

# SOBORNOST

**St. Thomas the Apostle Orthodox Church**

**(301) 638-5035 Church**  
**4419 Leonardtown Road**  
**Waldorf, MD 20601**

**Rev. Father Joseph Edgington, Pastor**  
**(703) 532-8017**

[fredgington@gmail.com](mailto:fredgington@gmail.com)

[www.apostlethomas.org](http://www.apostlethomas.org)

*American Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Diocese*

*ECUMENICAL PATRIARCHATE  
OF CONSTANTINOPLE*

## SERVICES

**Wed: Liturgy of the  
Presanctified Gifts 6:00 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 26, 2023 – Sunday of Forgiveness (Cheesefare)**

By Metropolitan Hierotheos of Nafpaktos and Agiou Vlasiou

The period that begins tomorrow and ends the Friday before the Saturday of Lazarus, together with Holy Week, is a period of alertness, resistance, upliftment and creation. The hymns of the Church prepare us for a struggle towards fulfillment. Fasting, prayer and worship, which consist of the spiritual atmosphere of this period, fit in to this genuine Orthodox humanism.

### **Ecclesiastical Experience**

All of this could sound weird, fitting in to a formality and ritualism, and regarded as some religious procedures. Prayer and fasting can be considered as an exercise of the will and as a singular religious meditation, as observed in all religions. Yet it is distinguished for another purpose, a secret and substantial "entelechy".

When we speak of Orthodoxy we do not mean it as an ideological system or religious organization, but as a Church. There is a great difference between a religion and the Church. The former involves individual beings struggling to survive the pressure of mechanistic processes, while the latter (the Church) requires a community of persons.



The Church is a special and particular community, a family in which we learn to live maturely, responsibly and integrated. An entire community prays, every member cares about each other, as well the entire Church is concerned with the problems that concern wider society. Fasting and prayer are related with philanthropy and awareness for the entire world. Individualism is a mental and spiritual illness.

Speaking of community, we can also consider the Church a therapeutic community, in which humanity and society is healed, because in actuality it is used as primary, secondary and tertiary prevention. I once said in an interview that every parish, and there are many, serves as a perfect therapeutic community, in which entire problems that concern humans are unraveled.

### **Masks and Persons**

This period is important because the Church helps its members remove its masks in order to become persons. All year we wear our masks of hypocrisy, presenting ourselves as just, democratic, virtuous, and holy, while in reality we are experiencing conflicting situations. Through the existential struggle, which is done with the uncreated Grace of God, we eliminate the hideous masks and become persons. Then there is no difference between what we are and what we appear to be.

When one speaks of persons much can be said. I will confine myself to highlighting two key elements. The person is distinguished by love and freedom. And of course in speaking of person, I do not mean personality, as is done in psychology, but of existence, the development of the hypostatic principle. The person/hypostasis is distinguished by love and freedom.

Love is not an emotional state, nor a superficial and typical altruism, but a mutual interchange of hypostaseis. One comes out of their hypostasis, without losing his personal character, and enters into the hypostasis of another. He tries to understand the other, outside of his own specifications, and continuously struggles to appropriate the strengths of the other and then obtain hypostatic unity, without of course eliminating the particular, the otherness.

Freedom is not a choice among many things, as we learned through Western philosophy, but it is the elimination of the gnostic will and the survival of the natural will, the freedom of the person from every power that wants to impose upon created things, even the institutions. The person is not dominated by any necessity. Ultimately, freedom is the transcendence of death.

### **The Problem of Death**

Death is not a final act that will happen at the end of biological life, but a reality that is experienced by our birth. It is a paradoxical thing to talk about the

coexistence of life and death, from birth. Corruptibility and mortality, which occurs with diseases, the increase of the body, insecurity, uncertainty, insurances and pensions, the existential void that occurs in a particular way at all ages, is the experience of death.

