

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 28, 2023 – 7th Sunday of Pascha | Sunday of the Holy Fathers of the First Ecumenical Council

By Metropolitan Hierotheos of Nafpaktos and Agiou Vlasiou

In this year's short sermons for the Sundays of Summer, beloved brethren, I will refer to the Ecumenical Synods of our Church, and especially to the dogmatic issues which our Holy Fathers who comprised of them dealt with these. Orthodox Christians must know our Orthodox faith. Of course, these issues are big and serious and they cannot be adequately analyzed in short eucharistic sermons, but we will highlight some of the key points of some of the decisions of the Ecumenical Synods that Orthodox Christians must know. This is, in other words, a small study, and those who are interested will be able to interest themselves in gaining more information.

The First Ecumenical Synod was convened in Nicaea of Bithynia, in the year 325 AD, by Constantine the Great. The presidents of the Synod were Eustathios of Antioch and Alexander of Alexandria, and perhaps Saint Kordouis. The dogmatic issue this Synod dealt with was the heresy of Arius. Arius was a Presbyter of the Church of Alexandria and had previously been condemned by a Synod of the Church of Alexandria for his heresies regarding the divinity of Christ. Because, however, his heretical views spread to other ecclesiastical areas of the Roman



Empire and created problems, that is why the Emperor Constantine the Great convened the First Ecumenical Synod, to solve this issue.

The basic proposal of Arius was that there was a time when the Son of God did not exist. He said: "ἦν ποτέ ὅτε οὐκ ἦν" ("there was a time when he was not"). The consequence of this view was that the Son and Word of God was created by the Father in time, that is, there was a time when there was no Son of God, thus inserting time between the Father and the Son; that the Son did not have the same essence as the Father, which means He is liable to change; and that He is ignorant of the Father. As a consequence of this the Holy Spirit is a creation that was created by the Father through the Son.

Arius began with philosophical views, especially beginning with Aristotle, who said that everything that comes from essence is essential. Therefore if the Son was born from the essence of the Father then He would by necessity be the Son of God, which is why he would say He was born from the will of God. This means that the Word was not God, but a creature, and in fact the first creature of creation. Another basic position of Arius is that the Son functions as a lower deity, who creates people, but His essence is foreign to the higher essence of the Father.

These heretical views caused great confusion in the whole Church, because the faithful knew from the Old Testament Prophets, who saw the pre-incarnate Word, and the Apostles of the New Testament, the divinity of Christ, the Light of God, like the Disciples on Mount Tabor, but also in other events, especially on Pentecost - that Christ is the true God, was born of the Father before all ages, is the Light which comes from Light, and has the same essence as the Father and He knows the Father, and has revealed Him unto men.

Thus, the Fathers of the First Ecumenical Synod confessed this faith of the Prophets and the Apostles, but also from their own experience, and wrote the first articles of the Symbol of Faith, which we confess and recite to this day.

Specifically, it is written in the Creed that we believe in one God, the Father who is the creator of all things visible and invisible, so as to exclude the view that the creator of the world is a lesser God, as the Gnostic philosophers believed. Then, the deity of Christ is confessed, who was born before all ages by the Father and there is no time between the Father and the Son, that Christ is the Light just as the Father is; the Son is of the same essence as the Father; and that the Son of God was incarnate for our salvation. Also, in this first Symbol of Faith it is written that we also believe in the Holy Spirit, and in the end those who teach the opposite of these things are anathema.

Of course, this Symbol was completed by the Second Ecumenical Synod, as we will see next Sunday, but the important thing is that we Orthodox Christians

absolutely believe in the divinity of Christ, which is something that was verified by those who saw His glory, His divinity as Light. These are the Prophets, the Apostles and the Fathers through the ages.

Arius and all the other heretics talk about issues like this by implementing philosophy, the imagination and thinking, while the God-seeing Prophets, Apostles and Fathers recorded the experiences they had, and they confessed that Christ is Light, who was born before all ages by the Light and He is true God. Him do we worship, Him do we love and obey His commandments, in order to reach the Light. *(from johnsanidopoulos.com)*

