

# 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**

**August 27, 2023 – 12<sup>th</sup> Sunday After Pentecost**

**Abba Poemen the Great**

By Metropolitan Hierotheos of Nafpaktos and Agiou Vlasiou

The venerable Poemen, who is celebrated by our Church today, belongs to the great chorus of Venerable Ones and Ascetics, who existed as followers of the Martyrs that were martyred during the period of persecution in the first centuries of Christianity. That is, when the persecutions ended, then the martyric "spirit" of Christianity continued with the Venerable Ones and Ascetics, who tried their entire lives to observe the commandments of Christ, even at the most perfect degree.

The venerable Poemen was born in Egypt around 340 AD and from his youth he lived ascetically. When he reached the age of fifteen he went to live in a Sacred Monastery of Libya. At first he seemed "hard" to his mother, who had gone to meet him at the Skete and he avoided her, but he did this in the context of asceticism, which was understood by his mother, and thus she withdrew with joy, even though she did not meet him. In turn, the venerable Poemen came to know the entire method of the Orthodox ascetic life, having been purified of his passions with many spiritual ascetic feats, and he acquired love for the entire world. The love of the venerable Poemen was proverbial, as shown from his sayings which have been preserved in the book known as *Gerontikon*.



I will mention some of them which he told his visitors, and reveal his spiritual maturity.

When a brother asked him what is the faith which purifies man of the passions, he answered: "Faith is for one to be led by humility and to do works of mercy." Of course, faith is the uncovered truth Christ gave to His Apostles and they to their successors who protected the Church with dogmas. But here is meant empirical faith, which is the experience of uncovered truth, which is humility and love towards others.

A certain brother had evil thoughts and wanted to get rid of them. He asked Abba Poemen about this and he led him out in the air and told him to reach out and catch the winds, because thoughts are like the winds. And when he responded that he could not do it, the venerable Poemen replied: "If you cannot catch the winds, neither could you stop thoughts from coming, but you could resist them," that is, do not do what they tell you. How much truth is hidden in this counsel of the venerable Poemen and how much it helps us who are tossed about by various thoughts!

Abba Poemen taught that people could be saved wherever they were and no matter with what work they were occupied. He said: "If three people are found together, and one is living in quietude well [that is he is living the hesychastic method, far from people and praying unceasingly], the other is ill and thanks God, and the third serves people with pure thoughts [without pride and ulterior motives], then all three are performing the same work." Thus, wherever one lives and in whatever situation they are in, they could be saved if they live with faith in God, love towards the brethren and pure thoughts.

In spiritual struggles there needs to be a measure, in order to prevent excesses. Abba Poemen, who was characterized by discernment, which is why he was known by the name "lamp of discernment", and this was the result of many years of struggles against the passions and the devil, said at one point: "Over-excess is always from the demons," that is, whatever is beyond measure is from the demons. With both sin and spiritual struggle the person must discern the measure, and not be occupied by either despair or pride. Extremes are always dangerous.

Abba Poemen gave great importance to the repentance of man. He knew the alteration of human nature and that man sins by influence from the devil and the captivity of his will, which is why he showed great love towards sinners and urged them towards repentance. To a certain brother who asked him what repentance from sin means, he responded: "Repentance signifies a firm resolution not to return to a sin. For this reason precisely the righteous are called blameless, for they have abandoned sin and have been proven righteous."

A characteristic feature of the great love of the venerable Poemen towards people is shown in the response given to certain brethren who asked if they should awaken the brothers who were sleepy during the assembly. He said: "If I see a particular brother who is sleepy, I will place his head on my knees for his repose."