That is why this period is the heart of the ecclesiastical year, with worship, prayer, fasting, and philanthropy, which give us the opportunity to gain experience of the community, and to dispel emotional and psychological bereavement. At the same time we become persons, destroying all of its numerous and diverse masks, and above all driving out of the depths of our being the foundation of death. Because the most tragic death and fearsome foundation is located in the bowels of existence. (*from johnsanidopoulos.com*)

### **Today's Epistle Lesson – St. Paul's Letter to the Romans 13:11-14:4 EOB**

Brethren, it is already time for you to awaken from sleep, for salvation is now nearer to us than when we first believed! The night is far gone, and the day is near. Let us therefore throw off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light. Let us walk decently, as in the day; not in parties and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and lustful acts, and not in strife or jealousy. Instead, put on the Lord Jesus Christ and do not think how to satisfy the flesh and its lusts. Accept the one who is weak in faith, but not to enter into arguments over disputable matters. One has faith to eat all things while the weak eats only vegetables. The one who eats [everything] should not look down on the one who does not eat. The one who does not eat should not judge the one who eats because God has accepted him. Who are you who judge someone else's servant? He stands or falls to his own master! Yes, that one will be made [able] to stand, because God has the power to make someone stand.

### **Today's Gospel Lesson – Saint Matthew 6:14-21 EOB**

The Lord said, "If you forgive people their offenses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive people their offenses, neither will your Father forgive your offenses. Moreover, when you fast, do not be like the hypocrites with their gloomy faces. For they disfigure their faces so that people may see that they are fasting. Amen, I tell you: they have received their reward. But you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face so that people may not see that you are fasting. Only your Father who is in secret will see, and your Father, who sees in secret, will reward you. Do not store up treasures for yourselves on the earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal. Instead, store for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consume, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

## A Word From the Holy Fathers

THE INVISIBLE SERPENT, the originator of evil, is inventive, versatile and extremely skillful in contriving wickedness. He has means to hinder our good purposes and actions as soon as they begin. But if he fails to prevent them initially, he sets up other devices by which he can render them useless once they are underway. If he is unable to make them worthless when they are half way to completion, he knows other tricks and ways to invalidate them even once they are finished, and makes them a source not of reward but of harm to all but the most careful. First of all he points out how laborious and difficult to accomplish virtue is. In this way he fills us with laziness and despair, as though we were attempting difficult and impossible things and were therefore incapable of putting our intentions into action. Then he engenders disbelief in the rewards which God has promised to those who struggle.

But we, brethren, should rise above this trap by our soul's courage, eagerness and faith. We should bear in mind the fact that just as the earth cannot yield worthwhile fruit without labor, so the soul cannot acquire anything which pleases God or leads to salvation without spiritual struggles. But while it is possible to find earth which is unsuitable for cultivation, every human soul is naturally suited to virtue. As we are all unavoidably condemned, however, by the judgment given against our forefather, to live by labor and toil, let us turn necessity into an honor and willingly offer to God what is ours not by our own will. Let us give up transitory things in exchange for things that endure, and receive what is beneficial in exchange for what is harmful, transforming short-lived toil into a means to gain eternal ease. If we labor here for the sake of virtue we shall certainly attain to the rest promised in the age to come. He who promised is trustworthy and is at hand to help all who readily take on the struggle for virtue. If He who can do all things gives us His help, is anything impossible to achieve?

When we remember this and eagerly apply ourselves to virtuous actions, the evil one, knowing that nothing can be good unless it is done in a good way, strives to persuade us not to accomplish any good work with the object of pleasing God or of winning His approval, but to look for other people's approval. By this means he can deprive us of our reward from God and of all spiritual and heavenly honors. Let us frustrate these efforts of his by considering the great recompense stored up for those who live as God pleases, and how insignificant other people's approval is. Not only is it not worth mentioning in comparison with the great and holy glory to come, but it is also insufficient reason to neglect and waste our flesh.

Even after suffering this defeat, the originator of evil undermined us with pride, the last and worst abyss. He suggests conceited thoughts and persuades us to boast as

though we had managed to be virtuous through our own ability and intelligence. But let us remember that the Truth says, “Without me ye can do nothing” (John 15:5), and fend off all the evil one’s schemes. Let us do good works in a good way, with appropriate humility. If someone has a jar of precious perfume, whether he pours it out on to dung, or pours dung into the jar, he ruins and destroys the perfume. Be aware that, in the same way, whether someone rejects and discards virtue by his inaction, or mixes evil with his virtuous actions, he equally ruins and destroys virtue.