Today's Epistle Lesson – The Acts of the Apostles 20:16-18, 28-36 EOB

In those days, Paul had determined to sail past Ephesus in order not to spend time in Asia because he was in a hurry: if possible he wanted to be in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost. From Miletus, Paul sent a message to Ephesus and called to himself the presbyters of the Church. When they arrived, he told them, “You yourselves know, from the first day that I set foot in Asia, how I was with you all the time. Keep watch over yourselves and over the flock among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers! Be shepherds of the Church of God which he has purchased with the blood of his own [Son]. For I know that after my departure, vicious wolves will enter in among you and they will not spare the flock. From among your own group, men will arise who will speak perverse things in order to draw away the disciples after them. Therefore, keep watch! Remember that for a period of three years, I did not cease night and day to warn everyone with tears. Now, brethren, I entrust you to God, and to the word of his grace which is able to build up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified. I coveted no one's silver, or gold, or clothing. You yourselves know that these, [my] hands, served my needs and those who were with me. In all things, I have given you an example, that by this kind of hard work you should support the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, as he himself said, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive!’” After saying these things, Paul knelt down and prayed with them all.

Today's Gospel Lesson – Saint John 17:1-13 EOB

At that time, said these things, and lifting up his eyes to heaven, he said, “Father, the time has come! Glorify your Son, so that your Son may also glorify you. Even as you gave him authority over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him. This is eternal life: that they should know you, the only true God, and him whom you have sent, Jesus Christ. I have glorified you on the earth! I have accomplished the work which you have given me to do! Now, Father, glorify me with yourself with the glory I had with you before the world existed. I have

revealed your Name to the people whom you have given me out of the world. They were yours, and you have given them to me; they have kept your word. Now, they have known that all things you have given me are from you. The words you have given me, I have given to them. They have received them and they have known for certain that I came forth from you, and they have believed that you sent me. I pray for them; I do not pray for the world, but for those whom you have given me, for they are yours. All things that are mine are yours, and yours are mine, and I am glorified in them. I am no longer in the world, but these are [still] in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, keep them through your Name which you have given me, so that they may be one, even as we are [one]. While I was with them in the world, I protected d them in your Name. Those whom you have given me I have kept. None of them is lost, except the son of destruction, so that the Scripture might be fulfilled. But now I come to you, and I say these things in the world, so that they may have my joy made full in themselves.

Homily on the Seventh Eothinon Gospel – John 20:1-10

By Metropolitan Hierotheos of Nafpaktos and Agiou Vlasiou

As we continue to interpret the Eothina Gospels, which are read during Matins on Sunday, today we will say a few words on the Eothinon which was read this morning in church and refers to the visitation to the tomb first by Mary Magdalene and after by two disciples of Christ, namely the Apostle Peter and the Apostle John, according to the description of the Evangelist John.

First of all, as we have said before, by divine economy the first to be informed of the event of the Resurrection and to have seen the Risen Christ were the Myrrhbearing women. In a previous sermon we analyzed that this took place to restore female existence and to correct Eve's mistake. As can be seen from the Gospels that describe the events of the Resurrection of Christ, the Myrrhbearing women went to Christ's tomb in the early hours of Sunday. At first they went to anoint Christ with perfumes, then, when they found that the body of Christ was not in the tomb, they felt astonished, which forced them to come to the tomb repeatedly. And then they announced what they saw to the Apostles, so they too were running to the tomb.

This shows that the existence and presence of women within the Church is not humble and condescending. According to their faith and their spiritual courage they know Christ - no one is excluded from this experience, neither men or women - and then the transformed women report to the Apostles what they saw, that is, they do not despise the Apostolic office because they had been first to have this great experience, but they respect the Apostles and honor them.

So Mary Magdalene, says today's Eothinon, seeing the stone shifted that was in front of the tomb, ran and announced it to the Apostles Peter and John saying to them, "They took the Lord out of the tomb and we do not know where they put Him." This prompted the two Apostles to visit the tomb where Christ was placed.

It is also characteristic how the two Apostles went to the tomb. The other disciple, John, who out of humility does not mention his own name, ran faster than the Apostle Peter, saw only the linens, without the body of Christ, but did not enter the tomb. Then came the Apostle Peter, who first entered into the tomb and saw the linens which wrapped the body of the dead, as well as the sudarium, which was the cloth with which they wrapped the head of the dead. The sudarium was not with the linens, but separate from them and folded separately in another place. This means that Christ was resurrected, after emerging out of the shrouds with which he had been wrapped and folding the sudarium with which His head was wrapped. This was discovered by the Apostle Peter. However, the Evangelist John, who entered the tomb after the Apostle Peter, also discovered it. We see, then, that John was first to run to the tomb, followed by Peter, but Peter was first to go in, and then John followed.

