

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

**August 6, 2017 – 9th Sunday After Pentecost | The
Holy Transfiguration of our Lord God and Savior
Jesus Christ**

By His Eminence Metropolitan Hierotheos of Nafpaktos and Agiou Vlasiou
The theology of the feast of the Transfiguration of Christ always moved me, together with the theology of the feast of the Resurrection and Pentecost. Even by reading the hymns of the feast of the Transfiguration, it feels like those who wrote them had the experience of the uncreated light of divinity, which emanates from the Body of Christ.

The Holy Fathers of the Church, especially however Saint Gregory Palamas, that hagiorite saint, not only saw the uncreated light of divinity, but he also developed this great event theologically and then identified the difference between contemplative theology and hesychastic theology. Contemplative theology is associated with metaphysics, while hesychastic theology is associated with the purification of the heart and illumination of the nous. Herein lies the difference between Western and Orthodox theology, and, of course, the difference between the contemplatives - metaphysicians and the Orthodox hesychast Fathers.

The vision of the uncreated light, according to the teaching of the Church, is participating in the Kingdom of God, and certainly we know that there is the



kingdom of God which is the entire creation, and the Kingdom of God which is the uncreated grace and energy of God, which is enhypostatic, since "the agent of energy is the hypostasis which uses the energy" (St. John of Damascus). The sharing in the Kingdom of God is at varying degrees according to our participation and communion with the Grace of God, which we taste of not as a so-called mystic but as the actual Body of Christ.

When man partakes of the uncreated glory of God, then he is glorified, according to the confession of the Apostle Paul: "If one member is glorified, all rejoice together" (1 Cor. 12:16), because the glorification of a member of the Church has consequences for all the people. For example, the Prophet Moses was glorified, he entered the divine cloud, and then guided the people with the laws, advice and his entire inversion.

With these conditions we understand that in the Orthodox Church we cannot speak of a militant and triumphant Church, in the sense that those living biologically are in the militant Church and those who are asleep and have entered divine glorification are participating in the triumph of Christ. This is because every saint who reaches the vision of the glory of God, and is thus glorified, definitely from now participates in the triumph of Christ. Although found to be in biological life, they participate in the triumphant Church. If one reads the writings of Saint Symeon the New Theologian, they will see this truth formulated in a theological and empirical way.

It should also be said that in the Orthodox Church we attach great significance to the methodology which leads to glorification and in the sharing in the triumph of Christ over death. This is because a wrong methodology, such as metaphysics which is associated with fantasy, and moralism which is associated with human-external devices, do not result in the vision of the uncreated light and the salvation of man. And this is important, because sharing in the Kingdom of God, the uncreated light of the future age, cannot be accomplished if the person from now has not prepared themselves for this purpose and has not tasted the rays of this glory. So, through the purification of the heart, in noetic prayer, which is an indication of the illumination of the nous, man can participate in the glory of God.

At this point we find the value of Orthodox monasticism, which maintains unadulterated the Orthodox methodology that leads to theosis, which is the purpose of man. Outside of this Orthodox methodology prevails the secularization of the faith and the Christian life.

In all of his works Saint Gregory Palamas speaks of this Orthodox method. In one of his texts he writes that it takes the true faith, because the distortion of the faith does not lead to the fulfillment of man's existence. "We believe as it was taught by

those who were illumined by Christ." He speaks of illumined Fathers, and of obedience to them for the preservation of the faith. But this is not enough, but a personal experience of the uncreated light is necessary: "We proceed towards the brilliance of that light." This is not a luxury of the spiritual life, but the authentic purpose of our existence. For this purpose is required the purification of our intellect of all earthly filthiness, with contempt for everything that is delightful and beautiful which is not permanent. "We must purify the eyes of the intellect from earthly filthiness, scorning the delightful and beautiful things which are not permanent." The delightful that is not permanent is the desire that causes suffering and which "surrounds the soul like an unsightly tunic of sin". For this reason Saint Gregory Palamas clearly argues that we get rid of the fire of hell by the "effulgence and awareness of the intangible and pre-eternal light of the Lord's Transfiguration."

The theology of the Transfiguration is integrally connected with the method we must use to experience this great light, and the Orthodox faith is connected with Orthodox hesychasm, because when one is disconnected from the other, then we arrive either at metaphysics or external ethics, which do not save man.

Many times I think that we contemporary Christians chant the beautiful hymns of the Transfiguration of Christ as well as the Apolytikion of the feast, supplicating to God: "Let Your everlasting Light also shine upon us sinners", or we pray the prayer of the First Hour: "May the light of Your Countenance shine on us, that in Your light we may see the unapproachable light", but our entire ecclesiastical life orbits outside the path by which we could see the uncreated light. It exists, that is, as a crisis of identity for the future of the Church, when it is not coordinated with the experience of the purifying, illuminating and deifying energy of God.

