

# SOBORNOST

## St. Thomas the Apostle Orthodox Church

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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**



## June 18, 2023 – 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday After Pentecost | Sunday of Regional Saints | All Saints of Carpatho-Rus

On the second Sunday after Pentecost, each region in world Orthodoxy commemorates those Saints who are associated in some way with either its geographic home, or that of its roots. The Saints among the forebearers of our Diocese are primarily identified with the eastern European lands of Carpatho-Rus, especially areas of the present-day Czech and Slovak Republics, Ukraine and Poland. The icon above portrays twelve of these Saints surrounding the young Christ child and the Theotokos. Orthodoxy is relatively new to North America, and although there are already a small number of canonized Saints of North America, we were called by our Metropolitan Nicholas of thrice-blessed memory to specifically remember the Saints of Carpatho-Rus on this day. Below are the lives of some of these saints.

### Holy New Martyrs of Bohemia

On Saturday, February 8, 2020 in the Orthodox Cathedral in Prague, the Orthodox Church of the Czech Lands and Slovakia canonized as martyr-saints several clergy and lay people who were martyred by the Nazis during World War II. The new saints include the priests Father Vladimir Petrek, Father Vaclav Cikl and the laymen Jan Sonnevend, Vaclav Ornest, Karel Louda and their families. All these

Orthodox Christians suffered for Christ with their Bishop Gorazd Pavlik who had been previously canonized as a martyr-saint in 1987.

The story of the new martyrs begins September, 1941 when Reinhard Heydrich was appointed as the Nazi Deputy Reich-Protector (Governor) of Bohemia and Moravia. Heydrich had a reputation as a violent, heartless Nazi. Adolph Hitler called him "*The man with the iron heart*" and others referred to him as "*The Butcher*". Within five days of his arrival in Prague, 142 people were executed and it was Heydrich who was the architect and key organizer of the Holocaust which led to the extermination of over six million Jews and others. Today, as we look at the historical photos of piles of emaciated bodies in Nazi concentration camps, we ask: "*Did anyone care? Why didn't someone stop this evil? Why didn't someone do something?*"

In May, 1942 a group of courageous people did take action to stop this evil. The Allied forces had previously secreted into the region several members of the Czechoslovak army in exile. The code name for their mission was *Operation Anthropoid* and its goal was the removal and assassination of Reinhard Heydrich. On the morning of May, 27, 1942 Heydrich was being driven to his Prague office in an open top car. Stepping out into the roadway the Czechoslovak soldiers opened fire with a machine gun and a bomb which led to Heydrich's death several days later.

The Nazis unleashed a wave of terror in reprisal for Heydrich's assassination. On June 9, in the village of Lidice 172 boys and men between age 14 to 84 were shot, women and children were deported to concentration camps. The same pattern repeated in the village of Ležáky: all adults were murdered. In Prague the Czechoslovak soldiers took refuge by hiding in the Sts. Cyril and Methodius Orthodox Cathedral while the Nazis began a furious search for their hideout. After a ferocious gun battle, all of the soldiers were killed in the crypt of the Cathedral. The Nazis then turned their wrath on the leadership of the Orthodox Church: Bishop Gorazd Pavlik with his priests Fathers Vladimir Petrek and Vaclav Cíkl were tortured and executed by firing squad. Jan Sonnevend, Vaclav Ornest, and Karen Louda, lay leaders of the Orthodox Cathedral in Prague were likewise subjected to torture and executed by firing squad. Today, at the site of their martyrdom at the Kobylisz Shooting Range, a monument has been erected in their memory and those others who suffered at the hands of the Nazis. Sonnevend's wife Marie, daughter Ludmilla and her husband along with Father Cíkl's wife Marie were sent to the Mauthausen concentration camp where they were all executed. These news martyrs are known as "The Holy New Martyrs of Bohemia" and are remembered each year on their feastday of September 5.

## A Just War?

The assassination of Reinhard Heydrich raises troubling theological and ethical questions. St. Paul in his epistle to the Romans wrote “*Repay no one evil for evil.....Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.*” (Romans 12:21) This Biblical teaching is clear but the question remains: is an act of violence ever permitted to stop greater evils from occurring? Was the act of the Czechoslovak partisans necessary to try to stop the Nazi atrocities against Jews and others? Some theologians and ethicists refer to these questions as the “*just war theory*”. This theory holds that war is always an evil act to be avoided but there exist exceptions such as to defend the innocent or to prevent greater evils and violence. While the just war theory was proposed by St. Augustine, a 4<sup>th</sup> century bishop in North Africa the other Fathers of the early Church agree that war and violence are always evil but at times they are the lesser of greater evils. The Church has always advocated for peace and seeks the peaceful resolution of differences. However throughout history there exist many examples of the unfortunate need for war and acts of violence to protect the innocent and to stop evil. The Church, following the teaching of St. Paul, has canonized as martyrs Sts. Boris & Gleb who in the 11<sup>th</sup> century accepted a violent death at the hands of their brother rather than defend themselves against him with violence. These two brothers are honored with the title “*Passion-bearers*” meaning they imitated the Lord Jesus in the acceptance of His passion and death. My own patron saint: the 10<sup>th</sup> century King Edward of England is also honored with the title “*Passion-bearer*” for his refusal to defend himself with violence. On the other hand, the Church also honors soldiers who gave their lives in battle and has canonized numerous warriors as saints such as the early Christian martyrs St. George and St. Demetrios and St. Alexander Nevsky, the warrior-prince of Russia. The Church remembers the words of our Lord: “*Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends*”. (John 15:13)

