

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



July 2, 2023 – 4th Sunday After Pentecost | Deposition of the Robe of the Most Holy Theotokos At Blachernae

By Metropolitan Hierotheos of Nafpaktos

Today our Church, beloved brethren, commemorates the Deposition of the Honorable Robe of our Most Holy Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary in Blachernae. It is a celebration of an event that refers to our Panagia and refers to a garment of hers that was her "overcoat".

According to the author of the synaxarion of the day, two patricians, Galbios and Kandidos, during the reign of Emperor Leo the Great, as they were traveling to Jerusalem to worship in the Holy Land, upon arriving in Galatia, came across a most-pious Hebrew woman, who had in her home the holy Robe, namely the overcoat of the Panagia. This woman prayed day and night in imitation of the Prophetess Anna who was in the Temple and found worthy to see Christ, when He was brought by the Panagia forty days after His birth.

The two Patricians, after some trickery, managed to obtain this precious treasure and brought it to Constantinople, where they placed it in their building, which was called Blachernae, and there they built the Church of the Apostles Peter and Mark. Later Emperor Leo the Great, when he found out about this, built the Church of our Lady the Theotokos, in which he placed the case that contained the honorable

Robe, which Christians venerated and beheld various miracles. The sacred hymnographer calls the holy Robe "a sacred garment, an inviolate safeguard (of Constantinople), an honorable gift, a wealth of healing that cannot be taken away, a river full of the graces of the Spirit."

On the occasion of the Deposition of the Honorable Robe of the Panagia, our Church recalls the great person of the Panagia, who became the joy of the universe, because she was the person through whom Christ came into the world, Who freed the human race from sin, the devil and death. All the hymns of the Church, beginning with the honorable Robe, are hymns to the person of the Panagia.

The apolytikion of the feast refers to the Panagia, where among other things it says: "In you nature and time are renewed." This means that nature and time, which often afflicts people, acquire another meaning, are transcended by the Grace of God. In the Panagia, with the Holy Spirit, her virginity was preserved, becoming a mother without losing her virginity, and she remains alive throughout the ages, since according to tradition her body was transferred to heaven.

However in today's feast we see that the Grace of God which sanctified the body of the Panagia passed on to the garments she wore. Indeed, according to Orthodox teaching, divine Grace through the soul passes onto the body and from there proceeds to clothes and in general to irrational creation. In this we are not idolaters and worshipers of creation, but we honor the material that contains the sanctifying energy of God. Thus the faithful, according to the sacred hymnographer, embrace with faith the holy Robe of the Panagia and receive the Grace of God that dwells in it. On the occasion of today's feast we must pray that our Panagia place us under her holy Robe, her sanctified overcoat, and to protect us from all evil. (*from johnsanidopoulos.com*)

Today's Epistle Lesson – St. Paul's Letter to the Romans 6:18-23 EOB

Brethren, having been released from sin, you became slaves of righteousness. I speak in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. Indeed, as you used to offer your members as servants of impurity and ever-increasing wickedness, now offer your members as servants of righteousness for sanctification. For when you were servants of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. What fruit did you obtain at that time by those things which now shame you? The end result of those things is death! But now, being made free from sin and having become servants of God, you have your fruit of sanctification, and the result of eternal life. The wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Today's Gospel Lesson – Saint Matthew 8:5-13 EOB

At that time, when Jesus came into Capernaum, a centurion came to him, asking and saying, “Lord, my servant is lying in the house paralyzed, grievously tormented.” Jesus answered, “I will come and heal him.” But the centurion replied, “Lord, I am not worthy that you should come under my roof! Only say the word and my servant shall be healed. For I am also a man under authority, having soldiers under my own authority. I tell this one, ‘Go,’ and he goes; and if I tell another, ‘Come,’ he comes. Or if I tell my servant, ‘Do this,’ he does it!”

When Jesus heard this, he marveled and said to those who followed, “Amen, I tell you that I have never found so great a faith, not even in Israel! I tell you that many will come from the east and the west, and will sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the Kingdom of Heaven. But the children of the Kingdom will be thrown out into the outer darkness and there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” Jesus said to the centurion, “Go your way. Let it be done for you as you have believed.” And his servant was healed in that hour.

Preconditions for Participation in the Divine Eucharist

By Metropolitan Hierotheos of Nafpaktos and Agiou Vlasiou

We live in a time when there has developed a whole theology around ecclesiology, and at the basis of ecclesiology is eucharistology. Great value and importance is placed today on the Mystery of the Divine Eucharist. And no one is opposed to this. The Divine Eucharist is the center of ecclesiastical life. All the Mysteries of the Church lead to the Divine Eucharist. After Baptism and Chrismation we receive the Divine Eucharist. There is the view that Christ was incarnated in order to establish the Divine Eucharist, by which we are deified and sanctified. For one to be united with God, it is not through the intellect, morals or contemplation, but it is a reality that takes place in the Church, by partaking of the divinized Body and Blood of Christ.