Contemporary science dazzles humans, because it speaks of the "mapping of the genetic code", of "decoding the genetic code", so that many diseases can be healed and for an extension of biological life to occur, yet we overlook the fact that the greatest disease is death, which is only destroyed by sharing in the glory of Christ. We must remember that the actual genetic code, the spiritual wonder of man, is the likeness of God, theosis, which is the original purpose of the creation of man, and as much as this purpose is not fulfilled, so will man remain empty. It is characteristic that the day the discovery was communicated for the decoding of the genetic code (June 27, 2000), a newspaper (*AFP*>) wrote: "The identity (of life) has been found, and its meaning is sought." When man does not find the meaning of life, then his life is a tragedy.

Human science, when it is not understood in the light of God, becomes a disaster for man. A concrete example is what happened on August 6th in the year 1945 in Hiroshima. While the Church celebrated the Transfiguration of Christ and hymned

the light of the divinity of Christ who spreads peace and joy and offers to man to overcome death, in Hiroshima another light shone, the light of contemporary man, the atomic bomb, which created catastrophe, pain, sorrow, death. Two lights, the created and the uncreated, two different worlds with opposite results.

The Transfiguration of Christ in conjunction with the Cross and Resurrection of Christ, as well as with the great feast of Pentecost, in which the Disciples became members of the Body of Christ, show the purpose and meaning of the existence of man. Unfortunately we remain far from the Transfiguration of Christ, and we live in the distortion of our image. We distance ourselves from the path of theosis and fritter on the path to dehumanization. We chant the hymns of the Transfiguration of Christ and within our soul we live the tragedy of the downward spiral.

"Christ our God,... Let Your everlasting Light also shine upon us sinners, through the prayers of the Theotokos...." *(from johnsanidopoulos.com)*

Today's Epistle Lesson – The Second Letter of St. Peter 1:10-19

Brethren, do all that you can to make your calling and election assured. For if you do these things, you will never stumble. Thus, you will be richly granted the entrance into the eternal Kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Therefore, I will not be negligent to remind you of these things although you [already] know them and are established in the truth which you now have. I think it right, as long as I am in this tent, to stir you up by reminding you [these things]. I know that I shall lay aside my tent very quickly, even as our Lord Jesus Christ made clear to me. And so, I will make every effort [to ensure] that you will always be able to remember these things, even after my departure. Certainly, we did not depend on cleverly invented fables when we told you about the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ; we were eyewitnesses of his majesty! For he received from God the Father honor and glory when the voice came to him from the Majestic Glory, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." We heard this voice come out of heaven when we were with him on the holy mountain. Therefore, we have the word of prophecy made even more certain, and you should pay attention to it as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts.

Today's Gospel Lesson – Saint Matthew 17:1-9

At that time, Jesus took with him Peter, James, and John his brother, and He brought them up into a high mountain by themselves. There, he was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and his garments became as white as the light. And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with Him. Peter then said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good for us to be here! If you want, let us make

three tents here: one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.” While Peter was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them. And behold, a voice came out of the cloud, saying, “This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased. Listen to him.” When the disciples heard it, they fell on their faces and were very afraid. Jesus came and touched them, saying, “Get up, and do not be afraid.” Lifting up their eyes, they saw no one, except Jesus alone. As they were coming down from the mountain, Jesus gave them this order, “Do not tell anyone what you saw, until the Son of Man has risen from the dead.”

Homilies on the Divine Liturgy: Small & Great Entrance

By Metropolitan Hierotheos of Nafpaktos and Agiou Vlasiou

The Divine Liturgy, my beloved brethren, is a great festival. We do not have the senses to understand this, but when we acquire other noetic senses then we will be enchanted by what is taking place, by what is said and chanted in the Divine Liturgy. The way in which the Divine Liturgy is performed today is not exactly the same as it was done in the ancient Church, because over time new sections entered and it became all this greatness that we enjoy today.

With today's sermon we will briefly look at the two entrances, or as they are called in the liturgical language, the Small and the Great Entrance. The Small Entrance is when the priest receives the Gospel from the Holy Altar and exits through the North Gate of the Holy Bema, descends to the west side of the sacred temple, stands in the middle of the temple, blesses the entrance and raises the Sacred Gospel as he chants: “Wisdom. Arise.”

