

SOBORNOST

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American Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Diocese

*ECUMENICAL PATRIARCHATE
OF CONSTANTINOPLE*

SERVICES

Wednesday: Lay Vespers 6:30 PM

Saturday: Vespers 5 PM

Sunday: Matins 8:45 AM

Sunday School 9:30 AM

Divine Liturgy 10 AM

May 7, 2023 – 4th Sunday of

Pascha | Sunday of the Paralytic

By Metropolitan Hierotheos of Nafpaktos and Agiou Vlasiou

"For an angel went down at a certain time into the pool and stirred up the water" (Jn. 5:4)

At the pool (in its porticoes) which was at the Sheep Gate "there was a large crowd of sick people" waiting for the descent of the angel to be released from their disease. This "pool" was also visited by the "Angel of Great Counsel", Christ, and He healed the bedridden man who had suffered for thirty-eight years. When the man had no man, He was accepted by the God-man. When he could not enter the pool, after the descent of the angel, he was found worthy to meet the Lord of the angels.

Bethesda - Baptism – Church

The Holy Fathers see a correlation between the Pool of Bethesda and the Pool of the Church, that is, of Holy Baptism. The Sacred Chrysostom says that the Lord with this miracle makes a hint at the Mystery of Baptism. These things are not written simply and randomly, but they depict and imprint what is to take place in the future. "A Baptism was about to be given, possessing much power, and the greatest of gifts, a Baptism purging all sins, and making men alive instead of dead."



The waters of Bethesda had miraculous and not healing properties, because not everyone who entered became well, but only the first to enter after the water was stirred by the angel. And the water of Baptism receives the uncreated energy of God, through which man becomes a member of the Body of Christ. The baptismal font is the womb of the Church. Just as in the womb a man is conceived, carried and born, so in the spiritual womb of the Church man is conceived, carried and born spiritually and becomes a member of the Church. Miracles were performed in the Pool of Bethesda, but miracles happened to one man, at a given moment and with the action of an angel. But with the appearance of Christ all these conditions changed. He Himself is salvation, which is offered to everyone and at any time, as long as man wants it.

But because Holy Baptism is the introductory mystery and through it we become members of the Church, that is why the Pool of Bethesda symbolizes the Church of Christ. In the Church there is always the Grace of the Triune God and heals everyone. *Bethesda* means "house of mercy" and that is exactly what the Church is. The Church is not a human organization, but a God-Human Organization, not a human association, but a God-Human Body. Everything in it is a mystery, which is why miracles happen all the time. And a "Lord have mercy" that one says in faith becomes a cause of receiving divine Grace. The Church is a constant Pentecost, in which the sick are healed and the dead are resurrected. We sense the Church as being a place of therapeutic healing, that is why we sinners feel comfortable, while the "pious" seek other places, other human organizations, to express their "piety" (social-charitable work, etc.).

The Period of Pentecost and the Gospel of the Apostle John

Apart from the symbolism and correlation we mentioned, the reading of the Gospel of John, which we read throughout this time, is done for two main reasons. First, because the fourth Gospel in the early Church was intended for the most spiritually perfect Christians, who had purified their hearts from the passions and were able to teach the mysteries of the Kingdom of Christ. This Gospel mentions a few miracles performed by Christ, which are connected with the basic Mysteries of the Church. It is an exalted Gospel, since the truths are presented that Christ is the Word of God, the Light and the life of men. Studying the fourth Gospel, one senses well what Saint Gregory Palamas says, that Christ "the pre-eternal God is born for us also as a Theologian." Christ is the true Theologian, because as the Word of God he revealed to us the Name of God the Father and His Counsel.