Such was the empathetic heart of Abba Poemen for the entire world and this was the result of his internal purification, the transformation of his passions towards love for God and for the brethren. This is why the sacred hymnographer calls him "a citizen among Angels and their converser", "a dweller in the metropolis above", "a habitat of virtues", and "a dean of the desert". May we have his prayers and intercessions before God. *(from johnsanidopoulos.com)*

### **Today's Epistle Lesson – St. Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians 15:1-11 EOB**

Brethren, I declare to you the Good News which I preached to you, which also you accepted, in which you also stand. And you are saved by it, that is if you hold firmly to the word which I preached to you. Otherwise, you believed in vain. For I delivered to you, first of all, what I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Kephias, then to the Twelve. After that, he appeared to over five hundred brethren at once, most of whom remain [alive] until now, but some have also fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, c then to all the apostles, and last of all, as to the child born at the wrong time, he appeared to me also. Indeed, I am the least of the apostles, unworthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the Church of God. But by the grace of God, I am what I am. His grace which was bestowed on me was not in vain, but I worked more than all of them - yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me. It does not matter whether is it I or they: this is what we preach, and so you believed.

### **Today's Gospel Lesson – Saint Matthew 19:16-26 EOB**

At that time, a man came to him and asked, "Good teacher, what good thing shall I do in order to have eternal life?" Jesus said to him, "Why do you call me good? No one is good but one, that is, God. But if you want to enter into life, keep the commandments." The man asked him, "Which ones?" Jesus replied, "'You shall not murder.' 'You shall not commit adultery.' 'You shall not steal.' 'You shall not bear false witness.' 'Honor your father and mother;' and, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'" The young man then said to him, "All these things I have observed from my youth! What do I still lack?" Jesus replied, "If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have, give it to the poor, and you will have [a] treasure in heaven. Then come, and follow me!" But when the young man heard <these words>, he went away sad because he was a person with great possessions. Jesus

said to his disciples, "Amen I say to you: it will be hard for someone who is rich to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven! Indeed, I tell you that it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the Kingdom of God." When the disciples heard this, they were extremely astonished and said, "Who then can be saved?" Gazing at them, Jesus answered, "By human resources, this is impossible, but with God all things are possible!"

## **Homilies on the Divine Liturgy: Preparation for Holy Communion**

By Metropolitan Hierotheos of Nafpaktos and Agiou Vlasiou

After the prayer of the anaphora, my beloved brethren, which is the most central part of the Divine Liturgy during which, by the Holy Spirit, the bread and wine is changed into the Body and Blood of Christ, and in our prayers we address Christ on behalf of our ecclesiastical government, our Church prepares us to commune of the Body and Blood of Christ.

The Divine Liturgy is not done just to pray, because if it had this purpose, then we could replace it with other services, namely Vespers, Matins, Paraklesis, etc. Rather, the Divine Liturgy is done to commune, that is, to receive the Body and Blood of Christ and to have communion with Christ. It does not mean that the Clergy liturgize in the Holy Bema (*altar – ed.*) and do not partake of the Body and Blood of Christ. In ancient times, all Christians communed, as long as they did not have an obstacle to Divine Communion.

Explaining this a little more, I would like to emphasize that, as it appears in the letters of the Holy Apostles, Christians in ancient times had the Grace of God active in their hearts. And this presence of the Holy Spirit was manifested by the psalms and hymns that were sung in the heart, by the prayer of the heart, so having this energy of the Holy Spirit, and being true members of the Body of Christ, they proceeded to receive Christ, and to have fellowship with Him. But when they sinned and the Grace of the Holy Spirit ceased to be active, they had to repent and confess, and then the spiritual father prepared them properly so that they could endure this great gift. For example: if a person does not have a good stomach he will not be able to eat strong foods, because he will be harmed even more. This is the meaning of the words of the Apostle Paul: "But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup." And he continues: "For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body" (1 Corinthians 10:28-30).

After the transformation of the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ, our liturgist prepares us to commune of the Body and Blood of Christ with a clear conscience, so that communion may contribute to the remission of sins, the forgiveness of sins, the communion of the Holy Spirit, the inheritance of the

Kingdom of Heaven, boldness before God and not for condemnation. Because the transformation of the Honorable Gifts can be a blessing, it can also be a condemnation, as is the case with medicines as well, which in one causes health and in another creates other reactions that cause harm. It is not the body of Christ that is to blame, but our spiritual condition.