Until the seventh century, the Divine Liturgy began from this point, since the priest at that time took the Sacred Gospel from the sacristy, which was located outside the sacred temple, then he entered the sacred temple to perform the Divine Liturgy. Therefore, this moment was the first solemn entry of the Bishop, the sacred Clergy and the people into the sacred temple. As Saint Maximus the Confessor says, this entrance is an image and type of the first incarnate presence of Christ in the world, when Christ began to preach the gospel of the Kingdom of God. That is why the priest or deacon holds the Gospel and says: “Wisdom. Arise.” That is, what I hold in my hands, he says, is the wisdom of God, so get up all of you. This is why the Divine Liturgy is the experience of the divine economy, of the divine incarnation.

The Great Entrance takes place after the Cherubim Hymn, when the priest receives from the Holy Proskomidi the bread and wine, which will later become the Body and Blood of Christ, and transfers them from the Holy Proskomidi to the Holy Altar and chants: "May the Lord God remember all of you in His Kingdom always now and forever and unto the ages of ages." While with the first - the Small Entrance - we saw Christ entering the world to preach and perform miracles, now

we see Christ proceeding to Golgotha to suffer, to be crucified and resurrected for the salvation of man. In the Divine Liturgy we experience what Christ said, what Christ did and especially what Christ suffered for man, but also what great good Christ did to man, after giving him the opportunity to participate in the mystery of His resurrection and ascension.

The Small and Great Entrance reminds us that we too must respond to this work of Christ, to thank Christ for His great gift in becoming man in order to deify human nature, but above all to make the Small Entrance a reality in our life, namely, to live through our actions the spirit of the words of Christ, that is, to keep His word, and to make the Great Entrance into the mystery of the Cross and the Resurrection of Christ. In other words, what Christ once made physically happen, may it continue in our lives, so we will not dwell on the external and superficial aspects of the Christian life, but to go deeper. The Church is a mystery that has great depth. And blessed are those who can discern this depth and can dive into it. Most of us stand on the seashore, on the beach and see the surface of the Divine Liturgy.

The purpose of the Divine Liturgy is to help us make, first, the Small Entrance into the spirit of the evangelical words of Christ and then make the Great Entrance into the mystery of the life in Christ and the entrance to Paradise, the Kingdom of Heaven. *(from johnsanidopoulos.com)*

A Word From the Holy Fathers

Come, friends, and let us today, without hesitation, touch on the treasures of the gospels, in order that we may from there, as is our custom, draw wealth, which is distributed in abundance, and is nowhere ever exhausted. Come to the all-wise one who guides us well on our way, and let us again follow Luke, in order that we may see Christ ascending a high mountain, as well as Peter and James and John, whom he is taking along as witnesses of his divine transfiguration. For it says that the Lord took aside those surrounding Peter and ascended a high mountain. A high mountain, on which Moses and Elijah conversed with Christ. A high mountain, on which the Law and the Prophets conversed with Grace. A high mountain, on which was Moses, who slaughtered the lamb of pascha, and sprinkled its blood on the doorposts of the Hebrews. A high mountain, on which was Elijah, who cut the ox in pieces in the presence of those people, and consumed the sacrifice with fire in the midst of water. A high mountain, on which was Moses, who opened and closed the Red Sea's masses of water. A high mountain, on which was Elijah, who opened and closed the showers of rain. A high mountain, in order that those surrounding Peter and John and James may learn that it is he before whom "every knee will bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth" (Phil. 2:10).

For the Lord took only those three aside and ascended the mountain; he took not all aside. He left not all behind. He withheld not with grudge glory from the rest. He judged them not of lesser rank. He caused the nine no grief; for being righteous he conducts all things righteously, while counting all as one, and not separating them, whom he united, from the love towards one another. But since he, Judas, who was destined to become his traitor, was unworthy of the divine vision, and of that frightening apparition, he for this reason left the others behind, that he might later exclude every excuse from Judas that only he was left behind; and that he might take along as witnesses of his transfiguration those three, a number that was sufficient according to the law, while they were carrying in spirit the rest of them. For he prays, "Righteous Father, keep them safe, that they may be one, even as we are also one" (Jn. 17:11). For Judas, when he saw Andrew, Thomas, Philip and the rest remaining behind with him at the slope of the mountain, and that they were not grumbling, nor irritated, nor full of reproach, but full of joy, and the grace from above was theirs in common, and that they were one in mind with those absent, he was left totally without any excuse, having never been barred from the miracles. But he also kept the purse – and while grudging without cause the woman the price of the perfume with which she anointed Christ, yet he audaciously delivered the Master to the enemies.