Secondly, the fourth Gospel is read at this time, because on Holy Saturday, as is well known, the group Baptisms of new Christians took place. The faithful prayed throughout Great Lent for the Catechumens and for those who were pursuing towards Holy Illumination, so that they may be cleansed of their passions, freed

from the methods of the devil and receive the "illumination of knowledge and piety." Baptism, after all, is called Illumination, because people receive the true Light, Christ, and are the truly enlightened. So the catechumens went through the stage of purification, during which they were taught to distinguish the energies of God from the energies of the creation and even of the devil. This was done by reading the first three Gospels. After Holy Baptism, after receiving illumination, they could understand the deeper meaning of the word of God (being united with the Word of God), which is why at this time this eminently theological Gospel was read.

The inner connection of John the Evangelist with Christ (who leaned on His chest during the Secret Supper) and with the Panagia (he took her into his home as a gift of Christ to him) gave us this theological Gospel, which the Church ordained to be read at this time, in which we sail in the resurrection joy.

Some Great Truths

From what has been said, the following is clear. First, the spiritual life is a continual progression. There is no end to the spiritual life, but a continuous perfecting. Man, from the purification of the heart, proceeds to the illumination of the nous and then enters the theoria (vision) of God, which has no end. Saint Gregory of Nyssa typically says that "virtue is a term that is without term". And elsewhere he says: "By virtue we learn a term of perfection, one that does not have a term." This progress has to do with a sense of sinfulness and the life of repentance.

Second, reading the Gospels is very important for the spiritual life, but understanding it does not depend on our cognitive state, but on our spiritual state. It is proportional to the degree of the illumination we have. Also the interpretation of the Gospel is offered authentically by the Church to its members and in fact during Divine Worship and in the spirit of Worship. No one can give arbitrary interpretations. Heretics cannot possibly interpret it well.

Thirdly, it is terrible to have received Holy Baptism (Illumination) and not yet have entered the stage of purification and to be tormented by the state of our impurities. Remaining in the spiritual Bethesda, the Church (House of Mercy), having the spirit of constant and fiery repentance, will accept the visit of the God-man, who will heal and illuminate our existence. *(from johnsanidopoulos.com)*

Today's Epistle Lesson – The Acts of the Apostles 9:32-42 EOB

In those days, as Peter was traveling through all those regions, he also came down to [visit] the saints who lived in Lydda. There, he found a certain man named Aeneas, who was paralyzed and who had been bedridden for eight years. Peter

said to him, “Aeneas, Jesus Christ heals you! Get up and make your bed!” And immediately, he arose. All who lived in Lydda and Sharon saw him and turned to the Lord.

Now, there lived in Joppa a certain disciple named Tabitha, (which, when translated means Gazelle). This woman was full of good works and acts of mercy. But it happened that at this time, she became ill and died. She was washed and placed in an upper room. As Lydda was near Joppa, the disciples, hearing that Peter was there, sent two men to him, imploring him, ‘Do not to delay in coming to help us!’ So Peter arose and went with them. When he arrived, the disciples led him into the upper room. All the widows stood by him weeping, showing [to Peter] the coats and garments which Dorcas had made while she was with them. But having put everyone out [of the room], Peter knelt down and began to pray. Turning towards the body, he said, “Tabitha, get up!” She opened her eyes, and when she saw Peter, she sat up. Then Peter gave her his hand and raised her up. Calling the saints and widows, he presented her alive. This became known all over Joppa, and many people believed in the Lord.