What is the Divine Eucharist? According to the Fathers, as expressed by St. John of Damascus, the Divine Eucharist is the Secret Supper, the prayer of Christ in Gethsemene for the world, the Resurrection of Christ and our participation in it, and it is the journey along the road to Emmaus. When Christ met the Apostles Luke and Cleopas along the road to Emmaus after His Resurrection, where they did not recognize Him at first, they came to recognize Him when He broke bread with them.

What exactly happened along the road to Emmaus? The Apostles were sad, bitter and in despair over the events that took place two days prior with the death of Christ. Suddenly Christ approaches them as a stranger. After the stranger asked them why they were sad, they explained to the stranger how they had hoped Christ

was the promised Messiah to liberate Israel, but now He was dead after being crucified in Jerusalem. The stranger then explained how all these things had to take place as they were foretold in the Old Testament. He therefore explained to them the prophecies, especially from Isaiah, which had to be fulfilled in order for death to be conquered. Later these Apostles revealed to each other how their hearts burned within them as the stranger explained the prophecies of the Old Testament. It was not an intellectual stimulation, but stimulation of the heart, since the intellect is one thing and the nous in the heart is another. And as they were going along the road and the stranger was about to go His own way, the Apostles asked Him to stay with them for the night. Then with the breaking of bread, which symbolizes the Divine Eucharist, their eyes were opened and they recognized the stranger to be the Risen Lord.

This incident shows exactly what is the Divine Eucharist and what are the preconditions by which we can participate in the Divine Eucharist. Nothing takes place without preconditions and preparations. In science, for example, a student must find a teacher to learn, and to learn he must devote time to study and labor with sweat and tears in order to become a scientist. He must show that he has a desire and love for knowledge. If he doesn't have love for knowledge, how can he acquire human knowledge? Then slowly with time and in stages he acquires the knowledge he desires. The same takes place with divine knowledge. The Divine Liturgy also requires preconditions, and we can't participate in the Divine Liturgy without preconditions.

What does this mean? Consider the example of the journey towards Emmaus. We must listen to the words of God, reading Holy Scripture and the texts of the Fathers. We must pray. The heart must burn with desire for the love of God, with eros. The more our hearts burn with divine eros, the more we can approach properly the Divine Eucharist. Only in this way can we know God.

We cannot separate the Divine Eucharist from Holy Scripture or prayer, especially prayer of the heart. What is Holy Scripture? It is the commandments of Christ. When we read Holy Scripture, we must ask: "What does God want from me? What do the friends of God seek? Who are the friends of God?" Of course, the friends of God are the Prophets and Apostles. By doing this we learn to practice the commandments of Christ. An example can be found in the Beatitudes of Christ which He preached during the Sermon on the Mount, which are sequential steps to living according to the commandments of Christ. When we begin to live according to the commandments of Christ, our hearts begin to pray and to burn with divine eros. This is our personal Emmaus that leads to the Divine Eucharist. Only then and in this manner can we encounter God and come to know God.

If one does not follow these preconditions for participating in the Divine Eucharist, then instead of experiencing God as light, they will experience Him as fire. This is very important and it is something all the Fathers of the Church talk about, especially St. Gregory Palamas. All will see God, but some will see Him as light, and others as fire. Just as light has two properties, to illumine and to burn, so also does the experience of God both in this life with the Divine Eucharist and in the next on Judgment Day. St. Nicholas Cabasilas explains this as well.

Therefore, participation in the Divine Eucharist cannot take place without preconditions. And the journey along the road to Emmaus teaches us that these preconditions are the keeping of Christ's commandments and prayer of the heart, by which we acquire the knowledge of God. Then the Divine Eucharist becomes for us illumination and deification and will not be unto judgment. (*from johnsanidopoulos.com*)

A Word From the Holy Fathers

"God is a consuming fire" (Heb. 12:29). When an object touches fire, it changes: it either burns out or hardens.

So a person, touching God, either perishes or is saved.

Fire is always fire! But from touching it, both ashes and steel are obtained, depending on what it touches.

This happens with a person, and everything depends on what he brings to the Divine fire - in what state he touches God. If he holds himself like iron, then iron will strengthen and become steel. If he blooms to the weakness of the straw, it will burn.

Every person, sooner or later, will inevitably touch God, and woe to him if he does not prepare for that meeting.

Tolstoy carelessly, self-confidently, and not in the fear of God, approached God, took communion unworthily, and became an apostate.

The hour will come when there will be a touch with God's power, whether we like it or not.

The shovel is in the hand of the Lord. Grain and straw are tossed with a shovel, the latter is carried away by the wind, while the grain falls at the feet of the Master and is collected in granaries, and the straw is left or burned.

A meeting with the Lord is inevitable and we must prepare for it.

Our sins are straw that burns at this meeting. It is necessary to pronounce judgment on yourself in advance and, in preparation for that meeting, separate yourself from the straw, burn the straw of sins with repentance.

Either they are burned alone, or the person who has surrendered to sin burns with them.

