

# SOBORNOST

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*American Carpatho-Russian Orthodox  
Diocese*

*ECUMENICAL PATRIARCHATE  
OF CONSTANTINOPLE*

**SERVICES**

**Wed: Lay Vespers 6:30 PM**

**Sat: Confession 4:30 PM**

**Great Vespers 5:00 PM**

**Sun: Matins (Orthros) 8:45 AM**

**Sunday School 9:30 AM | Divine Liturgy 10:00 AM**

**February 12, 2023 – Sunday of the Prodigal Son**

By Metropolitan Hierotheos of Nafpaktos and Agiou Vlasiou

The Lord in the Parable of the Prodigal Son does not want to simply describe the life of the prodigal, since it is mentioned in only two words ("ζων ασώτως" = "prodigal living") while the burden falls on the return, but on the one hand He wants to present the consequences which were created when the youngest son removed himself from his paternal home, and on the other hand the great and exceeding love that the Father showed to the returning son. This is how the God-bearing and Spirit-bearing Fathers interpreted today's parable, in contrast to others in our day who interpret it in a literary or moral way. For us and for all Orthodox in general, what matters is not what this or that person says, but what the Holy Fathers say, who are a Revelation in history, who have attained theoria. For the understanding of the true teachings of Holy Scripture is a form of theoria.

With the few thoughts that will follow we will try to see three patristic interpretations, which will help us to enter the deeper meaning of the parable and to discover ourselves.



## Prodigality and Death

The Prodigal Son was dead when he was out of the house and away from paternal love. Life was received by returning to the Father. This is the meaning of the words of the compassionate father: "This my son was dead, but is alive again." This shows that life outside of God, who is our Father, is death. God is Life in His substance. He who turns away from Him is dead according to Grace, even if he lives physically and holds a great social position. Saint Gregory of Nyssa teaches that "he who does not have true life does not truly live; the life of a sinner is not truly so, but in name only."

In general, the Holy Fathers teach that, just as when the soul leaves the body it dies and emits a stench, a sign that it lacks the soul, so when the Holy Spirit leaves the soul, which is the soul of our soul, the nous of our nous, the life of our life, then the soul dies and the rot of death is released. Thus we understand that sin is the mortality of the immortal. It is an existential event and not a simple psychological conflict or a moral event. But when the dead man returns to the Father, then he lives true life and tastes real happiness and bliss.

### Man is a Prodigal Without the God-man

With this prism, Adam and his descendants were prodigals, having turned away from God, they put on with sin the robe of divine Grace and put on the leather tunic of decay and mortality. The beloved one kicked away the gift of the possibility of deification and preferred the prodigal life. He lost communion with God. All life outside of God is prodigality. However, the Lord Jesus Christ came and with His incarnation gave man the opportunity to return to his home, that is, to Paradise. The loving Father opened His arms and gave him the kiss of peace, welcoming him to the house, that is, to the Church. He gives him the ring of adoption. He wears it through the first garment after Holy Baptism, the garment of the Holy Spirit. We are clothed with the Holy Spirit not as we are clothed with a robe, but like iron with fire "not outwardly, but entirely mixed, and our hearts are filled with the Paraclete, the eyes are enlightened, the ears are sanctified, thoughts are suppressed, meanings issue forth, wisdom is given, and people of Grace are fulfilled." Even the Father sacrifices with the Holy Eucharist the calf, offering him the Body and the Blood of the Lamb of God, "the one who takes away the sin of the world." Living in the Holy Church, in the house of the Father, man celebrates and rejoices, because in it "a feast of the heavens and the earth is formed, a thanksgiving, a rejoicing, a joyful dancing." In the Orthodox Church "the pleasant and blessed make the sound of a chorus, the angelic song" (John Chrysostom).

Thus in the Church we feel comfortable and experience real and natural life. The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, the consubstantial and life-creating Holy

Trinity, call the prodigal and give him life. In the Church we live our unworthiness, but also the generous love of God, who accepts us. We feel that the cause of our condemnation is not sin, since we are all sinners, but the denial of God's love. Thus the members of the Church are not a sum of "virtues", but of sinners who repent and experience the love of God. Therefore the Church is not a deprivation of life, but is filled with life. It is not an absence of love, but an excess of love.