In 1999 Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople summarized the teaching of our Church:

*"War and violence are never means used by God in order to achieve a result. They are for the most part machinations of the devil used to achieve unlawful ends. We say "for the most part" because, as is well known, in a few specific cases the Orthodox Church forgives an armed defense against oppression and violence. However, as a rule, peaceful resolution of differences and peaceful cooperation are more pleasing to God and more beneficial to humankind."*

Fr. Ed Pehanich (from [acrod.org](http://acrod.org))

## **A Holy Disciple of St John the Wonderworker: Schema-Archimandrite Vasily of Carpatho-Russia**

Monastic life and eldership did not come to an end in Carpatho-Russia during the Soviet period of 1944-1991, not even under the persecutions of Khrushchev. After the repose of Archimandrite (now St) Alexis (Kabaliuk) in 1947, the names of Archimandrites Job (Kundria) (+ 1985) and Vasily (Pronin) (+ 1997) came to the fore. Surely, one day, their names will be listed in calendars together with the other saints of Carpatho-Russia. [*St. Job has been canonized since this article was written. - Ed.*]

Archimandrite Vasily, in the world Vladimir Pronin, was born in Kiev on 8 September 1914 to an ancient noble Russian family. From childhood he showed humility, piety and love of the church, thanks to the upbringing of his devout parents Vasily and Iroida. After the Bolshevik Revolution, Vladimir's family emigrated to Orthodox Serbia. There, Vladimir studied at seminary in Bitol and met many bishops of the Serbian and Russian Churches. Above all, he frequented Hieromonk (now St) John (Maximovich), his spiritual mentor. The latter greatly influenced Vladimir and considered him to be one of his closest spiritual children. Although Fr John was consecrated Bishop in 1934 and went to Shanghai, he never lost contact with Vladimir.

Between 1934 and 1937, Vladimir studied at the Theological Faculty of the University of Belgrade, graduating with distinction. It was on completing these studies that Vladimir visited Kishinev and the crypt where his parents were buried. While inside this crypt, the metal door slammed shut on him and he found himself trapped inside. Vladimir prayed with tears and made a vow that if he could get out, he would devote his whole life to God. At that moment the door opened. From now on Vladimir's destiny came to be linked with Bishop Vladimir (Raich).

Born in 1882, Bishop Vladimir was a Serb who had studied in Russia, including at the Moscow Academy. On returning to Serbia, he had spent thirty years teaching catechism in schools, until in 1937 he was tonsured and consecrated bishop by the Serbian Patriarch Gabriel, Metropolitan Anastasius, head of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia, the Serbian Bishops Irineius and Simeon and Bishop (now Hieromartyr) Dositheus.

On 10 March 1939, Bishop Vladimir tonsured Vladimir Pronin, aged 25, monk and then ordained him to the priesthood. Vladimir was given the name of Vasily (Basil), in honour of St Basil the Fool-for-Christ. Bishop Vladimir had been appointed Bishop of Mukachevo in Carpatho-Russia, for the autonomous Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Church was then in the spiritual care of the Serbian Church. Bishop Vladimir loved Carpatho-Russia, which during the 1930s was

fighting to keep its Orthodoxy and national identity, and he was to take Fr Vasily there.

On hearing this news, Bishop John sent Hieromonk Vasily a congratulatory telegram: 'I sincerely congratulate you on receiving the monastic tonsure and the priesthood. I rejoiced with all my heart when I read your letter. Entering monasticism and taking up the service of the Church in the much-suffering Carpatho-Russian land, you have made the right choice, useful to you and to many...The Carpathian land is very close to me as an ancient Russian land...For centuries it has kept the faith and its national identity, despite all the attempts to supplant them. That land will always remain close to me and I send my greetings to the disciples who have been prepared to serve the Church'. Bishop John constantly corresponded with Fr Vasily and took a keen interest in the situation in Carpatho-Russia.

Hieromonk Vasily served in various parishes in Carpatho-Russia and was ever a zealous pastor and missionary. However, on 19 November 1945, at the end of the Second World War and under Soviet occupation, the Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Church passed into the jurisdiction of the Moscow Patriarchate. In 1946 Fr Vasily became the spiritual father of the Convent of St Nicholas on Monastery Hill in Mukachevo. For over fifty years he was to give spiritual nourishment to the nuns there. Many of them had suffered greatly for Orthodoxy, among them the Abbess, Mother Nina (in the world Juliana Prokop). Others, from laypeople to hierarchs, and from all over the Soviet Union, beat a path to Fr Vasily's door, seeking his unceasing prayer, counsel and clairvoyance.