You need to know about the Last Judgment and treat that day and event as you should. You need to cleanse your soul, you need to pray.

That event must be treated clearly and consciously, and not like an animal that hides its head so as not to see the danger.

– St. John Maximovitch (*Translated by John Sanidopoulos*)

Also Commemorated Today: St. John Maximovitch of Shanghai

By Anna Kuksa

I once met a holy man in the Nyack church that I attended with my family. At the time, I was a little girl and did not realize it. Neither did a lot of people, not for another 30 years or so.

He was a Bishop and was visiting from San Francisco. After the liturgy, as customary, I kissed the cross and his hand. This in itself was a great blessing, a blessing that has been with me ever since. I distinctly remember the round, black glasses he wore and how his head tilted every so slightly to the right. He exuded an aura of peace and didn't frighten me in the manner that most priests and bishops did.

Originally, the man's name was Mikhail Maximovitch. He was born in Russia and moved to Belgrade after the Russian Revolution. Many Russians fled the Communist regime: some, as was the case of my family waited longer, others left sooner.

In Belgrade as a young man, Mikhail felt the pull to church life and he pursued and graduated with a degree in theology from the university. Soon after, he became a monk and took the name John. Eventually, he was transferred to China and assumed the role of the Bishop of Shanghai. Many Russian expatriates had fled to China and as a result, they needed a leader. In 1962, Bishop John came to America when he was assigned to San Francisco.

There was a lot of drama in church politics that I won't mention, but suffice it to say that drama is a part of life.

Bishop John was a living saint, not eating or sleeping much, spending his time praying and doing good deeds. His fasting and prayer and worked miracles: there were many instances of healings by Bishop John while he was alive and even more

miraculous events after his death. People witnessed how he appeared in two places at once, how he floated in the air and had a glowing light around his body, especially after Easter services.

By his own prediction, he died on July 2, 1966 and his body was entombed in a sepulcher in The Cathedral of the Theotokos, Joy of All Who Sorrow in San Francisco.

I visited this magnificent Russian cathedral on Geary Boulevard in San Francisco on a trip to California in 1988.

The tomb was underneath the church and even though it was below ground, the room was bright, lit by burning candles on the stands that stood around the sepulcher. The burning incense filled my lungs as I crossed myself and bent over to kiss the cold granite of his tomb. Silently, I said my prayer and asked the Bishop to intercede on my behalf with the Divine. My prayer was not for myself, and, I can assure you that to this day, it remains answered. Many other supplications were answered as well.

I was not the only one whose prayer was answered. Many Russian Orthodox persons, both here in America and abroad, petitioned the Russian Orthodox Church to consider sainthood for Bishop John. In 1994, after much study, the Church canonized him. His sepulcher was opened and it was discovered that his body was incorrupt, meaning that it had not decomposed despite the fact that the body had not been embalmed.

In 1994, I returned to San Francisco and witnessed the glorification along with hundreds of others. It was a glorious, once in a lifetime event. Although the services were long, I did not tire and afterwards, I paid my respects to wonderworker Saint John of Shanghai and San Francisco. His body now rests in a glass tomb, in the Cathedral upstairs.

I realize that some don't recognize saints and there are even fewer who are fortunate to meet one in their lifetime. All I can say is that some souls are more advanced than others in the spiritual sense and their life's mission is devoted to prayer, helping and serving others. In serving others, they serve the Divine.

What you may not realize, either, is that all of us have the potential. (*from johnsanidopoulos.com*)

Also Commemorated Today

St. [Photius](#), metropolitan of Kiev (1431).

St. [Juvenal](#), patriarch of Jerusalem (458).

St. Juvenal, protomartyr of America and Alaska (1796).

St. [Kointos](#) the Wonderworker (272)

Holy Martyr [Anthimos](#) the Elder with 36 Martyrs of Egypt (c. 300)
Right-believing King [Stephen](#) the Great of Moldavia (1504) (Romania).
St. [Monegunde](#) (Monegundis) of Chartres (530 or 570) (Gaul).
New Martyr [Lampros](#) of Makri (1835) (Greek).
Uncovering of the relics (2003) of New Hieromartyr Priest Sergius Florinsky of Rakvere, Estonia (1918).
St. Oudoceus (Oudoc, Eddogwy), abbot of Llandeilo Fawr. (564)
St. Swithun (Swithin), bishop of Winchester (862).
Icon of the Theotokos “The Root of Jesse” at the Monastery of St. Nicholas of Andros
Martyr Acestes & 2 other soldiers of Rome converted at the martyrdom of St. Paul (c. 68)
Martyrs Ariston, Crescentian, Eutychian, Urban, Vitalis, Justus, Felicissimus, Felix, Marcia and Symphorosa of Campagna (c. 285) (Italy)
Martyrs Processus and Martinian of Rome, baptized by St. Peter while in prison (68)
St. Luner (Lunaire), bishop of Aleth in Brittany (580)

Social Team for July 9

Team 5 – Cooper, M. Blaydoe, Roberta Corson, Mary V., Steven Watts. 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.)