I am speaking to your charity on this subject in this present season of fasting, so that we may observe it together for our own sake unalloyed with anything evil. Fasting was of no benefit to that Pharisee in the Gospel, even though he always fasted two days a Week, because he had adulterated it with pride and condemnation of his neighbor (Luke 18:11-12). Not that this means fasting is unprofitable. Moses, Elijah and the Lord Himself showed how beneficial it is for those who fast properly in a way pleasing to God.

Moses fasted for many days. Awaken your minds, I entreat You, and lift them up at this opportune time, in company with Moses when he went up the mountain towards God. In this way may you start off afresh on your ascent, and be lifted up together with Christ, who did not merely go up a mountain but up to heaven, taking us with Him. Moses fasted for forty days on the mountain and according to the Scriptures he saw God, not darkly but face to face (Exod. 24:18). He talked to Him as someone would speak to his friend (Exod. 33:11, Deut. 34:10). He learnt from God and taught everyone about Him: that He is He Who eternally Is (Exod. 3:14) and will never cease to be, that He summoned what did not exist into existence, brought all things out of non-being and will not let them fall back into non-existence. In the beginning He brought the whole visible creation out of nothing all at once, just by a nod and His will. “In the beginning”, it says, “God created the heaven and the earth” (Gen. 1:1), not empty of course, nor without all that lies between them. The earth was interspersed with water, and both were full of air, animals and plants of various kinds, whereas the heavens were full of the various lights and fires, from which the universe is formed....

At the creation first one thing was brought into existence, then another, then another and so on in turn. Last of all came man (Gen. 1:26), who was worthy of God’s greater honor and consideration both before and after his creation. All the visible world was made before him for his sake. Immediately after the foundation of the world, before he existed, the kingdom of heaven was made ready for him. A divine Counsel concerning him preceded him, and he was created by God’s hand and in His image. He did not take his whole being from matter or the visible world, like the other living creatures did, but only his body. His soul he took from the

heavenly realms, from God Himself when He breathed life into him in a way that defies description (Gen. 2:7). Man was a great wonder surpassing all else, towering above everything, superior to all. Man was capable of knowing God, as well as receiving Him and declaring Him, and was most certainly the highest achievement of the Creator's sublime majesty. He had paradise for his home, specially planted by God (Gen. 2:8ff). There it was his lot to have sight of God, speak to Him face to face and receive a counsel and commandment from Him concerning the fasting appropriate to that place (Gen. 2:16-17). If he kept and observed this, he would remain free from death, toil and pain for ever.

Alas, he chose the treason of the serpent, the originator of evil, in preference to this commandment and counsel, and broke the decreed fast. Instead of eternal life he received death and instead of the place of unsullied joy he received this sinful place full of passions and misfortunes, or rather, he was sentenced to Hades and nether darkness. Our nature would have stayed in the infernal regions below the lurking places of the serpent who initially beguiled it, had not Christ come. He started off by fasting (Matt. 4:2, Luke 4:2, cf. Mark 1: 13) and in the end abolished the serpent's tyranny, set us free and brought us back to life, as Moses foretold (Deut. 18:15, 18-19, Acts 3:22; 7:37). After fasting on the mountain Moses received tablets, the work of God (Exod. 31:18), and later received again, on a second set of tablets, the law written by the finger of God (Exod. 34:1-4). He instructed the holy nation in the law and by his work he hinted at, and showed a glimpse of, Christ's future ministry. As Moses appeared as the liberator and savior of Abraham's race, so later Christ did the same for the whole human race.

