

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



September 17, 2023 – 15th Sunday After Pentecost | Afterfeast of the Elevation of the Cross | Martyrs Sophia and Her Daughters Faith, Hope, and Love

As David chants saying for Sophia and her children, let the mother be glad now in her prayers. With faith in You, O Trinity, the three, Faith, Hope and Love bowed their necks to the sword.

By Protopresbyter Fr. George Papavarnavas

The three Martyrs, Faith, Hope and Love were daughters of Saint Sophia, just like the virtues of faith, hope and love are the offspring of wisdom, the true wisdom which "comes from above" and gives birth to the fear of God; "the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom".

The three daughters of Saint Sophia, twelve, ten and nine years old respectively, had all the virtues, as indicated by their names, and were full of faith and hope in Christ and love towards God and man. And their mother was Sophia in both word and deed. She had true love which is greater than natural love, the so-called mother's instinct, which is why she sought out the spiritual interests of her children. She encouraged them to proceed towards death for the love of Christ, knowing that in this way she would ensure for them true life, since "the righteous live unto the ages" (Wisdom of Solomon 5:1).

Saint Sophia's pattern of behavior shows the measure of love she had for her children, who were not the property of their birth parents, but animated and reasonable gifts of God to the parents, who are co-workers with God in the work of creation. True love is selfless and does not seek a return, it does not expect reciprocation. We love our children because we love God who gave them to us and they truly love us if we have taught them to love God. In the name of love we should not infringe upon the freedom of our children, nor does true freedom exist without love. A love without freedom is a dictatorship, and a freedom without love is anarchy. What touches the hearts of children, more than words, is to pray for them and to set the right example.

Children who have experienced within their family true freedom and selfless love, have learned to love and generously offer without discrimination. The opposite happens with children who have been deprived of love and freedom. They become authoritarian, reactionary, antisocial, sealed tightly within themselves, aggressive and suspicious. Respect for the freedom of others is taught by God Himself, Who has endowed man with free will and respects what anyone does with human freedom.

An Orthodox education helps one overcome any problems or difficulties in life, without creating or allowing the soul to remain repressed, not infrequently leading to unpleasant situations. Many parents, unfortunately, "take out" their repressed emotions on their children. Whatever they failed to do or be in life, they want to do or become them and they try in every way to enforce it thus violating every concept of freedom and democracy, since democracy and dictatorship is a way of life and a daily behavior. Saint Sophia was a democrat in every sense of the word. She encouraged and allowed without imposing. She knew that her daughters belonged to God and she offered them. Love for Him transcends a mother's pain. She believed in eternal life and lived with the hope of eternal good things. She was temporarily separated from her children to be reunited with them in the kingdom of God. She went above their grave and supplicated God to take her life, to be near them. She had the assurance that her children existed, that they were alive and she would meet them, and that she would see them again.

Those who are hard on young people today I think are being unfair. Young people today, according to the testimony of many educators and others involved with youth, are more honest and straightforward than young people of the past. Their violent behavior, in some cases, and extreme reactions I believe are due to what they require from society, such as tenderness, love and sincerity, but instead they encounter cruelty, heartlessness and hypocrisy. Wherever they meet humanity and kindness they become other people, and of this we have many examples.

Faith, Hope and Love were worthy children of their glorious Mother. They were nursed with the guileless milk of faith, hope and love towards God, which is why they managed to realize the purpose of life, their well-being, which is to be together with Christ in the kingdom of God, where life never ends. (*from johnsanidopoulos.com*)

Today's Epistle Lesson – St. Paul's Letter to the Galatians 2:16-20 EOB

Brethren, knowing that no one is justified by the works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, we believed in Christ Jesus, so that we might be justified by faith in Christ, and not by the works of the law, because no one will be justified by the works of the law. But if, even though we desired to be justified in Christ, we were found to be sinners, does that mean that Christ is a servant of sin? Certainly not! Indeed, if I build up again those things which I [once] destroyed, I show that I am breaking the law. For I, through the law, died to the law, so that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ, and it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. I now live this life in the flesh, but I live [it] by faith in the Son of God who loved me and who gave himself up for me.

Today's Gospel Lesson – Mark 8:34-38: 9:1 EOB

At that time, Jesus called the multitude to himself with his disciples and said to them, "Whoever wants to come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me. Indeed, whoever wants to save his life will lose it; and whoever will lose his life for my sake and for the sake of the Good News will save it. What does it profit if someone, to gain the whole world, loses a his life? For what will someone give in exchange for his life? Whoever will be ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man also will be ashamed of when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels." Jesus said to them, "Amen, I tell you that there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the Kingdom of God c come with power."