And how reads Scripture? "And he was transfigured before them; and there appeared to them Moses and Elijah, talking with him" (Mt. 17:2-3). But Peter, because he was always in all things ardent, having seen with the eyes of his mind whom he never saw before, the men talking with the Lord, and not having measured the greatness of the miracle, and not contemplated the wonder of the divine illumination, called the deserted place beautiful, and emerged as tentmaker from being a fisherman, saying to the Savior, "Let us make three dwellings at this place; one for you, and one for Elijah, and one for Moses," not knowing what he said" (Lk. 9:33). And well the all-wise Luke defends him with the words "not knowing what he said." But, O Peter, chief of the disciples, and front-ranked man of the apostles, why do you wish to act hastily with lowly intentions, and do you insult the divine with your human thoughts, and talk of erecting three dwellings on a lonely place, marking out the Lord as having like honor as his servants, and do you haste building one dwelling for Christ, and in equal measure for the two others? For surely Moses was not conceived from the Holy Spirit as he was. For surely a virgin mother did not give birth to Elijah as the all-holy virgin Mary to him. For surely the Forerunner, when he was but an embryo, did not recognize Moses from the womb, as he did him. For surely heaven made not known the birth of Elijah. Neither did Magi worship the swaddling-clothes of Moses. For surely Moses and Elijah worked not such miracles. They neither drove the legions of

demons out of people, nor did they chase off spirits from human recesses. For once Moses became angry, and having struck with his rod, crossed the sea. But your teacher Jesus walked on the sea, and turned the depths of the sea into a staff for you, Peter! Elijah, having pleaded with God, multiplied the wheat meal of the widow, and raised her son from the dead. But he took you on as a disciple from among fishermen, and with a few loaves of bread satiated thousands, and encountered Hades in battle and despoiled him, and carried off those who have been sleeping there from the beginning.

Do not say, then, O Peter, "Let us make three dwellings at this place," nor "It is well that we are here." Say nothing human, nothing lowly, nothing earthly, nothing unworthy. "Set your mind on things that are above; seek the things that are above," as Paul recorded, "not the things that are on earth" (Col. 3:2). For how is it "well that we are here" - where the serpent committed an outrage upon the first-created humans, and harmed them, and caused paradise to be closed? Where we heard that we should eat our bread by the sweat of our face; where he learned that due to Cain we would groan and tremble on earth; where nothing is secure and stable; where all are shadows; where all will pass in a wink of the eye? How then is it "well that we are here"? If Christ intended to leave us here behind, why did he bend the heavens and descend? If Christ intended to leave us here behind, why did he share with us flesh and blood? If Christ was leaving us here behind, why did he condescend to the one who came to a fall, and raise the one who was lying down? If it "is well" that we are on earth, in vain were you called the one holding the keys of the heavens; for where then would the keys of the heavens have been of use to you? Since you love this mountain, then renounce the heavens! If you wish to erect dwellings, reject your being, and your being called the foundation of the church! For the Lord Christ was transfigured, not for a simple reason, but that he might show us the coming transfiguration of human nature, and that his second coming would occur, together with the angels on the clouds amidst light; for he is the one who puts on the light as a garment, being the judge of the living and the dead. Therefore he brought Moses and Elijah into their midst, and presented them as symbols of the old visions.

And what says the great author of the gospels? "He was still speaking, when lo, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and lo, a voice from the cloud said, 'This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him'" (Mt. 17:5). It says - Peter was still speaking, when the Father answered from heaven: 'What is this, Peter? Why in doubt? Why act so presumptuously, and why do you say that this place is good? Did you forget yourself? But are you envious of your race, not knowing what you are saying? Are you not yet instructed? Did you not yet learn the certain and sure knowledge of sonship? Were not you the one who said, 'You

are the Christ, the Son of the living God'? (Mt. 16:16). You, Bar Jonah, have seen so many miracles and yet you are still Simon? He appointed you keyholder of the heavens, and you did not as yet don the garment of a seaman? Behold, this is the third time that you oppose the will of the Savior, not knowing what you are saying. For he said to you, 'I have to suffer,' and you said, 'This shall never happen to you' (Mt. 16:22). Again, he said, 'You will all fall away (Mt. 26:31), and you said, 'Though all will, but I will never fall away' (Mt. 26:33). And look, now you wish to erect a dwelling for Christ, just as for Moses and Elijah? A dwelling for Christ, who together with me stretches out heaven? A dwelling for the one who together with me established the earth? A dwelling for the one who together with me founded the sea and fixed the firmament? A dwelling for the one who kindled the heavenly luminaries, set the air on fire, and created with me the universe before the ages? A dwelling for the one who is from me and from you? A dwelling for the one who is in me and with you? A dwelling for the fatherless Adam [a reference to Christ's virgin birth – Ed.]? A dwelling for the motherless God? A dwelling for the one who took on a dwelling, which he chose to be a virgin womb? Since then you still wish to erect three dwellings, not knowing what you are saying, I used a bright cloud as dwelling, and having covered those present, I call from the highest heavens, 'This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.' Not with Moses nor with Elijah, but with "him". Not with that one or another, but with "him", one and the same, 'with whom I am well pleased; listen to him.'"