Today’s Gospel Lesson – Saint John 5:1-15 EOB

At that time, there was a feast of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. Now in Jerusalem, by the sheep gate, there is a pool with five porches called in Hebrew “Bethesda.” Under these laid a great multitude of people who were sick, blind, lame, or paralyzed, waiting for the moving of the water. For an angel went down at certain times into the pool, and stirred up the water. Then whoever stepped in first after the stirring of the water was made whole of whatever disease he had. A certain man was there, who had been sick for thirty-eight years. When Jesus saw him lying there and perceived that the man had been sick for a long time, he asked him, “Do you want to be made well?” The sick man replied, “Sir, I have no one to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up, but while I am coming, someone else steps down before me!” Jesus said to him, “Arise, take up your mat, and walk!” Immediately, the man was made well; he took up his mat and began to walk. Now, it was the Sabbath on that day. And so, the Jews said to the man who had been cured, “It is the Sabbath! It is not lawful for you to carry the mat!” The man answered them, “He who made me well, that one said to me, ‘Take up your mat, and walk.’” Then they asked him, “Who is the man who said to you, ‘Take up your mat, and walk?’” But the man who had been healed did not know who it was, for Jesus had withdrawn in the crowd that was there. Later, Jesus found him in the temple and said to him, “Behold, you have become well. Sin no more, so that nothing worse may happen to you!” The man went away and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had made him well.

Homily on the Fourth Eothinon Gospel - Luke 24:1-12

By Metropolitan Hierotheos of Nafpaktos and Agiou Vlasiou

Continuing our interpretation of the Eothina Gospels, that is the Gospels that are read during Matins on Sunday which refer to the Resurrection of Christ, today we will examine the Gospel that was read this morning during Matins which was the Fourth Eothinon.

Today's Gospel refers to two visits to the Tomb of Christ. The first visit was of the Myrrhbearing women, namely Mary Magdalene, Joanna and Mary the mother of James, while the other visit was of the Apostle Peter. The important thing here is that none of them saw the Risen Christ, but the women saw two young men in bright clothing, who were angels, and Peter only saw the shroud which he found in the tomb of Christ.

It is particularly impressive when one reads the events of the Resurrection that the women called "myrrhbearing women" were the first to go to the tomb, who then told the disciples about the event of the Resurrection, but the disciples did not immediately receive the information of the women.

The myrrhbearing women had spiritual bravery and great faith, which is why they were made worthy of the great honor to be the first evangelists to the Evangelists and apostles to the Apostles. In this way the restoration of the female nature was made. As we know, Eve sinned first and then brought about the fall to Adam. Now, with the Resurrection of Christ, this is corrected, and so the first to certify the miracle of the Resurrection of Christ were the women who conveyed this message to the disciples.

Then, both the Myrrhbearing women as well as the Apostle Peter, felt anxious when they entered the tomb. We must understand that the tomb in which Christ was placed was not underground, but within a rock. This is the tomb the Myrrhbearing women and the Apostle Peter entered. And upon entering the tomb, they saw that it was empty, except the shroud, so they felt anxious. Of course, Christ had previously proclaimed His Resurrection, but the resurrection of a man is such a major event, especially for one to raise himself with his own power, as Christ did, whose divinity raised His body, that this goes beyond human reason and knowledge. Anxiety and disbelief before such an event is natural and according to human knowledge. But within the Church of the Resurrected Christ, everything, even that which is paradoxical, can be realized.

The women saw two angels in bright uniforms, which was the light of God, that the angels receive when they approach God. When people first meet others who are people of God, who transmit to them the message of the Resurrection, and after, in accordance with the obedience shown to them and in accordance with the

economy of God, they are made worthy to see the Resurrected Christ Himself. Obedience to our spiritual fathers and the saints of our Church is a necessary stage of preparation for this great appearance of Christ and personal communication and communion with Him.

The angels said to the myrrhbearing women: "Why do you seek the one who lives among the dead; He is not here, but is risen." The God of the Orthodox Church is not the God who lives among the dead, He is not a dead God, but a living God. Whoever wants to experience this let them obey the contemporary angels, who are the saints, and let them follow their advice. Then they will confirm it personally and certainly they will rise from the works of sin. (*from johnsanidopoulos.com*)

A Word From the Holy Fathers

Wherever Jesus appears, there is salvation. If He sees a revenue officer sitting in his office, He makes him an apostle and evangelist. Laid in the grave, He raises the dead to life. He bestows sight on the blind, hearing on the deaf. When, as now, He visits the public baths, it is not out of interest in the architecture, but to heal the sick.