The Holy Fathers say that Peter is the expressor of praxis, and John, the beloved disciple of Christ, is the expressor of theoria. Theoria is zealous and runs towards Christ, then, with praxis, man enters the tomb of the Master, followed by theoria which makes him believe in the Risen Christ. Praxis is repentance and the struggle to obey Christ's commandments. Theoria is internal noetic prayer of the heart and the vision of God.

Therefore, there is a path to finding the Risen Christ. We begin with zeal and inspiration, motivated by a visionary saint, as the Apostles were motivated by Mary Magdalene, then we observe the will of God, the commandments of God, and after this lawful course we find and affirm the Resurrection of Christ and our resurrection from the dead works of sin.

Christ was resurrected to resurrect us from the works of sin. That is why we celebrate Christ's Resurrection every Sunday. Let us personally discover it, following the method of the spiritual path that the Apostles Peter and John have shown us. (*from johnsanidopoulos.com*)

A Word From the Holy Fathers

The Jews kept the Feast of the Passover, the crossing from Egypt to the land of Palestine, as laid down in their law, and we have celebrated the gospel Pascha, the passage of our human nature in Christ from death to life (cf. Jn. 5:24; I Jn. 3:14), from corruption to incorruption (cf. I Cor. 15:42,50). What words can express the

superiority of this celebration over the solemnities of the old law and the events commemorated on its holy days? No one can adequately state how much more excellent it is. The enhypostatic Wisdom of the most high Father, God's pre-eternal Word who is beyond all being, who was united with us in His love for mankind and lived among us (Jn. 1:14), has now revealed through His actions a cause for celebration even more distinctly superior than Pascha's excellence. For we now celebrate the transition of our nature in Him, not just from the subterranean regions up on to the earth, but from the earth to the heaven of heavens, and to the throne above the heavens of Him who rules over all.

Today the Lord not only stood with His disciples after His resurrection, but was also parted from them and was taken up into heaven as they watched (Acts 1.9-11), ascended and entered into the true Holy of Holies and sat down on the right hand of the Father, far above all principality and power and every name and honor that is known and named, either in this world, or in that which is to come (cf. Eph. 1.20-21). There were many resurrections before Christ's resurrection, and similarly, there were many ascensions before His ascension. The Spirit lifted up Jeremiah the prophet, and an angel took up Habakkuk (Bel & Dr. 33-39 LXX). In particular it is written that Elijah went up with a chariot of fire (2 Kgs. 2.11). But even he did not go beyond the realms of earth, and the ascension of each of those mentioned was just a sort of movement lifting them up from the ground without taking them out of the area surrounding the earth. Similarly, the others who were resurrected all died and returned to the earth. By contrast, Christ has risen and death no longer has dominion over Him (cf. Rom. 6.9), and now He has ascended and sat down on high, every height is below Him and bears witness that He is God over all (Rom. 9.5).

The Master's body is the visible mountain of which Isaiah speaks, the Lord's house above the tops of all the mountains of reason (cf. Is. 2.2 LXX). Neither an angel nor a man, but the incarnate Lord Himself came and saved us, being made like us for our sake while remaining unchanged as God. In the same way as He came down, without changing place but condescending to us, so He returns once more, without moving as God, but enthroning on high our human nature which He had assumed. It was truly right that the first begotten nature from the dead (Rev. 1.5) should be presented there to God, as firstfruits from the first crop offered for the whole race of men.

Although many resurrections and ascensions have taken place, we celebrate none of them as we do the Lord's resurrection and ascension, because we neither have nor ever shall have any share in those others. All we gained from them was to be led towards faith in our Savior's resurrection and ascension, in which we all share now and in the future. His resurrection and ascension are the resurrection and

ascension of our human nature; and not just of our human nature, but of everyone who believes in Christ and shows his faith in works (cf. Jas. 2.18). Christ was unbegotten and uncreated according to His divinity, and it was for our sake that He became man. He lived as He did because of us, teaching us the path that leads back to true life. Everything he suffered in the flesh He suffered for us to heal our passions. On account of our sins He was led to death, and for us He rose and ascended, preparing our own resurrection and ascension for unending eternity. For all the heirs of everlasting life follow as far as possible the pattern of His saving work on earth.