Homily on the Great Litany of the Divine Liturgy

By Metropolitan Hierotheos of Nafpaktos and Agiou Vlasiou

The Divine Liturgy, beloved brethren, is the great Mystery of the Church, since in it the bread and wine are transformed into the Body and Blood of Christ and we commune Christ, who is the source of life and immortality. Thus, you cannot be a Christian who does not go to church, does not attend liturgy without having a serious reason.

The Divine Liturgy begins with the proclamation: "Blessed is the Kingdom of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto the ages of ages." It is a doxology of the Triune God, namely the Father, the Son and the Holy

Spirit. Immediately after the remembrance of the Triune God, the Priest asks the Christians present to pray to the Triune God and to mention their petitions to Him and to ask Him for their needs.

In these short Sunday sermons of these two months (July-August), we will briefly interpret the petitions that the people are urged by the Priest to address to God at the beginning of the Divine Liturgy. In this way we will be able to understand their meaning and thus the liturgical prayer will be done with meaning and purpose. The first three petitions of the supplication refer to peace, where three states of peace are mentioned.

The first state of peace refers to the way in which we should pray. "In the peace let us pray to the Lord", that is, let us pray to God in peace. It is about external peace, that is, with order and quiet, but also internal peace, that is, prayer without thoughts and mental activity. Both are needed for our prayer to have power. We should not talk in church, we should not create disorder, but neither should we think about various problems that concern us in daily life. Every time we attend the sacred church we must dedicate ourselves to God.

The second state of peace is the peace of God. "For the peace from above and the salvation of our souls, let us pray to the Lord", that is, the Priest urges us to pray that God will send us His own peace and grant us the salvation of our souls. Christ Himself made a distinction between the peace He gives and the peace the world gives (John 9:27). The peace of God is His Grace, for when it comes into our hearts, it frees us from every turmoil, every worry, every inner conflict.

The third state of peace is the peace of the world and of the Churches. "For the peace of the world, for the stability of the holy Churches of God, and for the unity of all, let us pray to the Lord," that is, let us pray to God for the peace of the whole world, the stability of the holy Churches and the unity of all. Turmoil and wars are the result of the sin of the First-formed, who turned away from God, the source and ruler of peace. Feuds and schisms in the Church are the result of the passions of people who create problems in the Church and separate people into nations, races, languages, which is the fruit of sin. That is why we must constantly pray to God to send us His peace, to guard our hearts, and to banish fear, turmoil, and anguish.

Every time we liturgize and pray to God with these supplications, we must do it with great care, faith and power, because today people are in turmoil, burdened with thoughts, agony, but there are also many wars among humans. There are also many social upheavals. We come to church on Sundays full of agony and turmoil from the problems and temptations of the past week, which we encountered in our family, our workplace, society and that is why we seek calmness, tranquility, peace. May Christ, who is the ruler of peace, grant us this great gift, but let us also

prepare ourselves to receive it, so that in the Church and the Mystery of the Divine Eucharist we will feel the peace of God. *(from johnsanidopoulos.com)*

A Word From the Holy Fathers

During the reign of the impious Roman Emperor Hadrian, a widow of Italian ancestry called Sophia, whose name means "wisdom", lived in Rome. She was a Christian, and in accordance with her name, she lived wisely, showing that wisdom praised by the Apostle James, who says, "The wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits." This wise gentlewoman, Sophia, while living in honorable wedlock, bore three daughters, whom she named after the three great virtues. The first was named Faith, the second Hope, and the third Love, for to what does Christian wisdom give birth other than to God-pleasing virtues?

Soon after the birth of her three daughters, Sophia was widowed. Living piously, she pleased God by prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. She reared her three daughters in a manner befitting a wise mother so that they, being the namesakes of virtues, might in truth acquire those traits, the names of which they bore. As they matured, they increased in virtue, and they learned well the books of the prophets and the apostles. They became accustomed to listen to the words of their teachers and earnestly occupied themselves with spiritual reading, prayer, and household chores. Moreover, they submitted themselves in all things to their holy mother, who was filled with divine wisdom. Thus, going from strength to strength, they were successful in all things. As they were exceedingly fair and perfect in wisdom, the eyes of all were soon upon them.

Word spread throughout Rome of the wisdom and beauty of the three sisters, and even the Eparch Antiochus wished to see them. When they were brought before him, Antiochus learned that they were Christians, for they did not hide their faith in Christ. Hoping in Christ, they did not doubt or falter in their love for Him, but before all they glorified Christ, showing disdain for the idols, hateful to God.