By the Sheep Market in Jerusalem there used to be a pool with five colonnades, four of which enclosed the pool, while the fifth spanned it midway. Here large numbers of sick would lie (unbelief also was rise among the Jews). The physician and healer of both souls and bodies showed fairness in choosing this chronic sufferer to be the first recipient of His gift, that he might the earlier be released from his pains. For not for one day only, nor for two, had the poor man lain on his bed of sickness – nor was it now the first month, no, nor the first year – but for eight-and-thirty years. His long-standing illness, rendering him a figure familiar to passers by, now made him ocular evidence of the power of his healer. For the paralytic was known to all by reason of the length of time. But though the master physician gave proof of His skill, He was rebuffed by those who put an unfavorable construction on His work of mercy.

As He walked round the pool, "He saw." He did not elicit the information by asking questions, for His divine power obviated any such need. Not "asking," but "seeing" how long the invalid had lain there; "seeing," He knew; indeed He knew before He saw. For if in the case of secrets of the heart "He had no need to question anyone concerning man, for He Himself knew what was in man," much more was this the case when it was a question of diagnosing diseases with visible symptoms.

He saw a bedridden man weighed down by a sore sickness; for the paralytic's heavy load of sins aggravated the long-drawn agony of the disease. A question addressed to the sufferer hinted to him his need: "Do you wish to be healed?" Not a

word more; He left him with the question half spoken. For the question was ambiguous; it was because he was sick not only in body but also in soul (compare His later saying: "Behold, you are cured; sin no more, lest something worse befall you") that He asked him: "Do you want to be healed?" What mighty power that implied in the physician, making relief depend only on the patient's willing! It is because salvation is from faith that He asked "Do you want to be healed?" that his "Yes" might give Jesus His cue. This "Do you wish?" is the word of Jesus only; it belongs not to doctors who heal the body. For those who treat bodily ailments cannot say to any and every patient: "Do you wish to be healed?" But Jesus grants the will, accepts the faith, and freely bestows the gift.

Once when the Savior was passing by, two blind men were sitting by the roadside. Though their bodily eyes were sightless, their minds were open to the light. The blind men pointed out Him whom the Scribes did not recognize. For the Pharisees who, for all that they had been taught the Law – yes, had studied it from childhood to old age – had nevertheless grown old still uncomprehending, now said: "As for this man, we do not know where he comes from" (for "he came unto his own, and his own received him not"). But the blind men kept on crying out: "Son of David, have mercy on us." Those whose eyes did not serve them to read knew Him whom the students of the Law failed to recognize.

Going up to them, the Savior said: "Do you believe that I can do this for you?" and "What do you wish me to do for you?" He did not say: "What what do you wish me to say to you?" but "What do you wish me to do for you?" For He was a doer, a maker – a giver of life, too – not now beginning to do for the first time (for His Father works always, and He works with His Father); He was the maker of the whole world at His Father's command. Alone begotten, without intermediary, of the Alone, He questions the blind men, saying: "What will you have me do for you?" Not that He did not know what they wanted, for it was obvious: but he chose to make His gift depend on their answer, that they might be justified out of their own mouths. The reader of hearts could not be ignorant what they would say; but He waited upon their words; now His question was their cue.

He stood by the cripple, the doctor visited the sick man, nor is it so strange that He condescended to attend the invalid by the pool, for had He not visited us from Heaven? He asked him: "Do you wish to be healed?" by the question leading him on towards the saving knowledge, raising a question in his mind. A gift, truly, of grace! No fee was charged; else the patient would not have had the physician coming to him. He said to Him: "Yes, sir; for the long duration of my illness makes me desire health; but, desire it as I may, I have no man..." Do not lose heart, my good fellow, because you "have no man"; God you have standing by you, One who is at once man and God under different aspects; for both must be confessed. The

confession of the humanity without the confession of the divinity is unavailing, or rather earns a curse. For "cursed is he who puts his trust in man." So with us: if, hoping in Jesus, we hope in the man only, not including the divinity, we inherit the curse. But as it is, we confess both God and man, and both truly: in worshiping Him as God truly begotten of the true Father and as man not merely in appearance, but really and truly born, we receive a real and true salvation.