We start this imitation of Christ with holy baptism, which symbolizes the Lord's burial and resurrection. Virtuous living and conduct in accord with the gospel are its intermediate stage, and its perfection is victory through spiritual struggles against the passions, which procures painless, indestructible, heavenly life. As the apostle tells us: "If you live in the flesh, you shall die; but if you mortify the deeds of the body through the Spirit, you shall live" (cf. Rom. 8.13). Those who live according to Christ imitate what He did in the flesh. Just as He died physically, so in time everyone dies, but we shall also rise again in the flesh as He did, glorified and immortal, not now but in due course, when we shall also ascend, as Paul says: for "we shall be caught up," he says, "in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord" (1 Thess. 4.17).

Do you see that any of us who wishes will share in the Lord's resurrection, and will be an heir of God and joint-heir with Christ (cf. Rom. 8:17)? That is why we joyfully celebrate the resurrection of our human nature, its exaltation and sitting down on high, and also the starting point of the resurrection and ascension of each of the faithful, publicly proclaiming the word of today's Gospel reading, that when the Lord had risen, He stood in the midst of His disciples (Lk. 24:36-53).

Why did He stand in their midst and afterwards accompany them? "And He led them out," it says, "as far as to Bethany, and He lifted up His hands, and blessed them" (Lk. 24:50). He did it to show that He was completely whole and unharmed, to prove that His feet, that had endured being pierced by nails, were sound and trod firmly, that His hands, that had been likewise nailed to the Cross, and His side, that had been pierced by the spear, were whole, even though they bore the signs of the wounds as confirmation of the saving passion. I think that the words, "He stood in the midst of His disciples" (cf. Lk. 24:36), also imply that their faith in Him was strengthened by the way He appeared and blessed them. He did not just stand among them all, but stood in the midst of each one's heart and it was strengthened through faith, so that the psalmist's words, "God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved" (Ps. 46:5), can be applied to each of their hearts. For from then on the Lord's apostles became steadfast and immovable.

So He stood in the midst of them and said: “Peace be unto you” (Lk. 24:36), that sweet, penetrating, and familiar salutation. There are two kinds of peace: peace with God, which is above all the fruits of godliness, and peace with one another, which arises naturally from the words of the Gospel. At that time the Lord gave them both by His one greeting. When He first sent them out He told them, “Into whatsoever house you enter, first say, 'Peace be to this house’” (Lk. 10:5). Now He did exactly that, and entering the house where they were gathered, He straightway gave them peace. He saw that they were frightened and troubled by the unexpected and strange sight – “and supposed,” it says, “that they had seen a spirit” (Lk. 24:37), that is, that the person they saw was a phantom. So once more He told them what was happening in their own hearts, revealed that He was the one to whom they had said before the passion and resurrection, “Now we know that you know all things and we do not need for anyone to ask questions from you. “ (Jn. 16:30), and proposed that they reassure themselves by examining and touching Him. Once He saw that they had accepted the truth, He gave further confirmation for them to scrutinize by taking food while they watched, as well as sharing fellowship and peace with them. “And while they still did not believe and were perplexed,” certainly not because they dissented, but for joy, “He said to them, 'Do you have anything here to eat?' And they gave Him a piece of a broiled fish, and a honeycomb. And He took it, and ate it before them” (Lk. 24:41-43).

That incorruptible body was fed after the resurrection, not because it needed food, but to prove it had risen and to demonstrate that it was the same one as He had eaten with them before the passion. It did not, however, consume the food in the way that mortal bodies do, but by divine energy, as, so to speak, fire dissolves wax, except that fire has to have fuel to sustain it, whereas immortal bodies do not need food for sustenance.

The piece of baked fish and the honeycomb which He ate were also symbols of Christ's mystery. The Word of God united Himself hypostatically with our human nature, which was like a fish swimming in the waters of pleasure-loving, passionate life. By the unapproachable divine fire of His Godhead He cleansed this nature of every tendency towards passion, and made it equal to God, and, as it were, red hot. The Lord came to send fire upon the earth (cf. Luke 12:49), and through participation in this fire He makes divine not just the human substance which He assumed for our sake, but every person who is found worthy of communion with Him. On the other hand, human nature is like honeycomb because we hold the treasure of reason in our bodies, just as honey is contained in the comb. This is especially true of anyone who believes in Christ, for he has the grace of the divine Spirit stored up in his soul and body like honey in wax. The Lord ate these things because He was pleased to take the salvation of each human

being as His food. He did not, however, eat it all, but just a piece of a honeycomb, that is, a part of it, for not everyone believed. Nor did He take this portion Himself, but it was given Him by His disciples, for the disciples set before Him just the believers, separating them from the faithless.