### A Prodigal and Scattered Nous

The Prodigal Son of the parable perfectly expresses, according to Saint Gregory Palamas, the prodigal nous. That is, when the human nous emerges from the heart and from the constant memory of God and turns sinfully and sensually to creation, when "it is scattered in the desire for food that is not necessary, in the desire for bodies that is not modest, in the desire for money that is not satisfied, and in the desire for empty and inglorious glory," then he is literally a prodigal.

The heart, according to the biblical and patristic tradition, is the home where the nous resides with God. There a continuous "internal divine liturgy" takes place. When the nous departs all the gifts of God are scattered. According to the Holy Fathers, "a nous that is distanced from God is either beastly or demonic." That is why the return of the nous to the heart and the acquisition of the memory of God enlivens the dead nous, since it is illuminated by the uncreated Grace of God. Therefore life without prayer is prodigality and life with prayer is indeed LIFE. "The nous which is united with God and remains with Him with prayer and love, becomes wise, good, strong, philanthropic, compassionate, long-suffering" (St. Maximus the Confessor).

All this means that prodigality is decay, death and mortality, while incorruptibility, immortality and life are fruits of repentance. Therefore, let us be like, as Saint Chrysostom says, the Prodigal Son, who was not only prodigal in sin, but also in repentance, in order to restore our existence to the original beauty with which the Creator adorned it. (*from johnsanidopoulos.com*)

### **Today's Epistle Lesson – St. Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians 6:12-20 EOB**

Brethren, You say: "All things are lawful for me, but not all things are beneficial." "All things are lawful for me," but I will not be brought under the power of anything. "Food is for the stomach, and the stomach is for food," but God will bring to nothing both of these. However, the body is not for sexual immorality, it is for the Lord; and the Lord is made for the body. Now, God raised up the Lord, and he will also raise us up by his power. Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? May it never be! Or do you not know that whoever is joined to a prostitute is one body? For God says, "The two will become one flesh."

But whoever who is joined to the Lord is one spirit. Flee sexual immorality! “Every sin that a person can do is outside the body,” but whoever commits sexual immorality sins against his own body. Or do you not know that your body is a sanctuary of the Holy Spirit which dwells in you, and which you have from God? You are not your own! You were bought with a price! Therefore, glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which belong to God.

### **Today’s Gospel Lesson – Saint Luke 15:11-32 EOB**

The Lord said this parable, "A certain man had two sons. The younger of them said to his father, ‘Father, give me the share of the estate that will come to me.’ So the father divided his livelihood between them. A few days later, the younger son gathered all that he had and traveled to a far country. There, he squandered his property, living immorally. When he had spent everything, a severe famine took place in that country, and he began to be in need. He went and hired himself to one of the citizens of that country who sent him into his fields to feed pigs. He wanted to feed himself with the husks that the pigs ate, but no one gave him anything. But when he came to himself, he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired servants have bread enough to spare, and I am dying with hunger! I will get up, go to my father, and tell him, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you! I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me as one of your hired servants.”’” So he set off and went to his father. But while he was still at a distance, his father saw him and was moved with compassion. He ran, and embraced his son, and kissed him. Then the son said, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you! I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’ But the father said to his servants, ‘Bring out the first robe and put it on him! Put a ring on his hand and shoes on his feet! Bring the fattened calf, kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; for this, my son, was dead, and he is alive again! He was lost and [now he] is found!’ And they began to celebrate.

Now, his elder son was in the field. As he came near to the house, he heard music and dancing. Calling one of the servants, he asked what was going on. The servant replied, ‘Your brother has returned! Your father has killed the fattened calf, because he has received him back safe and healthy.’ However, the elder son became angry and he would not go in. Therefore, his father came out and begged him. But he answered his father, ‘Look, for so many years I have served you, and I have never disobeyed a commandment of yours. Yet, you never gave me a goat so that I might celebrate with my friends. But when this, your son, arrived, he who has devoured your living with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him.’ The father said to him, ‘Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours! But it was fitting to celebrate and to rejoice, for this, your brother, was dead, and is alive again. He was lost and is found!’”