Archimandrite Vasily was a highly cultivated man. He had a command of fourteen languages, knew Latin and Greek thoroughly and spoke Russian, English, French, German, Slovak, Hungarian, Romanian and Serb fluently. He was also a mineralogist and a famous expert on the minerals of Carpatho-Russia. In 1958, at the Moscow Theological Academy, Fr Vasily defended a doctorate on the History of the Mukachevo Diocese from the Beginnings until 1914. Using many sources, this highly serious and still unsurpassed work on the history of Orthodoxy in Carpatho-Russia showed that Carpatho-Russia had always defended Orthodox and its identity, whatever the attempts to uproot it. It is a great misfortune that it has not yet been published. As one Rusin who has read it has remarked that it shows that his Christian homeland in the Carpathians is part of the great Holy Russia.

This 'History' is not the only learned work of Fr Vasily. He also wrote 'A Rule for Monks', 'The Rites of the Convent of Mukachevo', 'The Bible and Mathematics', 'Rebirth and Resurrection', 'Gravity and the Renaissance', 'Subcarpathian Linguistics', and 'The Paleolithic on Monastery Hill'. Fr Vasily was the only

person to the present time to attempt archaeological excavations in Carpatho-Russia. He composed an Akathist to St Moses the Hungarian and several prayers. He was also an artist and painted one of the few pictures dealing with Orthodox history in Carpatho-Russia. This is a picture called ‘The Appearance of the Angel to Prince Theodore Koriatovich on the River Latoritsa’. The latter led the uprising of the Carpatho-Russian Orthodox against their Hungarian persecutors in the Middle Ages.

Fr Vasily was a wonderful pastor, who, ‘loved everyone, forgave everyone and warmed the hearts of all with his spiritual father’s love’, as his spiritual children write of him. Forced to lie down for the last year of his life, he foreknew the time of his repose. In 1997, a week before he passed over, he told his doctor of his coming parting. A few days before his repose he made his farewells to the nuns. He reposed on the night of 4 and 5 January and his burial took place on the Feast of the Nativity. Fr Vasily’s memory is honored in the Convent and his cell is kept as it was. His body lies next to that of the Confessor, Abbess Nina, in the Convent cemetery. Many go there and the faithful maintain that healings take place. Details of the life of Archimandrite Vasily have been handed to the Canonization Commission of the Russian Orthodox Church. (*from orthodoxengland.uk*)

## **A Serbian Saint For Carpatho-Russia: Bishop Irenaeus of Bac**

A Serbian bishop, who served for a time as a bishop of the Orthodox Church in Carpatho-Russia, was canonized as a saint by the Orthodox Church of Serbia on October 2, 2022.

The future saint was born as Ivan Chiric in a family of priests in Sremski Karlovce, Serbia on May 1, 1884. He was educated in his hometown and also in the city of Novi Sad. Ivan graduated from the Moscow Theological Academy in 1906 and defended his doctoral thesis in Vienna in 1908. Later that year he was tonsured a monk with the name “Irenaeus” and ordained deacon and then priest. With his advanced education, Father Irenaeus became the head librarian of the Patriarchal Library and also taught at the Karlovac Seminary in the area of theology and liturgics.

In 1919 Father Irenaeus was elected Bishop of Timok and in 1922 was transferred to the Diocese of Bac. He had a talent for languages and was involved in translating the Scriptures and liturgical texts from Hebrew, Latin, Greek, French, Russian, German and Hungarian. Bishop Irenaeus was especially known for his work translating the Holy Bible, especially the Old Testament, into Serbian and authored several commentaries on books of the Old Testament.

## **In Carpatho-Russia**

In the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century there was a growing movement among the Rusyn people away from the Greek Catholic Church to their ancestral Orthodox Faith. This Greek Catholic or Uniate Church was formed from a document signed in 1646 (the Union of Uzhorod) which allowed the Orthodox people to keep their liturgical life but to accept the authority of the Pope. This union with Rome was forced upon the people by the Hungarian authorities with the approval of many Orthodox clergy who desired the higher standard of living they would receive as Catholic priests. Any attempt to maintain the Orthodox Faith was met with arrests, persecution and violence. With the end of World War I and the breakup of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the persecution eased and the Orthodox Faith revived among the people. Many priests and bishops, especially from Serbia, aided in this flowering of Orthodoxy in the Carpathians. Among them was the Bishop Irenaeus who became the head of this new Orthodox Church of Carpatho-Russia in 1927.

## **In Serbia**

Bishop Irenaeus returned to Bac to aid his people who suffered greatly during World War II. He worked tirelessly to protect and help his people and was successful in rescuing 2,800 children and 189 mothers with babies held at the Hungarian sarvar concentration camp and in 1942 helped to establish a hospital in his diocese.