By eating the fish and the honeycomb in front of His disciples, in this way and for these reasons, He reminded them of the words He spoke to them previously when He was approaching His passion, thus proving that He was truthful. What He had foretold was fulfilled, and He opened their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures and know that thus it behooved God's only-begotten Son to be made man for men's sake on account of the unfathomable ocean of His love, to be manifested and witnessed to by the Father's voice from above and the appearance of the divine Spirit (cf. Luke 3:22). It was fitting that He be proved worthy of trust and admiration by extraordinary acts and words, and also that He be envied and betrayed by people who did not seek God's glory but honor from men, that He should be crucified, buried and rise on the third day from the dead. Repentance and the remission of sins had to be preached in His name, beginning at Jerusalem (Luke 24:47). Those who saw Him with their own eyes and served Him were to become messengers and witnesses of these events. He proclaimed that He would send them from above the promise of His Father, the Holy Spirit, and He ordered them to stay in Jerusalem until they were endued with power from on high (Luke 24:49).

As He spoke in this way to His disciples of matters pertaining to salvation, He led them out of the house and as far as Bethany, and when He had blessed them, He was parted from them and carried up to heaven (Luke 24:50-51). With a radiant cloud for a chariot, He ascended in glory (cf. Acts 1:9), entered the Holy of Holies not made by hands and sat down on the right hand of the heavenly majesty, making our human substance share His own throne and divinity. As the apostles continued looking steadfastly towards heaven, they learned authoritatively from angels that He would come again from heaven in the same way with everyone watching (Acts 1:10). The Lord Himself foretold this, and earlier Daniel had seen it. "I saw," he said, "and behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven" (Dan. 7:13). The Lord Himself said, "All the tribes of the earth shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven" (cf. Matt. 24:30).

The disciples worshiped the most high Lord Who had come down from heaven, made the earth into heaven and gone up again whence He came, having united things below with things above and formed one Church, at the same time heavenly and earthly, to the glory of His love for mankind. Then they returned with joy from the Mount of Olives, whence the Master had ascended, to Jerusalem and were continuously in the Temple with their minds set on heaven, praising and blessing

God (Luke 24:53), and preparing themselves to receive the promised coming of the divine Spirit.

Briefly put, brethren, that is how those called by Christ's name should order their lives. They should persevere in prayers and supplications and, in imitation of the angels, have their eyes lifted up to the Master above the heavens, praising and blessing Him with irreproachable conduct, and waiting for His mystical coming. As the psalmist says to Him, "I will sing and will behave myself wisely in a perfect way. O when will you come to me?" (Ps. 101:2). Paul demonstrated this too by saying, "For our conversation is in heaven" (Phil. 3:20), "whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus" (Heb. 6:20). Peter, the chief apostle, also guides us in this direction: "Gird up the loins of your mind," he says, "be perfectly sober, and hope for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. 13:8), "whom having not seen, you love" (1 Pet. 1:8). The Lord too hinted at the same with His words, "Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; and yourselves like men who wait for their Lord, when he will return" (Luke 12:35-36). In this way He did not destroy the sabbath but fulfilled it, showing that the day of rest from physical work for the sake of what is more excellent, is a truly blessed sabbath. It is linked with a blessing because when we are at leisure from earthly labors which are soon to cease, we wait patiently on God, seeking what is heavenly and imperishable with unashamed hope.

Under the old law one day of the week was the sabbath, and the Lord seemed to the foolish Jews to destroy what they thought of as their day of rest. However, He said, "I am not come to destroy the law, but to fulfill it" (Matt. 5:17). How was it that He did not do away with this sabbath but fulfilled the law regarding it? He promised to give the Holy Spirit to those who asked Him (cf. Luke 11:13) by day and by night, and commanded them to be always awake and watching, saying, "Be ready: for in such an hour as you do not expect, the Son of man comes" (Matt. 24:44). In this way He made all the days into blessed sabbaths for those who choose to obey Him perfectly, and so in this respect as well He did not abolish but fulfilled the law.