## A Word From the Holy Fathers

As I cast my eyes all around this holy flock and see the whole city in attendance, I can't decide whom to call blessed first – the holy Meletius, because he enjoys such great honor, even after death, or your love, because you demonstrate such good will concerning your shepherds, even after they are dead and gone. For while he is blessed, because he had the power to release such love in you, you too are blessed because after you received the deposit of his love, you persisted in preserving it intact for the depositor up to the present. For we whave already raced past the fifth year since he departed for Jesus whom he longed for and, just as if you'd seen him yesterday or the day before, you have come to meet him with fervent love today. He is to be envied because he fathered such sons. To be envied are you, too, because you were allotted such a father. Noble is the root and wonderful, but the fruit, too, are worthy of this root. For truly, just as a wonderful root is concealed by the folds of the earth and isn't seen itself, yet through the fruit the strength of its special quality is revealed, so indeed, too, blessed Meletius, hidden in this coffin, is not evident to us with our physical eyes, yet through you, the fruit, the strength of his special grace is revealed. Even if we were silent, the festival alone and the fervor of your enthusiasm are sufficient to proclaim louder than a trumpet the love of the holy Meletius for his children. For he has so inflamed your mind towards passion for him that you are heated through at just his name and are excited at the very mention of it.

It's for this reason that at present I, too, am continually weaving his name into my sermons, not at random but intentionally and from respect. Indeed, just as someone who weaves a gold wreath and next sets pearls in it renders the diadem more brilliant with the density of the gems, so in fact I, too, in today weaving a crown of praises for his blessed head densely weave into the sermon the constancy of mentioning his name like some pearls, hoping by this to render him more desired and brilliant. For this is the custom of lovers and such is their habit, to embrace even just the names of their loved ones and to get heated up at their very mention, which is what you, too, have experienced in the case of this blessed man. For from the beginning, you welcomed him when he arrived in the city, and you each named your own child after him, each thinking that through employing the name you were introducing the saint into your own house and, bypassing fathers and grandfathers and ancestors, mothers gave the name of blessed Meletius to the children they gave birth to. For the love of piety overcame nature and, from that time on, the offspring were more desirable to their parents, not just as a result of natural love, but also from the affection for that name. For they thought that the name itself was an adornment to relationship, security for the household, a safety

measure for those so-named, and a comfort for love. And, just as when people are sitting in the dark, they light up many lamps from a single lamp that's been lit, and each person introduces it into their own house, so, too, when that name burst into the city like a light, each person, as if lighting up a lamp, at the time introduced the name of that blessed man into their own house, as if, through assigning the name, they were embracing a warehouse of innumerable blessings.

And what happened was an education in piety. For, since they were perpetually compelled to have that name in mind and to have that holy man in their heart, they had the name as a repellent for every irrational feeling and thought. And it became so frequent that this name echoed around from every direction everywhere both in side streets and in the marketplace and in fields and on highways. But you didn't experience so much just at the name, but even at the depiction of his body. At least, what you did with names, this you practiced, too, in the case of that man's image. For truly, many carved that holy image on finger rings and on seals and on cups and on bedroom walls and all over the place so that one didn't just hear that holy name, but also saw the depiction of his body all over the place and had a double consolation for his loss.

As it was, the moment he entered he was expelled from the city, since the enemies of truth drove him out. And God yielded, wanting to show at the same time both that man's virtue and your courage. For when he arrived like Moses in Egypt, and freed the city from heretical error and, by cutting off from the rest of the body the limbs that were festering and in an incurable state, brought back uncontaminated health to the majority of the Church, the enemies of truth couldn't endure the correction, and stirring up the emperor of the time, expelled him from the city, hoping by this to subvert the truth and overturn the correction of events. But the opposite of what was expected took place, and your enthusiasm was demonstrated all the more and the proof of that man's pedagogical expertise shone forth. On the one hand, in that he was able to so ground you in the enthusiasm for faith in thirty days or not even that, that, when countless winds were attacking afterwards, that instruction remained unshakable. On the other hand, your fervor was demonstrated in that in thirty days or not even that you so precisely took in the seeds that were thrown down by him that you sent their roots down to the depths of your mind and from that moment gave in to none of the temptations that were brought forward.

