John, Nicholas, Jacob, Peter, John, John, John and Euthymius priest (1938).

Martyr Anastasius the Deacon of the Kiev Caves (12th c.).

Martyrs Manuel, George, Peter, Leontius, bishops; Sionius, Gabriel, John, Leontus, Parodus, presbyters; and 377 companions in Bulgaria (814).

St. Joseph Samakus the Sanctified of Crete (1511) (Greek).

St. Brithwald (Berhtwald) of Wilton, bishop of Sarum (Ramsbury) (1045) (Celtic & British).
St. Dozhwal (Doezval, Doetval), prince of Brittany brother of Sts. Jezekael, Onen & Uriel (7th c.) (Brittany)
St. Blaesilla of Rome (daughter of St. Paula, supporter of Bl. Jerome) (383)
St. Dominic of Sora, monk (1031) (Italy)
St. Gaudentius (Gaudence) of Novara, bishop (417) (Italy)
St. Vincent of Digne, bishop (380) (France)
Hieromartyr Vincent the deacon of Saragossa (304) (Spain)
Martyrs Vincent, Orontius, and Victor (305) (Spain)
St. Lufthilde (Lufthalde, Leuchttilde) of Cologne, female ascetic (719)
Martyr Oulph (Ulphus) of Champagne (2nd or 3rd c.)
St. Solenne, bishop of Chartres (509)
St. Blidran (Blidranus, Blidramme) of Vienna (719)
St. Bernard, bishop of Vienne (Gaul)
St. Antiochus of Mar Saba monastery (630) (also Dec. 24)

Social Team for January 29

Team 1 is up next week - Hanbury, P. Blaydoe, Chumak, Wally Simkin. 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, and those in need of our prayers. (Please advise Fr. Joseph of changes.)