"I declared Moses righteous, but with him 'I am well pleased' (Mt. 17:5). I took Elijah up, but I sent him into the virgin as if into heaven, and from the virgin into heaven itself. 'For no one,' it says, 'has ascended into heaven, but he who descended from heaven' (Jn. 3:13). In vain then did he descend onto earth, if he will remain on earth for ever. In vain he 'emptied himself, having taken the form of a servant' (Phil. 2:7), unless he, having remained what he was, became what you are. Unless he endured the cross regarding you and on account of you, he could not have redeemed the world with his own blood. Without any effect then is his incarnation, and the ancient sayings of the prophets remain then unconfirmed. But cease, Peter, and set your mind not on human things, but on the things of God. 'For this is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him.' For twice I have used such a saying concerning him: in your presence, on this mountain, and in the presence of John at the river Jordan, in order that the prophet of old might be proved to be trustworthy when he said, 'Tabor and Hermon will rejoice in your name'" (Ps. 88:13).

What name? "This is my beloved Son," "for he bestowed on him the name which is above every name" (Phil. 2:9), as Paul states. But, beloved, you will surely say, "What does this mean, 'Tabor and Hermon will rejoice in your name?'" Learn then

in wisdom: “Tabor” is this mountain, on which Christ was transfigured according to his will, and the Son was acknowledged by the Father, as you have just heard. And “Hermon” is a small mountain near the Jordan, where Elijah was taken up. And close to it, in the streams of the Jordan, Christ was baptized as he wished, and the Son was acknowledged by the Father. On both these mountains the immaculate Father, confirming the sonship, calls out now for a second time as he did then: “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him.’ For he who listens to him also listens to me, and whoever through shame rejects him and his words I will also out of shame reject him in my glory and before my holy angels.” “Listen to him” - in sincerity, in goodness, without limitation, and in all simplicity, seeking in faith, but not measuring with the tongue; accepting in faith, but not weighing the Word with words. For just now Paul, the orator, curbing the meddlesome person, and teaching all, called out with sufficiency and without any doubt, “O the depth of the riches, and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, how inscrutable his ways!” (Rom. 11:33). To him belongs the glory forever. Amen.

— St. Proclus, Archbishop of Constantinople, *Homily 8*

A Beneficial Narration Describing the Vision of Sophiani

(To be read on the 6th of August)

In an area near Constantinople, called Abydos, there lived an orthodox and pious Christian together with his virtuous and God-loving wife Sophiani in the year 1607. One day Sophiani became ill and was bed-ridden for twenty days without being able to even lift her head. At dawn on the 3rd of August she lifted her hands to heaven and seemed to have expired. All her relatives prepared her for burial and were unable to be consoled by anyone. But they found that beneath her left breast she was still warm, so they stopped the preparations until she was completely dead.

Meanwhile, her sister according to the flesh came, named Anna, and in her pain and despair she took cold water and sprinkled it over Sophiani, which helped her to revive. Sophiani then said to her sister: "It would have been better if you had not come, my sister, because you have caused me more harm and death by coming back to this temporary life, for your voice lifted me out of that bright Paradise and the inexpressible glory of God that I enjoyed. When you saw me dead, O miserable one, you should have rejoiced more and thanked God, rather than seeing me now restored to life."

Having revived fully and said many other things, those around her asked her to tell them about the mysteries of God she beheld in the other life. She rather asked of them to bring a spiritual father that she may confess, and if he decided it was blessed to narrate then she would do so. This is when the hieromonk Hierotheos

Koukouzelis, Abbot of the Holy Monastery of Stavrovouni in Cyprus, came by a patriarchal order to confess Sophiani, who then narrated the following:

"As I got up and settled on my bed, I fainted and saw before me an astonishing youth, holding in his hands a golden vessel full of water, and he said to me: 'Sophiani, I see that you have great thirst and your heart is sick with disease. If you drink this life-giving water, you will be healthy in your soul and body and you will have everlasting joy.' When I heard this, I leapt for joy, and I wanted nothing else but to keep seeing this young phenomenon. When I received the vessel in my hands to drink, I don't know how, but the life was taken out of me for three days and nights and I was absent from my body, while my soul followed the youth and we went up to heaven. We passed the seven spherical circles of heaven in the deep darkness and then we reached a bright and plentiful place, over which there were two tall and gorgeous gates. The right was made of pure gold and precious stones, while the left of copper and lit iron, which looked like fiery carbons. Around it stood a crowd of horrific armed giants who guarded the gate, and I stood speechless due to my fear.