With the ascent of the Communists to power in Serbia, Bishop Irenaeus became the target of the hatred of the new, godless government. He was placed under house arrest for 17 months. During the 1946 feast of the Transfiguration of the Lord as a festal procession was taking place around the church the bishop was insulted, beaten and nearly lynched by the Communists. The bishop suffered injuries from which he never recovered. He fell asleep in the Lord on the eve of the feast of the Annunciation in 1955 and was buried in the crypt of St. George Cathedral in Novi Sad.

*Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.*  
(Matthew 5:11-12)

## **His Canonization**

On May 23, 2022 the Holy Synod of Bishops of the Orthodox Church of Serbia, resolved to list Bishop Irenaeus among the saints as a “*Confessor of the Faith*” (one who suffered for Christ). The feastday of his remembrance was established on the anniversary of his falling asleep in the Lord: March 24 / April 6.

The solemn service of canonization took place at the Cathedral in Novi Sad led by His Holiness, Patriarch Porfirije of the Orthodox Church of Serbia along with dozens of bishops from around the world including Archbishop Juraj of the Diocese of Michalovce and Kosice in Slovakia. At the Little Entrance of the Divine Liturgy, Bishop Nikodim of Dalmatia read the decree of the Holy Synod of Bishops glorifying not only St. Irenaus but also the New Martyrs of Bac. (*from acrod.org*)

### **Today's Epistle Lesson – St. Paul's Letter to the Romans 2:10-16 EOB**

Brethren, glory, honor, and peace are for everyone who does good; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek, because there is no partiality with God. Hence, all those who have sinned apart from the law will also perish without the law, and as many as have sinned under the law will be judged by the law. For it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous before God, but the doers of the law will be declared righteous. (Indeed, when Gentiles who do not have the law do by nature the things of the law, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law, by showing that the practical expression of the law is written in their hearts. Their conscience bears witness, and their thoughts alternately accuse or defend them). This is for the day when, according to my proclamation of the gospel, God, through Jesus Christ, will judge the secret thoughts of all.

### **Today's Gospel Lesson - Saint Matthew 4:18-23 EOB**

At that time, walking by the sea of Galilee, Jesus saw two brothers: Simon who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother. They were casting a net into the sea since they were fishermen. He said to them, "Come after me, and I will make you fish for people!" Immediately, they left their nets and followed him. Going on from there, he saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother. They were in a boat with their father Zebedee, mending their nets. Jesus called them. At once, they left the boat and their father, and followed him. Jesus traveled throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the Good News of the Kingdom, and healing all kinds of diseases and sickness among the people. His fame spread into all Syria, and they brought him all who were sick, afflicted with various diseases and torments, people possessed with demons, epileptics, and paralytics; and he healed them. Great crowds from Galilee, Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea and from beyond the Jordan followed him.

## **Homily on the Tenth Eothinon Gospel – John 21:1-14**

By Metropolitan Hierotheos of Nafpaktos and Agiou Vlasiou

Today's Eothinon Gospel that was read in the Matins Service refers to the third appearance of Christ to His disciples, as presented by the Evangelist John. The first appearance was in the evening of the first day, the second appearance was the



following Sunday when Thomas was also present, and the third appearance is what we read today along the shore of the Sea of Tiberius.

A group of disciples, specifically seven disciples, went fishing. The disciples however were unable to catch any fish, even though they were there all night. Then at dawn, Christ appeared on land and asked them if they had anything to eat. When they responded in the negative, He urged them to drop their nets on the right side of the ship. Obeying this they caught many fish, which they later counted to be one hundred and fifty-three. With this they understood that the man was Christ. This is an incident that shows Christ manifesting Himself. We can say it was a small transfiguration. The first to understand was John, who told it to Peter who in turn wrapped his outer garment around himself and began to swim in the water to meet Christ.

Much can be highlighted in this wondrous resurrection account. But due to the limited time of this morning sermon allow me to emphasize three brief points.

First, even though the disciples had seen Christ while He lived, here they did not recognize Him as He sat on the land. This shows us that the knowledge and recognition of Christ is a matter of a revelation experience and not one of the external senses. God reveals Himself to people. At times it keeps people's minds away from perceiving Him, and at times it illuminates them to gain empirical knowledge, and this, of course, depends on the spiritual condition of the people. Thus, some regard Him as a common man and others as the true God.

The second is that Christ, as God, rules creation. He sees everything, where the fish are, where the animals are. He not only rules the world but also animates it. Everything obeys His commands and His words. Unfortunately, people often fail to obey His commandments, precisely because they have the freedom to be distressed, to be tormented, to suffer, and to be in pain. The disciples were distressed all night without the presence of Christ, but they obeyed Christ and they were blessed richly.

The third point is that John, who is an expression of *theoria* (divine vision), was first to recognize Christ, and then Peter, who is an expression of *praxis* (action), who with his zeal, hastened to meet Him. Love for Christ is very important and everything else follows. Of course, the spirited part of the soul must apply the will of Christ, to strive so that one can come to Christ. For if one has only love, but does not live up to what Christ says, then one cannot fulfill their desire and their love. Only then can someone claim to co-exist with Christ.