"Yes, I do want to be healed, but I have no man...." Maybe it was because of his dire straits that Jesus came to his rescue. For the generality of the sick had relatives, friends too, and maybe other helpers. But the poor cripple, crushed by a literally universal want, utterly destitute, abandoned, alone, found the Son of God, the Only-begotten, coming to his aid.

"Do you wish to be healed?" "Yes, Lord, but I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool." No, but you have the spring itself. "For with you is the fountain of life," the fountainhead of all fountains. "He who drinks of this water, out of his belly shall flow rivers," not of the water that flows downwards but of that water that springs up – for the spring inspired by Jesus' draught, unlike man's puny leap which lands him back on earth again, carries us up to the sky; the water "bubbles up unto life everlasting." Jesus is the wellspring of all blessings.

Why, then, fix your hope on a pool? You have Him who walks upon the waters, who rebukes the winds, who holds sovereign sway over the ocean; who not only Himself walked on the sea as on a firm pavement but vouchsafed the like power to Peter. For when the night was black and the Light, though it was there, was not recognized (for Jesus, walking on the waters, passed unrecognized in face and features; it was the characteristic timbre of His voice that betrayed His presence), they, thinking they were seeing an apparition, were frightened until Jesus said to them, "I AM, do not be afraid." Peter said to Him: "If it is You whom I know, or rather whom the Father revealed to me, bid me come to You over the waters"; and Christ, generously sharing what was His own, said: "Come."

There stood by the waters of the pool the Ruler and Maker of the waters. To Him the cripple said: "I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool." The Savior said to him: "Why do you await the troubling of the water when you can be cured with no trouble at all? Why wait for the movement that is seen? More swiftly is the mind's command performed by the word. Only look down into the swirling power of the spring and glimpse there God clothed in flesh; consider not the man whom your eyes see, but the invisible God who works through Him whom you see."

"I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool." He said to him: "Why set such narrow bounds to hope, intent on some poor water-cure? Arise: He who commands it is the Resurrection."

Everywhere the Savior becomes "all things to all men"; to the hungry, bread; to the thirsty, water; to the dead, resurrection; to the sick, a physician; to sinners, redemption.

"Rise, take up your pallet and walk." But first rise, cast away your sickness; afterwards you can put muscle on faith. Exert your strength first upon the bed that used to carry you; learn to carry away on a wooden stretcher those passions by which you were for so long carried away....

He said to him: "Rise, take up your pallet and walk." The disease was long-standing, the remedy swift. The paralysis had lasted for years; the strengthening of the sinews was instantaneous. For the creator of the sinews, He who provided a variety of remedies for the blind, He who gave that incongruous salve by anointing with clay (for a plaster of clay, applied to sound eyes, deprives them of sight, but Jesus by means of clay bestowed sight upon the blind)...His power reached others by yet other means.

Where He simply said: "Rise, take up your pallet and walk," what astonishment, do you think, seized the beholders! Yet, marvelous as the sight was, it was the faithlessness of the onlookers that was really strange. A years-old disease is healed, but an obstinate incredulity was not healed. Instead the Jews' malady persisted; they did not want a cure.

If they were right to be amazed by the incident, they should have gone on to adore the healer of bodies and souls. But they murmured; for they were the children of murmurers, of those who twisted good into evil, calling bitter sweet and sweet bitter. It was quite in accordance with the divine "economy" that Jesus worked on the Sabbath, performing deeds transcending the Sabbath, that the deed might convince. It was because an assertion can be met by a counter-assertion, while there is no answer to the deed, that He used to heal on the Sabbath; the lesson is, instead of relying on arguments, which only provoke counterarguments, to let deeds convince the onlookers.