It is worth not passing over either what happened in association with his expulsion. For when the urban prefect, driving his chariot, exited through the middle of the marketplace with the holy man seated next to him, showers of stones were hurled at the prefect's head from all directions – because the city couldn't bear the separation, but chose even to quit the present life rather than to see that holy man cast out. So, what did that blessed man do then? When he saw the hurling of the

stones, he wrapped the prefect's head up and hid it in his own clothing, in the one stroke shaming the enemies with the excess of his fairness and teaching his students how much forbearance one should display towards those who do wrong, and how it wasn't just appropriate for them to do nothing terrible, but that even if danger attacked them from other sources, they should fend it off with complete dedication. Who didn't tremble then and wasn't struck with amazement, when they saw the city's manic love and the teacher's high-reaching philosophy and his fairness and gentleness? For what happened at that time was truly incredible. The shepherd was driven away and the sheep weren't scattered; the helmsman was thrown out and the vessel didn't sink. The farmer was chased off and the vine abundantly bore fruit. For since you were bound to each other by the bond of love, not the introduction of trials, nor an increase in dangers, nor the length of the road, nor the abundance of time, nor anything else was able to distance you from being in the company of the blessed shepherd. Instead, although he was expelled, and as a result was at a long distance from his children, the opposite took place. For you were all the more constrained by the bonds of love. And he took the entire city with him when he went off to Armenia. For, although his body was fixed in his homeland, his intellect and mind, elevated by the Spirit's grace as if by some wings and hovering around you the entire time, carried this entire populace around in his heart, which was indeed your own experience. For, although you were situated here and circumscribed by the city, by love's spirit you were lifted up to Armenia day after day and saw his holy face and heard his most pleasurable and blessed voice, and so came back again.

It's for this reason that God allowed him to be driven from the city straight away, so that, as I started out saying, he might demonstrate the strength of your faith to the enemies attacking you and his skill at teaching. And it is clear from the following. For after his first exile, on his return he spent here not just thirty days, but even months of a year or one or two or more. For since you gave adequate demonstration of your firmness in regard to the faith, God granted you to luxuriate again in your father without fear. For it was indeed the greatest luxury to enjoy that holy face. For not just his teaching or speaking, but even his simply being looked at was enough to introduce every teaching on virtue into the viewers' soul. At any rate, when he rode in to meet you and the entire city sailed out to the road, some got close and touched his feet and kissed his hands and heard his voice. Others, prevented by the sheer numbers and only seeing him from afar, as if they had received sufficient blessing from seeing him and had obtained no less than those who were near him, in this way went away with complete conviction. And what happened in the case of the apostles, happened also in his. For just as in the case of the apostles, when their shadow extended and touched from a distance all

those who couldn't approach and be near, they drew to themselves the same grace and left likewise made well. So, too, now all those who couldn't get near went away filled with every blessing from just seeing him, as if they had felt a certain spiritual glory be sent forth from that holy head and pass through to those who were furthest away.

And when it seemed good to the common God of all to summon him at that point from the present life and to enlist him in the chorus of angels, not even this took place in a random way; instead, although an imperial edict summoned him, it was God who stirred the emperor. He summoned him not anywhere close or nearby but to Thrace itself, so that Galatians and Bithynians and Cilicians and Cappadocians and all those who inhabit Thrace might learn of our blessings. So that bishops all over the world, by looking at his holiness as if at an archetypal image and receiving from him a clear example of the service associated with this office, might have a secure and absolutely clear standard by which they ought to administer and govern the Churches. Indeed, because of the magnitude of the city and because of the close involvement of the emperor, many bishops from many places in the world flowed together there at that time. And the bishops of the Churches were summoned by imperial letters, on the basis that they had received those Churches that, after a lengthy battle and storm, had restored the beginning of peace and calm. And so, at that time, he, too, was present there. And, just as in the case of the three boys, when they were about to be heralded and crowned, they extinguished the fire's force, trampled on the tyrant's pride, but on trial every form of impiety, and had the entire world watching them as spectators (for although the satraps from all over the world and consuls, and prefects had been summoned for another reason, they became spectators of those athletes), this is how it turned out, too, on that occasion, with the result that the theater became magnificent for that blessed man. Summoned for another reason, the bishops who administer the Churches all over the world were in attendance and watched that holy man. And when they watched, and got to know every detail of his discretion, his wisdom, his enthusiasm for the faith, that every virtue appropriate to a priest was perfected in him, it was then that God summoned him to himself.