And because this sermon is taking place during the Divine Liturgy, it must be said that this incident teaches us that our love for Christ is mainly expressed by actions and the effort to observe the will of God and to participate in the Divine Eucharist

every Sunday. Some say they love Christ, but they do not attend church. How then will we express our love? Christ co-exists with those who love Him and are willing to meet him at the Divine Eucharist. So every Sunday, then, there is a meeting with the Risen Christ in the Divine Eucharist. If this is not the case then Sunday has no meaning. *(from johnsanidopoulos.com)*

## A Word From the Holy Fathers

Prayer and converse with God is a supreme good: it is a partnership and union with God. As the eyes of the body are enlightened when they see light, so our spirit, when it is intent on God, is illumined by His infinite light. I do not mean the prayer of outward observance but prayer from the heart, not confined to fixed times or periods but continuous throughout the day and night.

Our spirit should be quick to reach out toward God, not only when it is engaged in meditation; at other times also, when it is carrying out its duties, caring for the needy, performing works of charity, giving generously in the service of others, our spirit should long for God and call Him to mind, so that these works may be seasoned with the salt of God's love, and so make a palatable offering to the Lord of the universe. Throughout the whole of our lives we may enjoy the benefit that comes from prayer if we devote a great deal of time to it.

Prayer is the light of the spirit, true knowledge of God, mediating between God and man. The spirit, raised up to heaven by prayer, clings to God with the utmost tenderness; like a child crying tearfully for its mother, it craves the milk that God provides. It seeks the satisfaction of its own desires, and receives gifts outweighing the whole world of nature.

Prayer stands before God as an honored ambassador. It gives joy to the spirit, peace to the heart. I speak of prayer, not words. It is the longing for God, love too deep for words, a gift not given by man but by God's grace. The apostle Paul says: "We do not know how we are to pray but the Spirit Himself pleads for us with inexpressible longings."

When the Lord gives this kind of prayer to a man, He gives him riches that cannot be taken away, heavenly food that satisfies the spirit. One who tastes this food is set on fire with an eternal longing for the Lord: his spirit burns as in a fire of the utmost intensity.

Practice prayer from the beginning. Paint your house with the colors of modesty and humility. Make it radiant with the light of justice. Decorate it with the finest gold leaf of good deeds. Adorn it with the walls and stones of faith and generosity. Crown it with the pinnacle of prayer. In this way you will make it a perfect

dwelling place for the Lord. You will be able to receive Him as in a splendid palace, and through His grace you will already possess Him, His image enthroned in the temple of your spirit.

– St. John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Matthew*

## **The Fourth Ecumenical Synod (451 A.D.)**

By Metropolitan Hierotheos of Nafpaktos and Agiou Vlasiou

Last Sunday, beloved brethren, we saw how the Third Ecumenical Synod dealt with the heresy of Nestorius, Patriarch of Constantinople, how it condemned him and how it set terms for the faith in the God-man Christ and the Most Holy Theotokos, after an agreement between Saint Cyril of Alexandria and John of Antioch with the so-called "Ekthesis of Reconciliation" in 433.

However, after the death of these two Patriarchs (Cyril of Alexandria and John of Antioch) their fanatical disciples raised the issue, in consideration of the fact that both of them had departed from their positions, which they had already supported, and it now created problems in the Church. These are Eutyches, Dioscorus and other Antiochian theologians. Eutyches taught that the Lord Jesus Christ had two natures before the union, but he confessed one nature after the union. That is, he said that after the union of the two natures, human nature was absorbed by the divine nature. This problem continued, because there was still confusion between nature and person, so that they considered the one person is connected with one nature.

At that time, the Fourth Ecumenical Synod was convened in Chalcedon, by decision of the Emperors Marcian and Pulcheria, in 451 AD, under the presidency of Patriarch Anatolios of Constantinople and the representatives of Pope Leo of Rome. This Synod accepted the decisions of the Third Ecumenical Synod and following the previous Fathers, that is, "following the Holy Fathers", as it is written, decided that we confess that one is the person and one is the hypostasis of the Word, "while He is known "to be acknowledged in two natures, inconfusedly, unchangeably, indivisibly, inseparably" (έν δύο φύσεσιν άσυγγύτως, άτρέπτως, άδιαίρέτως, άχωρίστως), and nowhere is the difference between the natures denied because of the union, but the attributes of each nature is preserved for the unity in the one person-hypostasis of the Word.

This whole issue may seem philosophical, which has nothing to do with the theology of the Church, but this does not apply for the following reasons. The Fathers of the Church, through the study of Holy Scripture, the Old and New Testaments, especially with the Revelation of Christ to the Apostles, knew that Christ is the true God, the Son of God. The existence of the Holy Trinity was

revealed at the Jordan River. On Mount Tabor, the face of Christ shone like the sun and His garments became white like light. Also, a bright cloud covered the Disciples and the voice of the Father was heard. This Light was not considered created, but divine, uncreated, the Light of divinity. In Christ there was a human nature (soul, body), but the radiance of divinity also came from within. This Light was not another nature, but the divine nature which was united with the human nature of Christ. Thus, the divinity of Christ was revealed without abolishing human nature. This led the Fathers to say that the two natures - divine and human - act in the hypostasis-person of the Word "inconfusedly, unchangeably, indivisibly, inseparably".