We, by contrast, are entangled in worldly affairs, but if you abstain from acquisitiveness and mutual hatred, and strive to speak the truth and be chaste, then you too will make every day a Sabbath by being inactive in evil. When a day comes that is especially profitable for salvation, you must free yourselves even from blameless work and words, patiently stay in God's Church, listen with understanding to the reading and teaching and contritely attend to the supplications, prayers and hymns to God. Thus you too will fulfill the Sabbath, ordering your conduct according to the Gospel of God's grace and lifting up the eyes of your understanding towards Christ sitting above the vaults of heaven with

the Father and the Spirit. He has made us sons of God, not sons of one family with God and each other in the communion of the divine Spirit, through Christ's own body and blood.

Let us preserve this union with one another by indissoluble love. We should always look towards our Father in heaven, for we are no longer "of the earth, earthy," like "the first man," but like "the second man, the Lord from heaven" (1 Cor. 15:47). "As is the earthy, such also are those who are earthy: and as is the heavenly such are those who are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly" (1 Cor. 15:48-49). As we lift up our hearts to Him we shall behold the great spectacle of our nature united for ever with the fire of the divinity. And laying aside everything to do with the coats of skins in which we were clothed because of the transgression (cf. Gen. 3:21), let us stand on holy ground through virtue and steadfast inclination towards God.

In this way we shall all be bold when God comes in fire, and run forward to be enlightened and once enlightened live with Him for ever, to the glory of Him who is the light above all, the threefold Sun and sovereign brightness, to whom belong all glory, might, honor and worship, now and for ever and unto the ages of ages. Amen.

– St. Gregory Palamas, *Homily 21 On The Ascension*

Also Commemorated Today: Saint Andrew the Fool for Christ

By Protopresbyter Fr. George Papavarnavas

"Fool for Christ" is a category of saintly personalities who had many spiritual gifts, in particular the special gift of foolishness for Christ. They were not fools, or crazy, but they pretended to be so in order not to be praised and glorified by people for the spiritual gifts and miracles they displayed. They had deep humility, great love for God and people, and in a special way they helped those who were benevolent to be healed of their passions, and guided them on the path of progress and salvation.

Foolishness is a spiritual gift, which is given by God to those who have fiery zeal and ardent love for God, as well as the ability to tread this path until the end. Surely, however, what assists them in this task is their character. They mock the world, namely the worldly mindset, and the devil, who hates them to death. And they do this in order to substantially help people, and liberate them from being dominated by the passions and the devil, using various means, which in the eyes of "reasonable" people seem absurd.

Saint Andrew came from Scythia and lived during the reign of Leo VI the Wise (886-912). From his childhood he was sold as a slave to a general in the East who

was pious and virtuous, who loved him and raised him as his own child. He even sent him to school to study sacred letters. He studied the lives of the saints, and especially loved the martyrs and wanted to imitate their zeal and love for Christ. Thus he was a lover of God and lover of people. Whatever he had he would distribute to the poor, which often left him naked and hungry. But God comforted him, and made him worthy of lofty spiritual visions and great gifts.

We will now briefly refer to a few events in his life to show the pastoral methods of the saints. Saint Andrew had the habit of praying in the sacred temples or in deserted places, at times when people were busy and would not pay attention to him. One morning, at dawn, he went to pray in the sacred temple of the Panagia and the gates were closed. Upon doing the cross over the main gate, it opened immediately. A young man who happened to be passing by and saw him said: "This is a servant of God whom we idiots call crazy. And how many other such servants of God are there that no one knows about!" Saint Andrew called for him to come near, he appropriately admonished him and taught him how to walk in life, in order to progress and be saved. Also, he told him not to reveal to anyone what he saw until after his death, otherwise he would face a great temptation.

It was a great blessing of God for Epiphanius, a young virtuous man, to come to know Saint Andrew. Epiphanius, because he had inner purity, realized that this was a Saint and not someone crazy or demon possessed, as others called him. In the life of Saint Andrew incidents from their meetings are recorded, as well as the lofty theological analyses of the Saint, which were responses to the queries of Epiphanius. Whenever Epiphanius had a problem he would flee to Saint Andrew, who gave him solutions, and he would protect him from temptations and the attacks of the devil. In one of their meetings Epiphanius bent to kiss his hand, then the Saint knelt before him and said: "Bless me, Master!" Then he advised him how to shepherd his reasonable flock, which was by trusting in Christ through the Church. And indeed Epiphanius became the Patriarch of Constantinople forty years later.