This happened, too, in order to spare our city. For if he had quit his life here, the weight of the disaster would have been unbearable. For who would have endured seeing that blessed man breathing out his last breaths? Who would have endured seeing those lids closing over his eyes and his mouth shutting after uttering its last words? Who, on seeing these things, wouldn't have been distraught at the magnitude of the disaster? So that this might not occur, then, God arranged that he quit his life in another country, so that, having in the meantime worked through the disaster beforehand, when we saw the corpse entering the city, we wouldn't be



stricken to our soul, since we had become accustomed to the grief in our mind. Which is what in fact took place. For when the city received that holy body, it did indeed mourn so and set up a great howl. But the grief swiftly dissolved, both for the aforementioned reason, and because of what I am about to relate.

For God who loves mankind had compassion on our grieving and quickly showed us another shepherd, who with great accuracy adhered to the characteristics of Meletius and kept alive the image of every virtue. Indeed, when he mounted the throne he immediately stripped us of the dress of mourning and extinguished our grief, and instead refreshed the memory of the blessed man. And while our pain faded, our love flared up more fervently, and our despondency completely disappeared. And yet this is not the way it usually happens at the loss of one's nearest and dearest. Rather, when a person loses a much-loved son, or a wife a respected husband, for as long as he or she faithfully keeps his memory fresh, the grief, too, wallows excessively in their soul. But when time moves along and the grief softens, the flourishing of the memory, too, is extinguished together with the severity of the pain. But in the case of this blessed man, the opposite took place. Although the despondency was completely expelled, the memory didn't disappear with the grief, but grew intensively. And you, who after so long a time are flitting around the body of blessed Meletius like bees around honeycomb, are witnesses. But the love for him did not arise from nature, but from reason associated with correct judgment. For this reason it was not extinguished by death, nor did it fade with time, but it grew and advanced dramatically. And it was not just that of those of you who saw him, but even of those who didn't see. For this is the most amazing thing, that everyone who is younger than when he was alive, they themselves too are inflamed towards the same level of love. And so, while you the older generation can claim an advantage over those who didn't see him in that you actually spent time with him and enjoyed his holy company, those who haven't seen him can claim advantage over you in that, although they didn't see the man, they demonstrate no less a love for him than you who saw him.

Let us all pray together, governors and governed, women and men, old and young, slaves and free, taking blessed Meletius himself as a shareholder in this prayer (for truly he has greater boldness now and a more fervent love towards you), that this love be increased in us and that, just as we are here near this coffer, there too we may all be considered worthy of being able in the same way to be near his eternal dwelling and to attain the blessings stored up for us. May we all attain them through the grace and lovingkindness of our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom and with whom be glory and power to the Father, together with the Holy Spirit, forever and ever. Amen.

– St. John Chrysostom, *Homily On Saint Meletius*

## **St. Meletius of Antioch**

*As the Lord grasped the hands of Meletius, "I surrender my soul into Your hands" he said.*

This holy Father, who was from Meletine of Armenia, was a blameless man, just, reverent, sincere, and most gentle. Because he was exceedingly virtuous and possessed pure love in Christ, he was consecrated Bishop of Sebaste in 357. He was later banished from his throne by the Arians and departed for Beroea of Syria (this is the present-day Aleppo). After the Arian bishop of Antioch had been deposed, the Orthodox and the Arians each strove to have a man of like mind with themselves become the next Archbishop of Antioch. Meletius was highly esteemed by all, and since the Arians believed him to share their own opinion, they had him raised to the throne of Antioch in 360.

As soon as Meletius entered Antioch and was consecrated Archbishop, every Christian, holding him in such high regard, began inviting him into their home, thinking that just by his entrance he would sanctify it. Having taken the helm of the Church of Antioch, however, he began preaching the Son's consubstantiality with the Father. Then a test was issued by the emperor, as the historian Theodoret writes:

'Now the emperor had charged both Meletius and the rest who were able to speak to expound to the multitude the text "The Lord formed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old" (Proverbs 8:22, Septuagint), and he ordered skilled writers to take down on the spot what each man said, with the idea that in this manner their instruction would be more exact. First of all George of Laodicea gave vent to his foul heresy. After him Acacius of Caesarea propounded a doctrine of compromise far removed indeed from the blasphemy of the enemy, but not preserving the apostolic doctrine pure and undefiled. Then up rose the great Meletius and exhibited the unbending line of the canon of the faith, for using the truth as a carpenter does his rule he avoided excess and defect. Then the multitude broke into loud applause and besought him to give them a short summary of his teaching. Accordingly after showing three fingers, he withdrew two, left one, and uttered the memorable sentence, "In thought they are three but we speak as to one."