This experience was shared by many Fathers of the Church, as we clearly see in Basil the Great and Saint Gregory the Theologian and in many later Fathers, such as Saint Symeon the New Theologian, Saint Gregory Palamas and others. And for this reason all the Fathers have an identity of experience and faith with the Prophets and the Apostles.

They did not make this formulation in order to philosophize rationally about Christ, because this mystery cannot be understood rationally, nor did they do it to develop philosophy, but they did it to respond to the heretics. Thus, the heretical theologians tried to understand this mystery in terms of philosophy, while the Fathers used some terms, such as essence, nature, person, hypostasis, to answer the heretical theologians and to deconstruct the philosophical manner of their thoughts.

This means that dogma, as Saint Gregory Palamas says, is the manifestation/revelation of the Word of God to the Prophets in the Old Testament as pre-incarnate and to the Apostles in the New Testament as incarnate. On the contrary, the terms are the words, they are verbs, used by the Fathers to preserve the dogma, the revelation of the Son and Word of God. That is why the terms state the boundaries between truth and error.

The decisions of the Fourth Ecumenical Synod, as well as of the other Ecumenical Synods, were made into hymns by the Church, which we chant in the Church, and become a prayer, which closely connects dogma and the terms of the Ecumenical Synods with the worship of the Church. This shows the great value of worship, in which we confess and live the God-man Christ. *(from johnsanidopoulos.com)*

### **Also Commemorated Today: Holy Martyrs Leontius, Hypatius and Theodulus**

*The body of Leontios was like an anvil, an iron anvil taking the assaults of a hammer. On the eighteenth Leontios wounded gave up his spirit.*

*Free-minded Theodoulos to the sword, sees also Hypatios doing the same.*

The Holy Martyrs Leontios, Hypatios, and Theodoulos were Roman soldiers. The holy Martyr Leontios, a Greek by origin "of great physical stature, powerful, strong and brave in battles", served as a military-chief in the imperial army in the Phoenician city of Tripoli during the reign of Vespasian (70-79). Leontios was distinguished for his bravery and good sense, and the people of Tripoli held him in deep respect because of his virtue.

The emperor appointed the Roman senator Hadrian as governor of the Phoenician district, with full powers to hunt out Christians, and in case of their refusal to offer sacrifice to the Roman gods, to give them over to torture and death. And on his way to Phoenicia Hadrian received a report that Leontios had turned many away from worshiping the pagan gods. The governor sent the tribune Hypatios with a detachment of soldiers to Tripoli so as to find and arrest the Christian Leontios. Along the way the tribune Hypatios fell seriously ill, and being near death, he saw in a dream an angel, which said: "If you wish to be healed, you and your soldiers should say three times: 'God of Leontios, help me.'"

Opening his eyes Hypatios beheld the angel and said: "I was sent to arrest Leontios, how is it that I should appeal to his God?" At this moment the angel became invisible. Hypatios told his dream to the soldiers, among whom was his friend Theodoulos, and all of them together asked for help from the God Whom Leontios confessed. Hypatios was immediately healed to the great joy of his soldiers, but only Theodoulos sat aside, pondering the miracle. His soul was filled with love for God, and he told Hypatios to proceed twice as quickly as the other soldiers to the city in search of Leontios.

Upon their arrival in the city, a stranger met them and invited them to his house, where he lavishly hosted the travelers. Learning that their hospitable host was Leontios, they fell on their knees and asked him to enlighten them with faith in the true God. When he expounded his faith in Christ to them, their hearts burned with love for Christ and, at that moment, a bright cloud descended upon Hypatios and Theodoulos and dew from a cloud descended upon them. That was the Holy Spirit of God Himself baptizing these converted souls and Leontios, who at that moment, spoke these words: "In the name of the All-Holy Trinity: Father, Son and Holy Spirit."

The remaining soldiers in search of their commander arrived in Tripoli, where the governor Hadrian had also arrived. Learning what had happened, he ordered Leontios, Hypatios, and Theodoulos to be brought to him. After threatening them with torture and death, he demanded that they renounce Christ and offer sacrifice to the Roman gods. All the Martyrs firmly confessed their faith in Christ. Hypatios was put under a column and raked with iron claws, and Theodoulos was

mercilessly beaten with rods. Seeing the steadfastness of the Saints, they beheaded them with an axe. And after torture, they sent Leontios to prison. In the morning he came before the governor. Hadrian tried to entice the holy Martyr with honors and rewards, and accomplishing nothing, he gave him over to new tortures. His entire body was covered with wounds but he diligently prayed to God not to abandon him. In the midst of the cruelest torments, an angel of the Lord appeared to him, encouraged and comforted him. The holy Martyr was then suspended head downwards from a pillar with a heavy stone about his neck, but nothing could make him renounce Christ. The governor then gave orders to beat the sufferer with rods until he died. The death of the holy Martyrs occurred between 70-79.