Elijah, when he too had fasted forty days (I Kgs. 19:8), saw the Lord on the mountain, not in fire, as the elders of Israel had earlier (Exod. 24:9-10, Deut. 5:23), but passing beyond the fiery vision by his God-pleasing fast, he saw the Lord in the sound of a light passing breeze (I Kgs. 19:12 LXX). He had approached more closely to our Lord's words, "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24). For the sound prefigured the Truth and the preaching of Him who is Truth Itself, which rang out round all the ends of the earth, and the passing breeze prefigured the Spirit and grace.

From this vision while fasting Elijah also received power to anoint a prophet in his stead and bestow upon him a double portion of the grace he possessed, and to mount up above the earth in mid-air (2 Kgs. 2:9-11). This pointed clearly towards Christ's ascension from earth to heaven which was to happen later (Acts 1:9-11). While Christ Himself was fasting in the wilderness, He defeated our tempter by force and took away his power against mankind (Matt. 4:1-11, Mark 1:13, cf. Luke 4:1-13). Having at last put down his tyranny, he set our nature free and handed him over for sport to all those willing to live according to His Gospel. In this way He

fulfilled the words of the prophets and by His works inscribed grace and truth upon the symbolic events which took place in ancient times.

You see the benefits of fasting, and how it has made us worthy of so many great gifts? Even from its opposite, unlimited eating and self-indulgence, it is possible to see the advantage of fasting. For the last two weeks our city was given over to gluttony and lack of self-restraint, and straight away we had troubles, shouting, fights, disturbances, shameless songs and obscene laughter. But this week when the fast came it made everything more honorable. It took us away from frivolity's expensive cares, stopped us tolling for the sake of our useless stomachs, set us instead to works of repentance and persuaded us not to labor for the food which perishes but for the food which endures to eternal life.

Where now are the slaughter of animals, the aroma of roasting meat, the variety of sauces and the cooks' best endeavors? Where are the men who run around the streets and pollute the air with their impure voices? Where are those who beat the drum and make music around houses and tables, and their devotees who join in with applause and eat their fill of the food set before them to the accompaniment of kettledrums and flutes? Where are those who spend their days and nights at parties, who are always looking for places to drink, who keep each other company in drunkenness and the shameful acts that result from it? Once the fast was proclaimed all these evils went away and all things good took their place. Instead of disgusting songs, mouths now sing holy psalms. Instead of obscene laughter, there is salutary sorrow and tears. Instead of undisciplined outings and wanderings, everyone takes one and the same way to Christ's Holy Church. If unlimited eating produces a dense swarm of sins, fasting is the root of all virtues and the foundation of God's commandments.

Lack of self-control is actually an evil both ancient and modern, though it did not precede its antidote, fasting. By means of our forefathers' self-indulgence in paradise and their contempt for the fast already in existence there, death entered the world. Sin reigned and brought in the condemnation of our nature from Adam until Christ. The flood covered the whole earth because of the self-indulgence of Adam's descendants in this world of ours and their disdain for the chastity which came before. In those days God said to Noah, "My Spirit shall not abide in these men, for they are flesh" (cf. Gen. 6:3 LXX). The deeds of those who are flesh are none other than unlimited eating, drunkenness, sensual pleasure and the evils that spring from them. Because of the abominable depravity and self-indulgence among the men of Sodom, fire fell on them from heaven (Gen. 19:24). "Behold," says the prophet Ezekiel, "this was the iniquity of the men of Sodom, in fulness of bread they committed abomination" (cf. Ezek. 16:49-50). By means of this abomination, ignoring human nature they fell into unnatural unions. What deprived Esau, Isaac's

firstborn, of his birthright and his father's blessing? Of course it was lasciviousness and an unreasonable demand for food (Gen. 25:25-34; 26:34-35, Heb. 12:16). Why were Eli's sons condemned to death, and why did he meet a violent death at the news of the death of his children, whom he had not disciplined with proper care? Surely it was because they took the meat from the cauldrons before the time and used it (1 Sam. 2:12-17; 4:11, 17-18). Also, the whole Hebrew nation, while Moses was fasting on the mountain for their sake, were indulging themselves to their own detriment. They ate and drank and rose up to play, as the Scripture says (Exod. 32:6), and their sport was worshiping an idol, for it was then that the incidents surrounding the fashioning of the calf took place among them.