During this stage of preparation the liturgist offers some entreaties to God, we recite the Lord's Prayer ("Our Father"), mainly because it has the request "give us this day our daily bread", but also because it has the request "forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us", and because after Holy Communion we feel God to be our Father and especially the saints experience the Kingdom of God, since they can see the Light of God. That is why after every Divine Liturgy we chant: "We have seen the true light, we have received a heavenly Spirit."

Inside the Holy Chalice are the Holy Things, that is, the holy Body and Blood of Christ. That is why the priest says: "The holy things for the holy." Only those who struggle in various ways, in the struggle for the transformation of the passions, can commune of the Body and Blood of Christ. And those who struggle are divided into three categories, at the urging of the deacon or the priest, "With the fear of God, faith and love come forth." That is, those who have the fear of God come to commune, namely, those who struggle for fear of being condemned to Hell and behave like slaves; those who have faith, namely, those who struggle and hope to enter Paradise and behave like wage earners; and those who have perfect love and feel like children of God.

The Divine Liturgy is called Divine Eucharist because we thank God, and Divine Communion because we commune Christ. May God find us worthy to end our lives, after a worthy, as much as possible, divine Communion, so that it may be the provision of eternal life. *(from johnsanidopoulos.com)*

## A Word From the Holy Fathers

‘Hosius to Constantius the Emperor sends health in the Lord.’

I was a Confessor at the first, when a persecution arose in the time of your grandfather Maximian; and if you shall persecute me, I am ready now, too, to endure anything rather than to shed innocent blood and to betray the truth. But I cannot approve of your conduct in writing after this threatening manner. Cease to write thus; adopt not the cause of Arius, nor listen to those in the East, nor give credit to Ursacius, Valens and their fellows. For whatever they assert, it is not on account of Athanasius, but for the sake of their own heresy. Believe my statement, O Constantius, who am of an age to be your grandfather. I was present at the

Council of Sardica, when you and your brother Constans of blessed memory assembled us all together; and on my own account I challenged the enemies of Athanasius, when they came to the church where I abode, that if they had anything against him they might declare it; desiring them to have confidence, and not to expect otherwise than that a right judgment would be passed in all things.

This I did once and again, requesting them, if they were unwilling to appear before the whole Council, yet to appear before me alone; promising them also, that if he should be proved guilty, he should certainly be rejected by us; but if he should be found to be blameless, and should prove them to be calumniators, that if they should then refuse to hold communion with him, I would persuade him to go with me into the Spains. Athanasius was willing to comply with these conditions, and made no objection to my proposal; but they, altogether distrusting their cause, would not consent. And on another occasion Athanasius came to your Court, when you wrote for him, and his enemies being at the time in Antioch, he requested that they might be summoned either altogether or separately, in order that they might either convict him, or be convicted, and might either in his presence prove him to be what they represented, or cease to accuse him when absent.

To this proposal also you would not listen, and they equally rejected it. Why then do you still give ear to those who speak evil of him? How can you endure Valens and Ursacius, although they have retracted and made a written confession of their calumnies? For it is not true, as they pretend, that they were forced to confess; there were no soldiers at hand to influence them; your brother was not cognizant of the matter. No, such things were not done under his government, as are done now; God forbid. But they voluntarily went up to Rome, and in the presence of the Bishop and Presbyters wrote their recantation, having previously addressed to Athanasius a friendly and peaceable letter. And if they pretend that force was employed towards them, and acknowledge that this is an evil thing, which you also disapprove of; then cease to use force; write no letters, send no Counts; but release those that have been banished, lest while you are complaining of violence, they do but exercise greater violence.

When was any such thing done by Constans? What Bishop suffered banishment? When did he appear as arbiter of an Ecclesiastical trial? When did any Palatine of his compel men to subscribe against any one, that Valens and his fellows should be able to affirm this? Cease these proceedings, I beseech you, and remember that you are a mortal man. Be afraid of the day of judgment, and keep yourself pure thereunto. Intrude not yourself into Ecclesiastical matters, neither give commands unto us concerning them; but learn them from us. God has put into your hands the kingdom; to us He has entrusted the affairs of His Church; and as he who would steal the empire from you would resist the ordinance of God, so likewise fear on

your part lest by taking upon yourself the government of the Church, you become guilty of a great offense.