My guide said to me: 'You see these gates, sister? These are the gates of justice, the gold is of the Kingdom of Heaven, and the iron of the hell of sinners.' Leaving these gates we climbed higher to a brighter place, where there were countless crowds of astonishing men whose seats were not all in one place, but some were taller and others lower.

Then my guide placed me among the angels and said to me: 'Sophiani, here bow and venerate.' Immediately then I bowed and venerated with great fear, but who I bowed to I did not see. He again lifted me up and said to me: 'Stay here to know the greatness of the Second Coming of the Lord,' and after these words I saw a fiery, brilliant and royal throne, beneath which was a human hand holding scales.

Around this throne there were innumerable crowds of angels, who were coming up from the road that I too came from, carrying the souls of people, men, women and children, and when they raised them here, they said, 'Venerate,' and those souls venerated, as I did. On the fearsome throne, in bright clouds, sat the Master Christ, dressed in a blueish-purple garment. I, from the strong brilliance of His face, could not look at Him. The angels who were present were singing, 'Holy, Holy, Holy, the Lord, Who Is and God Who had appeared as man, have mercy on Your creatures.' While other angelic choirs were singing, "Holy, Holy, Holy Lord Sabaoth, heaven and earth is full of Your glory.' Those who were with us sang: "Glory to the God in the highest and on earth peace to those who please God.' Others cried out, 'Hallelujah' three times, while others: 'Amen, Amen, Amen' and never ceased their praise.

On the right hand of Christ stood the Theotokos and to the left the Holy Forerunner, as the iconographers depict. The angels, when they finished their praise, venerated the Lord and bowed their heads, and the Lord raised His blessed hands and blessed them. From the Master's fingers there fell gems and daisies, which, when I saw myself, I wondered and asked my guide what these mysteries were, and he said to me:

'Do you see, Sophiani, the daisies and the precious stones that fall from the right hand of the Master and descend to the earth? These are His rich mercy, the unbounded love He has for the human race, for Orthodox Christians, and that is why He blesses the homes of good Orthodox Christians, who keep untainted their faith in Him and those who confess clearly their sins, apply the divine commandments and abstain from the devil's will; all of them He blesses and redeems them from all evil. Those who are merciful and love their neighbor enjoy these blessings while alive and, after their death, inherit their inheritance from here and blessedness.

The flaming fiery knots that fall from His left hand signify His anger, wrath and indignation for those who live a sinful life and do not do justice to their neighbor. Not only are they barren of transient life, they are also consigned to the eternal fire to be damned with the unclean demons.' To the left of the throne and the scales that we spoke of, there was a great chasm, from which came an unbearable stench, a sulfurous aura of smoke and innumerable spurious voices of people who constantly shouted 'woe' and 'alas'.

The angels were bringing the souls of people from the earth, and as they venerated, they led them to examine all their works that they made on earth, and they put the good on the right side of the scales, and the wicked on the left. Then Christ commanded the saved and holy souls, and the angels led them to the place where the golden gate was, while the unrepentant and sinful souls were cast into that chaos of the abyss. Then the angels cheered and were glad for the saved souls, while they were lamenting and crying out loud about the damned ones.

At that moment angels brought forth a soul, whose soul was redeemed by her good works, and the Lord was about to nod to the angels to throw her into the abyss. But then the Lady Theotokos and the Honorable Forerunner presented themselves before Him and pleaded with the Lord, saying: 'You who are slow to anger, Your compassions overcome Your rage. Even though her soul is sinful, she did not cease to keep her true faith in You, which is why we are entreating You to forgive her.' While they pleaded with Christ, angels came and brought forth her acts of mercy, her liturgies, her candles, her oils, and all the offerings and memorials she made. Even the prayers of the priests rose up, who were liturgizing on behalf of her soul, as well as the good works of her parents and relatives which they offered to the

poor on behalf of her rest. In addition, the prayers of the poor could be heard, who received the charity from her relatives, who said: 'May God grant her forgiveness.'

Then the voice of the Master was heard, saying: 'Due to the prayers of My priests and My poor brethren, behold, I grant My forgiveness to this soul.' As the Lord was about to signal with His right hand for the angels to place this soul with the righteous, there arrived at His throne lamentations and crying, which were the result of the mourning and resentments of her parents with their blasphemies against God, which they uttered due to their grief, thus expressing their disbelief in the eleventh article of the Symbol of Faith: 'I await the resurrection of the dead.' When this took place, the Lord was greatly enraged, saying: 'Because the prayers of My priests did not suffice, but they oppose Me, take up this soul and cast it into the outer darkness.' The angels felt very sorry for this soul, but out of obedience to Christ, they took the soul and cast it into the immense precipice of hell. Then I the pitiful one dared to ask my guardian angel: 'Why, my lord, are the angels so sad when you cast a soul into the precipice of hell?'