They said to him: "It is the Sabbath; it is not lawful for you to take up your pallet." The Lawgiver was present, and another says: "It is not lawful for you?" "Appoint, O Lord, a lawgiver over them": it was spoken of the Savior. The man who had just been cured both in soul and body immediately retorts with a wise word from Wisdom. Unable to give a legal answer, he makes a brief one: "You all know," he says, "my long-standing sickness and the long years I was bedridden, my destitution in my distress. Not one of you ever took pity on me, taking me and putting me first into the pool that I might be cured. Yet, when you showed no pity, how have you now assumed the office of lawgivers, saying: "You're not allowed to take up your pallet?" My answer, then, in a nutshell is this: 'I did it at the

command of Him who cured me.' However little account you make of me, yet the deed should impress you. He applied no salve; He employed none of the expedients or remedies known to medicine. He spoke a word, and the work followed; He commanded, and I executed His command. I am only obeying the command of Him who by His command healed me. For if He who commanded had been powerless by His command to cure me, I should not be obliged to obey His commands. But now that His word of command has caused a palpable and inveterate illness to disappear, I have every right to listen to Him to whom my disease listened and, listening, was ended. He who made me well, he it was who said to me: 'Take up your bed'."

The miraculé did not know the identity of his healer. We have here a striking instance of our Savior's shunning of vaingloriousness. For after working the cure He turned aside to avoid receiving recognition for the cure. We do just the opposite. If we are fortunate enough to have a vision in a dream or to succor someone by the imposition of hands or to drive out a devil by invoking the Lord, so far are we from hiding our little triumph that, even unprompted, we boast about it. Jesus gives us an object lesson in not talking about oneself. After the cure He immediately turned aside to avoid recognition. He comes and goes as the occasion calls. When it was proper to prevent the acclaim of the achievement, He withdraws; only when the crowds had gone did He reappear to add spiritual to physical healing, saying: "Behold, you are well: sin no more."

He is a versatile doctor, sometimes healing the soul first, and then the body, sometimes following the reverse order. "Leave your sinful ways, lest something worse befall you," He says, through one teaching many. For the warning is addressed not alone to the man in the Gospel, but to all of us. For if ever we find ourselves afflicted by sickness, grief or trouble, let no one lay it to God's charge: "for God cannot be tempted by evil, and himself tempts no man." Each of us is scourged, "fast bound with the ropes of his own sins."

"Sin no more, lest something worse befall you." Listen to the saying, Everyman. Let him who before was a fornicator slough off his lust; let him who before was avaricious become generous in almsgiving; let the thief pay heed: "Sin no more." Great is God's forbearance, lavish His grace. But let not His exceeding patience breed contempt. Do not make God's long-suffering a pretext for continuing in sin. Take the cure for your carnal passions, so that you too can say, in the words of the lesson so appropriately read: "For what time we were in the flesh, the sinful passions, which were aroused by the law, were at work in our members." If the Apostle says, "What time we were in the flesh," he was not speaking of our mortal envelope of flesh but of the deeds of the flesh. He was himself, indeed, still clad in the flesh when he said, "What time we were in the flesh." It is in the sense in

which, when the deluge was preparing, God said: "My spirit shall not remain in these men, because they are flesh" (the spirit being perverted to fleshly appetite), that the Apostle says: "When we were in the flesh."

Let no one, then, be "in the flesh"; but, being in the flesh, let him not walk according to the flesh. The Apostle does not mean that, to avoid sin, we should withdraw altogether from the world, but that, being in the flesh, we should make the flesh our servant and not be ruled by it. Let us not be slaves, but masters, in our own house. Let us be moderate in our eating, not allowing ourselves to be carried away by gluttony. So bridling our appetite, we shall govern also its henchman, lust. Let the soul rule the body and not be at the beck and call of animal instinct.