Sensual pleasure causes ungodliness as well as sin, but fasting and self-control result in the fear of God as well as virtue. Fasting must be accompanied by self-control. Why? Because eating our fill, even of humble foods, is a hindrance to the purifying mourning, godly sorrow and contrition in our souls, which bring about unswerving repentance leading to salvation. For without a contrite heart we cannot really lay hold of repentance. It is the restriction of self-indulgence, sleep and the senses according to God's will that crushes our hearts and makes us mourn for our sins.

When that rich man in the Gospel said to himself, "Eat, drink and be merry" (Luke 12:19), the wretch made himself fit for the eternal flames and unfit for this present life. Let us, on the contrary, brethren, tell ourselves to be temperate, to fast, to keep watch, to be restrained, to be humble and to suffer hardship for our salvation. Then we shall finish this present life in a good way pleasing to God and inherit the blessed life without end.

May we all attain to this by the grace and love towards mankind of our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom belong glory, might, honor and worship, together with His Father without beginning and the life-giving Spirit, now and for ever and unto the ages of ages. Amen.

– St. Gregory Palamas, *Homily 6, On Fasting*

### **St. Meletius of Antioch**

*Who shall elude? Who shall neglect? Even Porphyrios who has passed from life? On the twenty-sixth the corpse of Porphyris was hidden in the earth.*

He was from the city of Thessaloniki, the son of parents who were noble and wealthy, during the reign of Emperor Arcadius (395-408). Withdrawing from his homeland, he went to Egypt, where he went to a skete and became a monk. After five years he went to Jerusalem, and enlightened many unbelievers by the words of his teachings. For this reason he was ordained a Presbyter by the Patriarch of



Jerusalem Praulius. Later he was ordained Bishop of Gaza by the Archbishop of Caesarea in Palestine John. Having become Bishop, he did many wonderful things, and many unbelievers he converted to the knowledge of God. Seeing that the provincial Christians were unjustly treated by the authorities of Gaza, who were idolaters and heretics, he went to Constantinople to seek help for those who were mistreated. There he met the great John Chrysostom who was at that time Patriarch of Constantinople and told him about the unjust treatment by the authorities of Gaza, for which reason he went to Constantinople. The divine Chrysostom therefore introduced him to the cubicularius of the emperor, whose name was Amantios.

The empress Eudoxia learned of the proposal of the Saint from the cubicularius, and she graciously received him, referring everything concerning him to the emperor, as well as the prophesy the Saint made in regards to a male child, which they were to give birth to, namely the young Theodosius. When the emperor learned about this, he rejoiced and thanked God. Later the empress gave birth to Theodosius the new, she then invited Saint Porphyrios for him to receive his blessing, and he also sought to complete all that he proposed, of which he asked the emperor. However, the emperor had difficulties with the authorities, and said it was not possible to banish the idolaters and heretics from Gaza, because they were very useful and helpful. The empress replied to the Bishop: "Your request is a heavy one, O Master, but heavier still are your earnest prayers." For this reason the emperor inclined towards the Saint receiving what he asked for. Therefore he immediately sent an imperial order, for the heretics and idolaters to be banished from Gaza, whosoever had authority.

Then the blessed Porphyrios, after receiving from the empress two hundred pounds of gold, in order to build churches, and two hundred coins for expenses, returned to his eparchy. There he destroyed the temples to the idols, and banished the heretics. The temple of the Greek god named Marna he burned down with fire, and built there a church according to the plans described by the empress Eudoxia. This divine Father therefore shined in his eparchy, and performed many miracles over the course of twenty-four years and eleven months and eight days, after which he departed to the Lord. *(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.