Shortly after, he was banished by the Arian Emperor Constantius, son of Saint Constantine the Great. He did not even last a month as Archbishop in Antioch.

After the passage of time, he was recalled to his throne, but was banished again the third time by Valens to Armenia near Cappadocia. There he communicated with Basil the Great and ordained him to the diaconate. He returned again to Antioch in 379 and summoned a Synod in which the Nicene Faith was affirmed. It was Saint Meletius who ordained Saint John Chrysostom reader and deacon in Antioch in

381. Meletios was then summoned to Constantinople where he presided over the Second Ecumenical Synod in 381 (which was convoked against Macedonius, Patriarch of Constantinople, the enemy of the Holy Spirit), being held in great honor as a zealot of the faith and a venerable elder hierarch.

Some time before, when the Emperor Gratian had made the Spanish General Theodosius commander-in-chief of his armies in the war against the barbarians, Theodosius had a dream in which he saw Meletios, whom he had never met, putting upon him the imperial robe and crown. Because of Theodosius's victories, Gratian made him Emperor of the East in Valens's stead in 379. When, as Emperor, Saint Theodosius the Great convoked the Second Ecumenical Synod in Constantinople two years later, he forbade that anyone should tell him who Meletios was; and as soon as he saw him, he recognized him, ran to him with joy, embraced him before all the other bishops, and told him of his dream.

At this Synod, Meletios confirmed Gregory the Theologian on the patriarchal throne in Constantinople. While at the Synod, Saint Meletios fell ill and reposed a short while after. Saint Gregory of Nyssa, among others, gave a moving oration at his funeral; bewailing the loss of him whom all loved as a father, he said, "Where is that sweet serenity of his eyes? Where that bright smile upon his lips? Where that kind right hand, with fingers outstretched to accompany the benediction of the mouth?" And he lamented, "Our Elijah has been caught up, and no Elisha is left behind in his place." The holy relics of Saint Meletios were returned to Antioch and were buried beside Saint Babylas the Martyr (Sept. 4), in the Church dedicated to the Martyr which Meletios, in his zeal for the Martyr's glory, had helped build with his own hands. *(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, Aydin Zill, 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 Loposky, 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. Mary, Called Marinus, of Alexandria**

Saint Mary and her father Eugene lived at the beginning of the sixth century in Bithynia (northwestern Asia Minor). After the death of his wife, Eugene decided to withdraw to a monastery, but his daughter did not want to be separated from him, and so she accompanied him, dressed as a man. Together they entered a monastery not far from Alexandria, and the daughter received the name Marinus. Marinus became accomplished in virtue, and distinguished by humility and obedience. After several years, when her father died, she intensified her ascetical efforts and received from the Lord the gift to heal those afflicted by unclean spirits.

One time the “monk” Marinus was sent with other monks to the monastery gardens, and along the way they had to spend the night at an inn. The inn-keeper’s daughter, having sinned with one of the lodgers, denounced Marinus and named “him” as the father of her child. The girl’s father complained to the igumen of the monastery, who expelled the “sinful brother.” The saint spoke not a word in her defense and began to live outside the monastery wall. When the hapless girl gave birth to a boy, the inn-keeper brought it to Marinus. Without a word he put his grandson down before her and left. The saint took the infant and began to raise him.

After three years the brethren begged the igumen to take back the “monk” Marinus into the monastery. The igumen, who very reluctantly gave in to their requests, began to assign Marinus very difficult obediences, which she fulfilled with the greatest of zeal, while also raising her foster child.

Three years later the saint peacefully reposed in her cell. The brethren saw the deceased “monk” and the boy crying over “him”. As they began to dress the saint for burial, her secret was revealed. The igumen of the monastery tearfully asked forgiveness of the departed, and the inn-keeper followed his example.

The body of Saint Mary was reverently buried in the monastery. The inn-keeper’s daughter came to the grave of the saint and openly confessed her sin. Immediately, she was freed from the evil spirit which had been tormenting her. The boy whom the saint was raising later became a monk. The relics of the saint were transferred to Constantinople, and were carried off to Venice in 1113. (*from oca.org*)

## **Martyr Luke (Luka) of Jerusalem, the Georgian**

The holy martyr Luka of Jerusalem lived in the 13th century. He was born to an honorable, pious Georgian family by the name of Mukhaisdze. After the repose of Luka’s father, his mother left her children and went to labor at a monastery in Jerusalem. When Luka reached the age of twenty, he traveled to Jerusalem to visit his mother and venerate the holy places. After spending some time there he decided to remain and be tonsured a monk. He was later ordained a deacon and became fluent in Arabic. Soon the brothers of the monastery recognized his wisdom and asked him to guide them as abbot. For three years Luka directed the monastery in an exemplary manner.