"Sin no more, lest something worse befall you." It is a warning to all; God grants that all ears may hear it. For it is not always that the fleshly ear, when it receives a message, transmits it to the mind. That is why the Savior, when addressing those who had "ears of flesh," said, "If you have ears that can hear, then hear."

Let everyone, then, give ear to Jesus and "sin no more." Let us, rather, hasten to the great Pardoner. Are we ill? Let us have recourse to Him. Is it a sickness of the soul that ails us? Let us become disciples of the physician of knowledge. Are we hungry? Let Him give us bread. Are we dead? Let Him raise us to life. Have we grown old in ignorance? Let us beg wisdom of Wisdom.

But my sermon has betrayed me into wordiness, and I am, maybe, standing in the way of its practical lesson. God grant that all of us may heed the Savior's words, that, aided by mightier works, we may send up our praise to God, to whom be the glory now and forever, through all eternity. Amen.

– St. Cyril, Archbishop of Jerusalem

Holy Martyr Acacius the Centurion of Cappadocia

The Holy Martyr Acacius, who lived mostly in the third century, was born at Cappadocia and was a centurion of the Martesian regiment under the military officer Firmus. When the persecution against Christians began on orders from the emperor Maximian Galerius (305-311), Firmus interrogated his soldiers one after the other about their faith. Saint Acacius firmly and openly confessed himself a Christian. Seeing the steadfastness of Saint Acacius, Firmus sent him to his superior officer, who was named Vivianus. Vivianus gave the saint over to fierce torture.

After the tortures they put him in heavy chains and locked him up in prison. A while later they led the martyr and other prisoners to Byzantium, to the prefect. The soldiers marched quickly, showing the prisoners no mercy. Saint Acacius weakened along the way from his wounds, from his chains, and from hunger and

thirst. When finally they halted for the night, Saint Acacius offered thanks to God, for permitting him to suffer for His holy Name. As he prayed the saint heard a voice from the heavens, "Courage, Acacius, and be strong!" This voice was heard also by the other prisoners, and many of them believed in Christ and asked the saint to instruct them in the Christian Faith.

At Byzantium they placed the holy martyr in jail, while the other prisoners were held under less severe conditions. At night the other prisoners saw how radiant youths appeared to Saint Acacius and attended to him, washing his wounds and bringing him food. After seven days, Vivianus again summoned Saint Acacius before him and was struck by his fresh appearance. Supposing that the prison guard was bribed to give the prisoner both respite and food, he summoned the guard to question him. Since he did not believe his answers, Vivianus had the guard severely beaten. Saint Acacius himself then answered Vivianus, "My power and strength are given me by the Lord Jesus Christ, Who has healed my wounds." Vivianus gave orders to beat the martyr about the face and to smash his teeth for his words.

Determined to intensify and prolong the torture of Saint Acacius, Vivianus sent him to the prefect Flaccinus with a letter. When he read the letter, Flaccinus became annoyed that Vivianus had tortured a centurion for so long and so cruelly, and he gave orders to behead the martyr without further delay.

At the place of execution Saint Acacius lifted up his eyes to the heavens, giving thanks to God for being granted a martyr's death for His sake. Then he bowed his head beneath the sword. This occurred in the year 303.

Under Constantine the Great the relics of the holy martyr Acacius rested at Constantinople in a church built in his honor, and later they were transferred to Calabria, to the city of Scillatio. The holy martyr Acacius particularly helps those who struggle against temptations of the flesh, as attested by Saint Epiphanius, a disciple of Saint Andrew the Fool-for-Christ. *(from oca.org)*

Appearance of the Cross in the Sky at Jerusalem in 351

The cross planted in the ground, sanctified the earth in days of old, and now that it has appeared, it sanctifies also the heavens. On the seventh the seal of the cross spread out in the heavens.

On this day in the year 351, not long after Saint Cyril of Jerusalem had succeeded Maximus as Archbishop of Jerusalem, during the reign of Constantius, the son of Saint Constantine the Great, on the day of Pentecost, the multi-attested sign of the Cross appeared over Jerusalem.