### **St. Photida, Sister of the Samaritan Woman**

Elder Gregory, of the Holy Monastery of the Honorable Forerunner and the Transfiguration, told us the following:

During one of the many times we went with the priest of my village, Papa-Aleko, to assist in the settlement of Amphipolis, we met an older man who then was helping the church of Amphipolis. Talking with him, he told us about an event that took place during the Turkish occupation, when he was a child of twelve years old:

"The Aga had become seriously ill, and ran to doctors in nearby areas, even going to Thessaloniki, but no one was able to make him well, and his health was

becoming worse. He stagnated in bed. One day in desperation he remembered Saint Photida, the chapel of the Saint who was the sister according to the flesh of Saint Photini [they both celebrate their feast on February 26th], which was about a kilometer from his settlement, and which has holy water that wells up even today. It is known as 'The Holy Water of Saint Photida'. 'Saint Photida will make me well,' the Aga said. So he ordered the then commissioner of the church in Amphipolis to go and bring him holy water from Saint Photida.

The commissioner could not do otherwise. But coming out of the house of the Aga he whispered: 'You pig, you think I'm going to bring you holy water from our Saint to defile it?' He left, and he calculated the time it would have taken to go to the chapel and return so as not to be perceived as a fraud by the Aga and be punished. So he took public water and took it to the Aga instead of the holy water.

When the supposed 'holy water' of Saint Photida reached the Aga, he ordered those present to roll up his bed, and weeping with tears in his eyes and with reverence he said twice: 'Saint Photida, help me. Saint Photida, help me.' He took the 'holy water', as he considered it, drank it, and the next day he was well. All were amazed, especially the commissioner who knew what he did. The faith, longing and confidence of the Aga in Saint Photida, as well as the intercessions of the Saint, made him well." (*from johnsanidopoulos.com*)

## **The Rules of Fasting**

[*This material is taken from the introduction to The Lenten Triodion published by St. Tikhon's Seminary Press – ed.*]

“Precisely [what] do the rules of fasting demand? Neither in ancient nor in modern times has there ever been exact uniformity, but most Orthodox authorities agree on the following rules:

“On weekdays (Monday to Friday inclusive) during the seven weeks of lent, there are restrictions both on the *number* of meals taken daily and on the *types of food* permitted; but when a meal is allowed, there is no fixed limitation on the *quantity* of food to be eaten.

“On weekdays in the *first week*, fasting is particularly severe. According to strict observance, in the course of the five initial days of lent, only two meals are eaten, one on Wednesday and the other on Friday, in both cases after the liturgy of the Presanctified.

“On the other three days, those who have the strength are encouraged to keep an absolute fast; those for whom this proves impracticable may eat on Tuesday and Thursday (but not, if possible, on Monday), in the evening after Vespers, when they may take bread and water or perhaps tea or fruit-juice, but not a cooked meal.

It should be added at once that in practice today these rules are commonly relaxed. At the meals on Wednesday and Friday *xerophagy* is prescribed. Literally this means 'dry eating'. Strictly interpreted, it signifies that we may eat only vegetables cooked with water and salt, and also such things as fruit, nuts, bread and honey. In practice, octopus and shellfish are also allowed on days of xerophagy; likewise vegetable margarine and corn or other vegetable oil, not made from olives. But the following categories of food are definitely excluded:

*Meat; animal products (cheese, milk, butter, eggs, lard, drippings); fish (i.e., fish with backbones); oil (i.e., olive oil) and wine (i.e., all alcoholic drinks).*

“On weekdays (Monday to Friday inclusive) in the *second, third, fourth, fifth and sixth weeks*, one meal a day is permitted, to be taken in the afternoon following Vespers, and at this one meal xerophagy is to be observed.”

During Holy Week: On the first three days there is one meal each day, with xerophagy; but some try to keep a complete fast on these days, or else they eat only uncooked food, as on the opening days of the first week. On Holy Thursday one meal is eaten, with wine and oil. On Great Friday those who have the strength follow the practice of the early Church and keep a total fast; those unable to do this may eat bread, with a little water, tea or fruit-juice, but not until sunset, or at any rate after [the Burial Service] at Vespers. On Holy Saturday there is one meal after the Liturgy of St. Basil, with wine but not oil.

The rule of xerophagy is relaxed on the following days:

- On Saturdays and Sundays in Lent, two main meals may be taken in the usual way, with wine and olive oil.

- On the Feast of the Annunciation (March 25) and Palm Sunday, fish is permitted as well as wine and oil.