The accusation against Saint Leontios, and his sufferings and death are recorded on tin tablets prepared by the court scribe (*commentarius*) Notarios. These tablets were placed at the grave of the holy Martyr.

Following the martyrdom of Saint Leontios, the soldiers then threw his body outside the city, but Christians reverently gave it burial near Tripoli. Leontios was buried in the yard of a woman by the name of Joanna who had given money to the soldiers to take the body. She was the wife of a great nobleman and prominent army commander named Maurus. She had wrapped the body in expensive cloth and also made a icon of him and she hung a lighted lamp before it.

It happened that Emperor Diocletian became angry with Maurus and shut him up in prison in the city of Antioch. She became sad, and prayed to God, interceding with His saint Leontios, to save her husband from prison. God accepted her prayers. Saint Leontios appeared to her husband in prison and told him, "Do not grieve or be sorrowful, for you shall be delivered tomorrow, you shall eat with the emperor at his table, and you shall return safely to your house." The Saint, then, went to the emperor, and woke him up. When the emperor saw the Saint, he became terrified. The Saint told the emperor, "I have come to you, O Emperor, to order the release of the army commander. Honor him, and let him go to his house, lest you be destroyed." The emperor, who was trembling, replied saying, "Whatever you command me, O my lord, I will do." The next morning, the emperor brought the commander out of prison, honored him, and dined with him at his own table. The emperor told him about the horseman that appeared to him, then dismissed him to return to his home town.

When he arrived in Tripoli, his home town, he told his wife and his family what had happened to him. His wife told him, "The good that happened to you was through the blessings of Saint Leontios." Then she uncovered the body of the Saint, and he took the blessing of the Saint. When he saw his face in the icon, he realized that he was the one that had appeared to him in prison.

After the perishing of Diocletian, they built a church in his name, and relocated the body to it with great veneration. Many miracles occurred and were attributed to him. Many other churches were dedicated to him. A cathedral at Bosra, Syria was consecrated to him, along with Saints Sergius and Baccus in 513. He was formerly the patron saint of Syria. Severus of Antioch, after studying law in Alexandria and Beirut, was converted from paganism and baptized at Saint Leontios' shrine in Tripoli in 488. In a homily on Saint Leontios delivered in 513 or 514 which recounts his life and various miracles which occurred at his famous shrine, Severus writes of his own experience that is valuable in knowing the importance of this shrine to the conversion of local pagans:

"And I know many of the young men who devoted themselves to Roman law in that turbulent city, that is Beirut, and they went off to his city (i.e. Tripoli) to pray, and speedily left their vain education and way of life, and purified their minds of Hellenic myths. They were changed for the better and were converted from those (myths) to a life full of wisdom and to conversation with the blessed monks. And I was one of them. For I was still at that time in that city. I heard of many miracles and cures that the blessed martyr made. My heart was moved in me, or rather the philanthropic God moved my rational faculty that I should run to the Martyrion of Saint Leontios and pray. So I went out from the city of Beirut, I and a friend of mine who was a scholastikos, and we went to the martyr's holy place and prayed. Moreover, I prayed separately because I was still a pagan. I prayed thus: 'Saint Leontios, holy martyr, pray to your God on my behalf that He would save me from the cult of the Hellenes and from the customs of my fathers.' That night a great mystery was revealed to me of which I am not worthy and of which I dare not speak. And so the God of all, Christ Jesus, converted me from the seduction of the Hellenes through the prayers of the martyr Saint Leontios and called me to the morally pure life of monasticism" (*Laudatio* 4.1-6). (*from johnsanidopoulos.com*)

## **Saint Alena of Belgium**

Saint Alena was born in Dilbeek, just outside Brussels, Belgium, in the seventh century. She was baptized without the knowledge of her pagan parents, the nobleman Levold and his wife Hildegaart. Alena secretly attended the Christian liturgy, giving varying excuses to her parents. One night her father told his guards to follow her and, after tracking her for quite some time, they witnessed Alena entering a chapel in Vorst. Her father came to the conclusion that Christians had bewitched her into conversion, and ordered that she be arrested. When her father's guards attempted to arrest her she resisted. During the struggle, her arm was severed, and she offered her soul up to God. It is said the arm was taken by an angel and placed before the altar in the chapel where she regularly worshiped.

Various miracles were claimed at the burial site of Alena's body, and one of Lebold's subjects, Duke Omundus, had his sight restored by invoking Alena's prayers. After witnessing these miracles, her parents converted to Christianity. In traditional art she is seen with one arm severed, healing a blind man, or with an angel helping her. Forest Abbey in Forest, Belgium, a municipality of Brussels, holds her relics and is a popular pilgrimage site. (*from oca.org*)

## **Also Commemorated Today**

New Hieromartyrs Nicanor, Basil, Alexander, Basil and Sergius priests (1938).

Venerable [Leontius](#), canonarch of the Kiev Caves (14th c.).

["Bogoliubov"](#) (1157) Icon of the Most Holy Theotokos.