Saint Cyril, in his letter to the Emperor Constantius, describes the event he witnessed with his own eyes:

On the nones [or 7th] of May, about the third hour [or nine in the morning], a vast luminous body, in the form of a Cross, appeared in the heavens, just over the holy Golgotha, reaching as far as the holy Mount of Olives [that is, almost two English miles in length], seen not by one or two persons, but clearly and evidently by the whole city. This was not, as may be thought, a momentary transient phenomenon: for it continued several hours visible to our eyes, and brighter than the sun, the light of which would have eclipsed it, had not this been stronger. The whole city, struck with a reverential fear, tempered with joy, ran immediately to the church, young and old, Christians and heathens, citizens and strangers, all with one voice giving praise to our Lord Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, the worker of miracles; finding by experience the truth of the Christian doctrine, to which the heavens bear witness. (<i>PG</i> 33:1 16q)

He concludes his letter with wishes that the emperor may always glorify the holy and consubstantial Trinity. Historians of the time, both Orthodox and non-Orthodox, including Sozomen, Theophanes, Eutychius, John of Nice, Glycas, and others quote Saint Cyril concerning this event. Others, such as Socrates, Philostorgius (an Arian), and the anonymous *Chronicle of Alexandria* give their own account of this phenomenon. This miracle was regarded by the Christians as the final victory of Orthodoxy over Arianism. Philostorgius and the *Chronicle of Alexandria* affirm that this Cross of light was encircled with a "large rainbow".

Philostorgius writes:

It appeared at Jerusalem about the third hour of the day which is called the day of Pentecost. This sign, which was portrayed by no human hand, was seen to stretch from the Mount of Calvary even to the Mount of Olives, and was accompanied by a large iris, like a crown, which surrounded it on all sides. The iris, indeed, signified the mercy of Jesus Christ crucified and taken up into heaven, and the crown denoted the victory of the emperor. Moreover, that splendid and venerable sign did not escape the notice even of the soldiers. But though it was clearly seen by both armies, it frightened above all measure Magnentius and his partisans, who were addicted to superstitious practices; while, on the other hand, it inspired Constantius and his army with invincible bravery. Magnentius, however, having suffered this defeat from Constantius, afterwards recovered his strength by degrees, and, engaging with him in a second battle, was entirely defeated, and fled away to Lyons with the loss of nearly all his army. (*Ecclesiastical History*, Book III, Chapter XXVI) (*from johnsanidopoulos.com*)

Also Commemorated Today

Repose of St. Alexis Toth of Wilkesbarre

New Hieromartyr [Andrew](#) (Boychuk), priest in Kiev (1941)

Repose of Venerable Nilus, abbot of Sora (1508).

Venerable John of Zedazeni in Georgia, and 12 disciples: Venerables Shio Mgvime, David of Gareji, Anthony of Martq'ophi, Thaddeus of Urbnisi or Stepantsminda, Stephen of Khirsa, Isidore of Samtavisi, Michael of Ulumbo, Pyrrhus of Breta, Zenon of Iqalto, Jesse (Ise) of Tsilkani, Joseph of Alaverdi, and Abibus of Nekressi (6th c.) (Georgia).

Uncovering of the relics (1815) of Venerable Nilus the Myrrh-gusher of Mt. Athos.
New Martyr Pachomius of Patmos (1730) (Greek).

St. Domitianus, bishop of Maastricht (or Huy) (560) (Neth.).

St. John of Beverley, bishop of York (721) (Celtic & British).

St. Juvenal, Bishop of Teramo (Italy)(c. 132)

St. Peter, bishop of Pavia (c. 735)

St. Placid, abbot of the Abbey of St. Symphorian in Burgundy (c. 675)

Social Team for May 14

Team 3 – Edgington, Victor Barzykin, R&C Wright. 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, 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.)