- Wine and oil are permitted on the following days: Forefeast of the Annunciation (March 24) and Synaxis of the Archangel Gabriel (March 26).

It has always been held that these rules of fasting should be relaxed in the case of anyone elderly or in poor health. In present-day practice, even for those in good health, the full strictness of the fast is usually mitigated. Only a few Orthodox today attempt to keep a total fast on Monday, Tuesday and Thursday in the first week, or on the first three days in Holy Week. On weekdays, it is now common to eat two cooked meals daily instead of one. . . . Personal factors need to be taken into account, as for example the situation of an isolated Orthodox living in the same household as non-Orthodox, or obliged to take communal meals at work or school. In cases of uncertainty each should seek the advice of his or her spiritual father. At all times it is essential to bear in mind that ‘you are not under the law but under grace’ (Rom. 6:14), and that ‘the letter kills, but the spirit gives

life' (2 Cor. 3:6). The rules of fasting, while they need to be taken seriously, are not to be interpreted with dour and pedantic legalism; 'for the kingdom of God is not food and drink, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit' (Rom. 14:17).

### **Also Commemorated Today**

New Hieromartyr Peter priest (1930).

New Hieromartyr Sergius priest (1933).

Virgin-martyr Anna (1937).

New Hieromartyrs John bishop of Rylsk and John priest (1938).

Venerable Sebastian, monk of Poshekhonye (1542).

Martyrs Sebastian and Christodoulos (66).

New Martyr John Calphas ("the Apprentice") at Constantinople (1575) (Greek).

St. Photina (Photini), the Samaritan woman, and her sisters Anatola, Phota, Photis, Parasceva, and Cyriaca; her sons Photinus and Joses; and Sebastian the Duke, Victor, and Christodulus — all martyred under Nero (66) (Greek).

Martyr Theoclitus, martyred with St. Photina (Greek).

St. Agricola, Bishop of Nevers (c. 594) (France)

St. Andrew of Florence, bishop (c. 407) (Italy)

Hieromartyr Dionysius of Augsburg, bishop (c. 303)

St. Faustinian, second bishop of Bologna (4<sup>th</sup> c.) (Italy)

St. Victor, hermit in Arcis-sur-Aube (7<sup>th</sup> c.) (Gaul)

St. Koulfid, bishop of St. Malo Aleth (6<sup>th</sup> c.) (Brittany)

St. Armahel (Arzhel) of Brittany

St. Eartongathe (Ercongode), nun of St.-Fare in Meaux (8<sup>th</sup> c.)

Hieromartyr Nestor, Bishop of Perge in Pamphylia (251), with Papias, Diodorus, Conon, and Claudian

Martyrs Fortunatus, Felix, and 27 others (251)

St. Alexander, bishop of Alexandria (326)

St. Eolade, bishop of Nevers (reposed Aug 28) (580 or 581)

Martyr Justinian of Troyes (unk)

Hieromartyr Hilary, bishop of Mainz (c. 150)

St. Auspice, bishop of Toul (c. 490) (also July 8)

St. Servule, bishop of Verona (6<sup>th</sup> c.)

St. Irene of Gaza, virgin

Hieromartyr Denis (Zosimus), bishop of Augsburg, with Afra, Taite, Hilary, Digna, Eunomia, Eutropia, and Bishop Narcissus of Gorona (303)

Martyr Pascal of Rome

## **Sunday of Orthodoxy Pan-Orthodox Vespers**

Sunday of Orthodoxy Vespers will be held at Ss. Constantine & Helen Greek Orthodox Church (721 Norwood Rd, Silver Spring, MD), on March 5th at 5pm. Our speaker will be Dr. Lewis Patsavos, Professor of Canon Law emeritus at Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School Of Theology. His topic will be *The Triumph of Orthodoxy: its Peril and Challenge*.

### **Social Team for March 5**

Team 6 is up next week - Howl, Dee Jubb, Johnsons, Charlotte H., Andrew, Jameson Barker. Thank you!

#### **Follow Our Diocese On-Line**

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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.)