But the devil was envious of the holy father and provoked a certain Shekh-Khidar, an influential Persian at the court of Sultan Penducht [probably Sultan Zakhir-Rukedin-Baibars-Bundukdar of Egypt (1260-1277)] to take up arms against Saint Luka. Sultan Penducht then transferred possession of the Holy Cross Monastery to Shekh-Khidar, who “treated the Georgian monks in a beastly manner and finally ousted them from the monastery altogether.” Fulfilling his God-given duty, the blessed Luka insisted on personally confronting Shekh-Khidar in defense of his brotherhood.

Luka’s Christian brothers and sisters warned him, saying, “Shekh-Khidar is threatening you.... Flee and hide from him!” But Luka paid no heed to their admonitions, certain that it was more fitting to die for Christ than to live for the world. As he had insisted, he himself approached Shekh-Khidar and asked for the release of the imprisoned fathers. Luka told him that he was prepared to accept any demands. The wicked Persian leader demanded nothing from Luka except that

he convert to Islam, promising to make him emir if he consented. When he refused, the furious Shekh-Khidar ordered Saint Luka's beheading.

After the terrible deed had been performed, Saint Luka's severed head turned toward the east and gave thanks to God with an expression of pure peace. Soon after, his precious body was set on fire at the command of the bewildered Shekh-Khidar. This occurred in 1277. (*from oca.org*)

### **Also Commemorated Today**

St. Alexis, metropolitan of Moscow and wonderworker of all Russia (1378).

St. Meletius, archbishop of Kharkov (1840).

New Hieromartyr Alexis (Buy), bishop of Voronezh (1930).

New Martyr Mitrophan, archpriest (1931).

St. Anthony II, patriarch of Constantinople (895).

Venerable Bassian, abbot of Ryabovsky Forest Monastery, Uglich (1509).

Martyr Callia the righteous.

Venerable Gertrude of Nijvel, abbess (659) (Neth.).

St. Ethilwald (Ethelwald, Aethelweald, Aedilauld) of Lindisfarne (740) (Celtic & British).

New Martyr Chrestos at Constantinople (1748) (Greek).

Martyrs Saturnius and Plotonus (Greek).

Hieromartyr Urbanus, bishop of Rome (223-230).

Holy Fathers Prokhore the Georgian (11th c.), Nikoloz Dvali (1314), and the Holy Fathers of the Georgian Monasteries in Jerusalem (Georgia).

St. Siadhal, priest and poet (Sedulius, Seadhal, Siadal) (5<sup>th</sup> c.)

St. Benedict Revelli, Bishop of Albenga (c. 900) (Italy)

Martyr Damian of Rome (unk)

Virgin-martyr Eulalia (Aulaire, Aulazie, Olalla) of Barcelona (c. 304) (Spain)

St. Gaudentius of Verona, bishop (c. 465) (Italy)

St. Julian the Hospitaler (unk)

Hieromartyr Modestus of Sardinia, deacon (c. 304)

St. Riok (Rieg, Rioc, Rioch), hermit of Brittany (4<sup>th</sup>? c.)

St. Glaode of Brittany

Hieromartyr Galactoire, bishop of Bénéarnum (507)

### **Social Team for Febuary 18**

Team 4 is up next week - Vallandingham, Tony Papadakis, Andrew and Katy, Joseph Frey. Thank you!

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JOIN US FOR A

# Lenten Encounter

at Camp Nazareth  
For All Youth Ages 8-18

**Friday March 10TH - Sunday March 12th**

**Cost: \$105 per person**

If there is a financial need to help get any of the youth from our diocese to this retreat, please reach out to the current ACRY president, Paul Zdinak ([paulzdinak@gmail.com](mailto:paulzdinak@gmail.com) or at 814-701-9272)

“Humble yourselves, therefore, under God’s mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.” 1 Peter 5:6-7



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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.)