One day as Andrew was wandering the streets he met a monk whom people considered pious and virtuous. Saint Andrew, however, with his spiritual gifts, understood that this monk was avaricious, because he saw the demon of avarice wrapped around his neck, and his guardian angel sadly abandoned him. This monk would exploit the mystery of confession in order to become rich by receiving gifts from those he would confess. And as much as he increased in wealth it seemed as if he was a monk dedicated to gold rather than Christ. Saint Andrew approached him and with his therapeutic words tried to lead him to repentance and salvation. He said to him, among other things, the following: "I sense great sorrow for your sake and unbearable suffering. How has it happened that you went from being a

friend of God to a friend of the devil? You who had wings like the Seraphim, why have you uprooted them and handed them to Satan? You who had a brilliant countenance, how have you become darkened? ... How did you become a friend of the dragon of avarice? What do you want with gold, brother? Why have you gathered it? Why do you love it? How did you gain it to cause your destruction? ... Others hunger and thirst, others die from the cold, and you see your wealth increase and you rejoice? Are these signs of repentance? Is this your monastic life? ... I heard the Lord frown upon you and say: 'My kingdom is for the merciful.' ... If you disobey my words I will tell the devil to trouble you. Then you will become a laughing stock not only in the city, but throughout the world." With what the monk heard he was moved. He asked the Saint to pray for him and promised that he would strive with all his strength for his correction. He was finally redeemed from the shackles of the demon of avarice and rediscovered the true purpose of his life.

The reasonable craziness of the fools for Christ, heals the unreasonable craziness of the life of the passions, the life of hypocrisy and arrogance. (*from johnsanidopoulos.com*)

Holy Martyr Helikonida of Thessaloniki

Helikonida was beheaded by the sword, delighting not on Helikon, but in Eden.

This Saint was during the reign of Emperors Gordian (238-244) and Philip (244-249), and was from Thessaloniki. Arrested for being a Christian, she was brought before the Duke of Corinth named Perinios. Because she was not persuaded to sacrifice to the idols, but proclaimed Christ as the true God, for this reason she was first tied by her feet with the strap of the yoke of the ox, and thrown to the ground. Afterwards the Saint was put into a cauldron of lead, asphalt (which is like sulfur) and pitch, but she came out of it without being harmed. Then they shaved her head to shame her, and lit her body on fire. The Saint then entered the temple of the idols, and by her prayer she toppled the idols of Athena, Zeus and Asclepius to the ground. For this reason her breasts were cut off.

When Justin the proconsul succeeded Perinios, the Saint was brought before him as well, and being unable to persuade her to make a drink-offering or sacrifice to the idols, she was put into a flaming furnace. Since the flames did not completely touch the Saint, they then laid her onto a fiery copper bed. The Archangels Michael and Gabriel then appeared to her, restoring her flesh to health, which had become unloosed and was melting to the ground. Therefore she was kept unwounded by this torture, and thrown to the beasts to be devoured. The beasts however did not completely touch her, but of the servants of the proconsul one hundred and twenty were killed. For this the Saint was condemned to death, and the blessed one was beheaded, and she went up crowned into the heavens. (*from johnsanidopoulos.com*)

Also Commemorated Today

Venerable [Nicetas](#), bishop of Chalcedon (9th c.).
St. [Ignatius](#), bishop and wonderworker of Rostov (1288).
Venerable Helen of Diveyevo (1832).
New Hieromartyr Macarius, Dyonisius, Hieromartyr Nicholas deacon, Martyrs Ignatius and Peter (1931).
New Hieromartyr Heraclius confessor (1936).
Virgin-Martyr Hermogenas (1942).
St. [Eutychius](#), bishop of Melitene (1st c.).
Woman Martyr Dapni of Thessalonica (244).
Hieromartyr [Helladius](#), bishop in the East (6th-7th c.).
New Martyr Mitros (Demetrius) of Tripolitsa (1794) (Greek).
New Hieromartyr Zachariah of Prusa (1802) (Greek).
Venerable Sophronius, monk-martyr, of Bulgaria (1510) (Bulgaria).
St. Germanus, bishop of Paris (576) (Gaul).
Martyrs Crescens, Paul, and Dioscorides of Rome (326) (Greek).
St. William of Languedoc (812) (Gaul).
St. Gerontius, metropolitan of Moscow (1489).

Social Team for June 4

Team 6 – Howl, Dee Jubb, Johnsons, Charlotte, Andrew, Jameson Barker. 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.)