It is written, “Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar’s, and unto God the things that are God’s.” Neither therefore is it permitted unto us to exercise an earthly rule, nor have you, Sire, any authority to burn incense. These things I write unto you out of a concern for your salvation. With regard to the subject of your letters, this is my determination; I will not unite myself to the Arians; I anathematize their heresy. Neither will I subscribe against Athanasius, whom both we and the Church of the Romans and the whole Council pronounced to be guiltless. And yourself also, when you understood this, sent for the man, and gave him permission to return with honor to his country and his Church.

What reason then can there be for so great a change in your conduct? The same persons who were his enemies before, are so now also; and the things they now whisper to his prejudice (for they do not declare them openly in his presence), the same they spoke against him, before you sent for him; the same they spread abroad concerning him when they come to the Council. And when I required them to come forward, as I have before said, they were unable to produce their proofs; had they possessed any, they would not have fled so disgracefully. Who then persuaded you so long after to forget your own letters and declarations?

Forbear, and do not be influenced by evil men, lest while you act for the mutual advantage of yourself and them, you render yourself responsible. For here you comply with their desires, hereafter in the judgment you will have to answer for doing so alone. These men desire by your means to injure their enemy, and wish to make you the minister of their wickedness, in order that through your help they may sow the seeds of their accursed heresy in the Church. Now it is not a prudent thing to cast oneself into manifest danger for the pleasure of others. Cease then, I beseech you, O Constantius, and be persuaded by me. These things it becomes me to write, and you not to despise.’

— St. Hosios of Cordoba, Letter to Constantius

## **Saint Hosius, Bishop of Cordoba**

Our Holy Father Hosios was probably born in Corduba in Hispania (now Córdoba, Spain), a province of the Roman Empire, although a passage in Zosimus has sometimes been conjectured as the writer's belief that Hosios was an Egyptian.

Elected to the see of Cordova about 295, he narrowly escaped martyrdom in the persecution of Maximian. In 300 or 301 he attended the provincial Synod of Elvira (his name appearing second in the list of those present), and upheld its severe canons concerning such points of discipline as questions concerning clerical

marriage, and the treatment of those who had abjured their faith during the recent persecutions. The Synod appears to have had Novationist tendencies and held a strict view that refused readmission to those baptized Christians who had denied their faith or performed the formalities of a ritual sacrifice to the pagan gods under pressures of persecution.

In 313 he appears at the court of Constantine the Great, mentioned by name in a constitution directed by the emperor to Caecilianus of Carthage in that year. He is not listed among the attendees of the Synod of Arles of 314, but may have been in attendance. As early as 320 or 321 Alexander, Bishop of Alexandria, convoked a synod at Alexandria at which more than one hundred bishops from Egypt and Libya anathematized Arius, his deacon. In 323 Hosios was the bearer of Constantine's letter to Bishop Alexander and Arius, in which he urged them to reconciliation. On the failure of the negotiations in Egypt, Constantine convened the First Ecumenical Synod of Nicaea, probably in agreement with Pope Sylvester I, and perhaps on the advise of Hosios. Hosios presided, although it is unclear whether he did so in the name of the Pope or was nominated by Constantine. Hosios took an active part in drawing up its canons and the Nicene Creed. After the Synod, Hosios returned to his diocese in Spain.

For nearly fifty years Hosios was among the foremost bishops of his time. He was held in universal esteem and exercised great influence. In 340 Athanasius of Alexandria was expelled from his diocese by the Arians. After passing three years in Rome, Athanasius went into Gaul to meet with Hosios. From there, they went to the Synod of Sardica, which began in the summer, or, at latest, in the autumn of 343. Hosios presided, proposed the canons, and was the first to sign the Acts of the synod.