He told me: 'This abyss is that which separates the righteous from sinners and sinks those who fall into this non-illuminated place of Hades, where they are eternally damned. If all of angels rejoice for those who are saved, even more so do we sorrow for those who are damned.'

While the angel was saying this to me, I suddenly heard a loud noise, for the angels were coming bringing a soul with psalms and incense and lamps and radiance. This soul was coming with much joy and boldness, and the souls of the righteous came to greet it. This blessed soul had a white and clean garment like the sun and didn't have on it any blot or stain of sin, as the other souls did. I believe this garment was the vestment of Holy Baptism, which kept it immaculate and which is why it radiated so much. This soul came forth and offered its veneration, as all did by habit. Then all the angels cried out loudly, saying: 'We thank You, Almighty Master, for we have seen a righteous soul clean and immaculate from sin.' Then the thunderous voice of the Master was heard, saying: 'Take it and let it rest with the saints.' Then turning His words and hands towards me, He said: 'Lead Sophiani through the dwellings and mansions of My saints, so she can see them. Because many in the world are asking for her, let her return to her body that others may be saved from the narration of this vision which she was made worthy here to see. If she struggles to gain other virtues and completely thrives, then in three years she will be made worthy to find rest with greater honors.'

With these words of the Master an angel grabbed me and we followed that righteous soul unite with other saved souls. We arrived before that golden gate of Paradise. Suddenly I saw the Lady Theotokos with unspeakable glory and with her was the Apostle Peter, who held keys in his hands. He opened that beautiful gate

and the Theotokos was first to enter followed by the Apostle Peter and then the angels with the souls they brought. I went with them in a hurry so I could walk with the Theotokos. This place was so radiant and full of fragrance, that I was in wonder and rejoiced beyond words. The land did not resemble our own solid land, which has uphill, downhill, stones, rivers and everything else we see, but it was white like pure cotton or like a golden garment adorned with various precious stones and pearls. I also saw tall trees, fragrant and full of flowers and beautiful fruits, which resembled roses and lilies. Underneath the trees there seemed to be golden-purple blankets on which rested men, women and children, among whom I recognized many from my homeland in Abydos and its city who had died.

There I also saw my priest father John and my mother Anastasia and one of my sisters, but I couldn't approach them or speak with them. Their dwelling places were not alike, just as their virtues and works here on earth were not alike. Walking forward I also saw the Saints, who were on a high and radiant place and all were walking around with white garments and dressed in a most bright light. I wondered to myself who they were, and the Theotokos turned to me and said: 'Sophiani, do you see the rest of the Saints? Go quickly to catch up and venerate the Righteous Abraham, otherwise you will not see him as you desire.' I then ran and saw from far away Abraham sitting on a beautiful throne and around him were innumerable souls with joy and gladness. I ran to see him and enjoy him, at which time he saw me and encouraged me to approach him. Taking more courage I ran to meet him, but at that moment I heard the voice of my sister and she sprinkled my face with cold water. I returned to myself and felt a great weight and coldness in my body, as if I was ice. Slowly-slowly my body got stronger and I completely recovered."

When her spiritual father listened to this carefully, he asked: "Did you see any other mystery, my child? Did you see demonic toll-houses, damned sinners, as others have seen?" Sophiani replied: "I did not see anything further, my father." "Do you recognize anything good you did in your life?" the priest asked.

"What good do you ask of me a sinner, father? But because you are forcing me to tell you, I will tell you what I know. Three years ago while I was spinning at my father's house, at noon I heard a loud sound and disturbance, as if an earthquake was taking place, and I saw with my eyes three sacred men in hierarchical vestments, who were, as I recognized them from their icons, Basil the Great, Gregory the Theologian and Saint John Chrysostom. I was paralyzed with fear, did my cross, and venerated them with great fear. They then said to me:

'Fear not, Sophiani, we are the Three Hierarchs and we want you to dedicate your house to God so that it becomes a church in our name and we will intercede for

your salvation.' With daring I said to them: 'My Holy Masters, is this house suitable for the glorification of God and a dwelling place for you, as we are poor people and do not have the place to build a church as you specify? Besides this I do not know my husbands opinion, and if we can obtain a royal permit to build this church.'