Venerable [Leontius](#), clairvoyant of Dionysiou Monastery, Mt. Athos (1605).

Martyr [Aetherus](#) of Nicomedia (305).

St. Marina the Virgin of Bithynia (8th c.).

Finding of the relics (1997) of New Hieromartyr Victor, bishop of Glazov (1934).

St. Erasmus, monk (*Greek*).

St. Leontius the Shepherd, monk (*Greek*).

Amandus, Bishop of Bordeaux (c. 431)

Calogerus the Anchorite of Girgenti (Sicily)(c. 486)

Martyrs Cyriacus and Paula of Malaga (Spain)(c. 305)

Fortunatus the Philosopher, bishop in northern Italy (c. 569)

Gregory (bishop), Demetrius (archdeacon), and Calogerus, evangelizers of Sicily (5<sup>th</sup> c.)

St. Guy, abbot of Baume (940)

Martyrs Mark and Marcellian, sons of St. Tranquillinus of Rome (c. 287)

Osmanna, princess of Northumbria (7<sup>th</sup>/8<sup>th</sup> c.)

Osmanna of Jouarre, nun (c. 700)

St. Theneva of Glasgow (7<sup>th</sup> c.)

Sts. Edburga and Edith of Aylesbury (c. 650)

St. Goneri of Brittany, hermit (6<sup>th</sup> c.)

St. Minnborinus of Cologne, Abbot of St. Martin's Abbey (986)

## **Father's Day**

Happy Father's Day! As our nation sets aside special days to honor our fathers and mothers, we must remember that they are not inseparable of duty, calling and function according to God's creation and purpose as recorded in the Book of Genesis. We know that if motherhood is the source of all love and compassion, then we can say that fatherhood is the source of security and stability. Today, I will dwell on the issue of what makes a man a dad. A father can become a dad only in a school called, "the academy of marriage," where he learns what to say and do. A good dad most often has a good father to learn from.



In our society, we have a very confusing image of what makes a father. Social media, TV or Hollywood presents us with violent fathers, helpless men or men missing from action. It does not teach us about the qualities of a good dad which resides in his image and likeness to be like God and to show the respect received from a mother.

No one goes to school to learn the art of fatherhood, but we are called upon, as a dad, to carry what we have inherited from our fathers and mothers. A father should be a man of prayer, conviction and honor who guards the reputation and good name of his family. So, the internship we all do as dads will be enhanced by our wives. He must cultivate a humble attitude.

In life, we have three fathers, our biological father, our adopted father and the one Father Who remains forever – our Heavenly Father. The prayer of the church reminds us that the image of a good father is Christ and the image of a good mom is the church. St. Paul speaks of this metaphor to illustrate how mothers and fathers are to journey through life....

The Holy Church teaches and encourages that parenthood is a Holy and Divine calling. In it, we mold our children's lives by impressing good character, and we influence them by being a good role model. So, every father must talk to his children, not only about God, but to be a Godly man. Every father must talk about to his children not how to love their mom, but how he loves and respects their mom. As fathers should be patient with their children, so should the children be patient with their dads.

We must keep the story of family alive in a positive mode and put aside whatever we have inherited of the negative issues. A father will project to his children where we are at and where, one day, we will accomplish our God-given purpose and destiny.

This could be a story of success that can carry with it some failure, but to also reemphasize that hope, faith and love is the greatest psychological and spiritual nourishment a dad can infuse into the life of his children. We can do this by not judging, condemning, or comparing, but by always looking ahead to stay grounded in our principles and convictions. There is a difference between judging failure or encouraging improvement. Encouragement always looks at one's own ability to grow. Condemnation is the formula to impede growth. So today, we remind every father not to preach to their children. Leave the preaching to the church. As Metropolitan GEORGE Khader, Archbishop of Mount Lebanon once stated, "I can see God's face on the face of my dad."

The Orthodox Christian Sacrament of Marriage perfectly defines how a man becomes a husband and later a dad. First and foremost to be with God. Before the

wedding service, the man is reminded by Psalm 128 about his calling and the reward he will reap in his marriage:

“How blessed is everyone who fears the Lord, Who walks in His ways. When you shall eat of the fruit of your hands, you will be happy, and it will be well with you. Your wife shall be like a fruitful vine within your house, your children like olive plants around your table. Behold, for thus shall the man be blessed who fears the Lord.” (Psalm 128:1-4)

Fearing the Lord means that a man who leads his family to church will be a good example to them morally and will lead them in generosity, truth, and forgiveness. The family is the school that one day the children will graduate from to be good parents. So, to all dads, we bless you today and we are grateful. To those dads who are in heaven, we say thank you. “Yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom all things came and for whom we live; and there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom we live.” (1 Corinthians 8:6) There will be no graduation from the school of fatherhood until one has grandchildren. Only then will a father see all the fruits of his diligence, labor, and love. *(from pramvir.com)*

## Social Team for June 25

Team 3 – Edgington, Victor Barzykin, R&C Wright. Thank you!

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Diocesan Website: <http://www.acrod.org>

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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.)