After Constantine's death, the prestige given to the Homoousian cause in the Arian controversy by the support of the venerable Hosios led the Arians to bring pressure to bear upon Constantius II, who had him summoned to Milan, where he declined to condemn Athanasius nor to extend communion to Arians. He so impressed the emperor that he was authorized to return home. There is a letter from Pope Liberius to him (ca. 353). More Arian pressure led to Constantius writing a letter demanding whether he alone was going to remain obstinate. In reply, Hosios sent his courageous letter of protest against imperial interference in Church affairs (353), preserved by Athanasius, which led to Hosios' exile in 355 to Sirmium, an imperial center in Pannonia (in modern Serbia). From his exile he wrote to Constantius II his only extant composition, a letter justly characterized by the French historian Louis-Sébastien Le Nain de Tillemont as displaying gravity, dignity, gentleness, wisdom, generosity and in fact all the qualities of a great soul and a great bishop.



Subjected to continual pressure from the Arians the old man, who was near his hundredth year, was weak enough to sign the formula adopted by the third Synod of Sirmium in 357, which involved communion with the Arians but not the condemnation of Athanasius. He was then permitted to return to his Hispanic diocese, where he died in 359. (*from johnsanidopoulos.com*)

### **Holy Martyr Anthousa the New of Persia**

*With a mantle made of felt, and a stone fastened, Anthousa entered the deep well.*  
The holy Martyr Anthousa the New was tied up in a felt sack made of hair, with a stone tied around her neck, and thrown into a deep well. The time of her martyrdom is unknown. (*from johnsanidopoulos.com*)

### **Also Commemorated Today**

New Hieromartyrs Priests Michael Voskresensky and Stephen Nemkov, and those with them, of Nizhni-Novgorod (1918).  
New Hieromartyr Archimandrite [Matthew](#), rector of Perm theological seminary (1918)  
New Hieromartyrs John, John priest and Hieromartyr Methodius (1937).  
New Hieromartyr Aleksander, priest (1939).  
New Hieromartyr Vladimir, priest (1940).  
St. Demetrius confessor, priest (1952).  
Venerables [Pimen](#), [Kuksha](#), and [Nicon](#) of the Kiev Caves (1114).  
[St. Liberius](#), [pope](#) of Rome (366).  
Venerable [Poemen](#) of Palestine (605).  
Venerable Sabbas of Benephali.  
Great-martyr [Phanourios](#) the Newly Appeared of Rhodes (Greek).  
[Baptism](#) of the Ethiopian Eunuch [Djan](#) Darada, who was later martyred, by St. Philip  
St. [Caesarius](#), bishop of Aries (543) (Celtic & British).  
Martyr-hermit [Decuman](#) of Watchet (Wales) (716)  
St. [Malrubius](#) of Merns (Scotland), hermit and martyr (1040)  
St. [Agilo](#), monk of St Aper in Toul (France)(957)  
St. [Ebbo](#), Bishop of Sens (France)(740)  
St. [Etherius](#) (Alermius), bishop of Lyons (602)  
Virgin-martyr [Euthalia](#) of Leontini (Sicily)(unk)  
St. [Gebhard](#), bishop of Constance (Germany)(995)  
St. [John](#), bishop of Pavia in Lombardy (813)  
St. [Licerius](#), Bishop of Couserans (France)(c. 548)  
St. [Monica](#) of Carthage, mother of Blessed Augustine (387)  
St. [Narnus](#), first Bishop of Bergamo (Italy)(unk)  
Martyrs [Rufus](#) (deacon) and Carpophorus of Capua (295)  
St. [Syagrius](#) (Siacre), bishop of Autun (France)(600)  
St. [Rufus](#), bishop of Capua, disciple of St. Apollinaris of Ravenna (unk)



## *College Student*

# SUNDAY

AUGUST 27, 2023

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## Social Team for September 3

Team 1 – Hanbury, P. Blaydoe, Chumak. Thank you!

### Man of God Screening and Panel Discussion

There will be a screening of the film “Man of God” (based on the life of St. Nectarios of Aegina) at the Museum of the Bible on September 21 at 6:00 PM followed by a panel discussion including the film's director, Yelena Popovic. Admission is free, but you must register in advance. See <https://www.museumofthebible.org/events/man-of-god> for more details.

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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.)