They said to me: 'Do not be distressed that the place is filthy and dull, and fear not for the royal permit, only take care to dedicate it to us, and we will take care of everything else. For in the old days this barn was our temple. But if you neglect this and do not do as we said to you, we will ask God to take your life out of disobedience.' When the Saints said this, they disappeared.

When my husband came that night, I told him about all that happened. After three days, when we had done compline and said our small prayers, the Saints again appeared with an earthquake and said with loud voices: 'Sophiani, why didn't you do what we told you? Do you want to die a sudden death?' I then said to my husband: 'Do you hear what the Saints are asking for?' He replied to them and said: 'My Holy Masters, Sophiani told me everything, but because we are poor and do not have the means, and we fear the authority of the state, we did not do anything. But because you want us to dedicate it to God and your holiness, this place is yours as of today.'

The Saints said to him: 'Tomorrow morning you will dig in the barn and will find marble, crosses, and even a Holy Altar, and with this you will be convinced of our words. Go also to the Sultan and ask him for a permit and we will convince him to give it to you.' When the Saints said this, they departed.

All that night we glorified God and in the morning we announced this event to our fellow villagers who all rushed with their digging tools to help with the digging. Indeed, we found the Holy Altar with white marble and other ecclesiastical items that were buried. With ease we also got the permit from the Sultan and began to build the church. We had some parcels of land that we sold and bought various things we needed for the church. When it was all completed, the Holy Metropolitan of Kitros came with patriarchal permission and he consecrated it. We then left our village and settled in Constantinople, where we rented a house. But I beg you, my holy spiritual father, persuade my husband to allow me to become a nun that I may weep for my sins these next three years which the Lord promised remain in my life."

When her spiritual father heard these things, he told her husband to not prevent her from pursuing her righteous desire. He said that in two years they will go together to the Holy Land to venerate the Sacred Shrines and they will dedicate themselves to God.

Indeed, after selling their possessions, they went to Jerusalem and confessed everything to Patriarch Sophronios. After this they communed of the Immaculate Mysteries and Sophiani went to a monastery and became a nun, and her husband went to a men's monastery and from the name Christos he was named Chariton. *(from johnsanidopoulos.com)*

Holy Martyrs Justus and Pastor of Complutum

When Dacian was governor of Spain, during the reigns of Diocletian and Maximian, a persecution broke out against the Christians, which arrived at Complutum, now called Alcala de Henares, where the edict was read in the marketplace.

At this time Justus, who was thirteen years old, and Pastor, who was seven years old, were attending school, and heard of the torments the Christians were unjustly suffering. Inflamed with divine zeal, they desired to share in their triumphs. Throwing down their books, they ran to the governor who was interrogating the confessors.

There they urged on the Christians in their contests, which brought notice to them and the faith they held. When the governor saw this, he sought to correct the youths by having them flogged. They suffered this cruel torment with great courage, and encouraged each other, which filled the crowd and soldiers with astonishment. And for an eternal crown, they expressed their desire to suffer more torture.

When the governor was informed of their constancy, he ordered for them to be privately beheaded. This sentence was executed in a field near the town, and their bodies were buried by the Christians on that very spot which their blood had sanctified. A chapel was afterwards built on the place. Paulinus of Nola and his wife Therasia, in the year 392, then in Spain, buried their recently deceased infant son Celsus next to the tomb of martyrs at Complutum.

Relics believed to be those of Justus and Pastor were discovered in the eighth century and taken to Huesca. In 1568, they were brought back to Alcalá de Henares and interred beneath the high altar of the city's Cathedral-Magistral of Saints Justus and Pastor (known familiarly as the Catedral de los Santos Niños). Constructed between 1497 and 1514, the ancient cathedral is still in daily use, and the saints' tomb is accessible to the public. *(from johnsanidopoulos.com)*

Also Commemorated Today

New Hieromartyrs Dimitry (Lyubimov), archbishop of Gdov (1938) and Priest Nicholas Prozorov (1930), priest Andrew (Zimin), priest Sergius (Tikhomirov), Domnik, Lidia and Mary (Zimins).

New Hieroconfessor [Barsonuphius](#), Bishop of Nikolsk (1934)
New Martyr [Abbacum](#) of Thessalonica (1628).
[St. Theoctistus](#), bishop of Chernigov (1123)
St. [Gezelin](#) (Ghislain, Joscelin), hermit of Slebusrode (Germany)(unk)
St. [Hardulf](#), hermit at Breedon in Leicestershire (7th c.)
Pope [Hormisdas](#) of Rome (523)
Martyrs [Stephen](#), Abbot of Cardeña, and companions (Spain)(872)

Social Team for August 13

Team 4 – Vallandingham, Andrew and Katy Matthews, Joseph Frey . 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.)