Antiochus related all these things to the Emperor Hadrian, who immediately sent his servants to bring the virgins before him. When the servants arrived at Sophia's house, they found the mother occupied with instructing her daughters. They told her that she was to come, together with her daughters, to the Emperor. Realizing the purpose of this summons, they arose to pray and said, "O Almighty God, do with us according to Your holy will, and forsake us not, but rather grant us Your holy aid, that our hearts be not frightened by the proud tormentor, that we be not terrified by his fearful tortures nor terrorized by bitter death, and that nothing might separate us from You, our God."

After praying and bowing down before God, all four martyrs, the mother and her daughters, took one another by the hand, forming as it were a plaited garland. They went forth, frequently looking up to the heavens, committing themselves with sighs and silent prayers to the help of Him Who commanded us to "do not fear those who kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul." When they arrived at the Emperor's palace, they signed themselves with the sign of the Cross and said, "Help us, O God our Savior, for the sake of the glory of Your holy name!"

They were then led before the Emperor, who sat proudly upon his throne. They rendered him fitting honor but stood before him without fear, their faces radiant, their hearts steadfast, their eyes gazing gladly upon all as though they had been summoned to a banquet. Such was their joy with which they came to suffer torment for their Lord!

Seeing their honorable, fair, and fearless countenances, the Emperor questioned the mother as to their lineage, names, and faith. She, being most wise, answered so sagaciously that all were amazed at her prudence. Having spoken but briefly of the maidens' ancestry and names, she began to tell of Him Whom she confessed and before Whose name every knee should bow. Having confessed her faith in Christ Jesus, the Son of God, she called herself His handmaiden and gave praise to His name. "I am a Christian," she said, "and in that honorable name I rejoice." She added that she had betrothed her daughters to Christ so that they might preserve their chastity for the incorruptible Bridegroom, the Son of God.

The Emperor, seeing that Sophia was a wise woman, did not wish at that time to speak further with her or pass judgment on her. He laid the matter aside for a time and sent all four martyrs to a certain noblewoman named Palladia, whom he charged to watch over them and to present them on the third day to be judged.

Staying in Palladia's house, Sophia had sufficient time to instruct her children. She confirmed them in the faith day and night, teaching them with words inspired by God and saying, "My beloved daughters, the time has now come for you to contend for Christ; the hour has arrived for you to be betrothed unto your immortal Bridegroom. In accordance with your names, may you display firm faith, undoubting hope, and unfeigned and never-failing love. The hour has come for you to rejoice, for you shall be crowned with the crown of martyrdom by your most beloved Bridegroom and will enter with gladsome voices into His bridal chamber.

"My daughters, for the sake of the honor in which you will be held by Christ, Who is more comely than the sons of men, do not spare your flesh. For the sake of life eternal, do not pity the bloom of your youth nor hesitate to suffer the deprivation of this fleeting life, for your Beloved, Jesus Christ, Who dwells in the heavens, is eternal well-being and beauty inexpressible. When your bodies have been tortured

to death for His sake, He will robe them in incorruption, and the wounds which you bear on your flesh will shine like the stars in heaven.

"When you have been deprived of your beauty for His sake, He will adorn you with heavenly beauty, such as the eye has not beheld. When you have laid down your souls for your Lord and suffered the loss of your temporal lives, He will grant you life eternal, and He will glorify you unto the ages before His heavenly Father and before His holy angels. You will be called Christ's brides and His confessors by all the hosts of heaven; all the holy monastics shall praise you, and the wise virgins will rejoice over you and will receive you into their company.

"My sweet children, do not allow yourselves to be deceived by the enemy's allurements, for the Emperor will entice you greatly and promise you rich presents, offering you glory, wealth, honor, and all the beautiful and sweet things of this corruptible and vain world. But love none of these things, for they all vanish like smoke and are scattered like dust by the wind and like a flower or grass wither and return to the earth. Neither be daunted by the prospect of grievous tortures, for having suffered them but a short while and having overcome the foe, you will rejoice forever.

"I believe that my God, Jesus Christ, will not forsake you should you resolve to suffer for Him, for He said, 'Even if a woman should forget her offspring, yet I shall not forget you'. He will remain with you throughout all the tortures you will suffer, looking upon your struggles, strengthening your infirmity, and preparing a plaited crown for your reward.

"My good daughters, remember the pains which I underwent in bearing you! Remember the labors I endured in rearing you, remember my words by which I taught you the fear of God, and comfort your mother in her old age with your good and brave confession of Christ. When I am deemed worthy to be called the mother of martyrs and will behold you suffering bravely for Christ, confessing His holy name and dying for Him, I will have more happiness, joy, honor, and glory than any of the faithful. My soul will be magnified and my spirit will rejoice and I will be strengthened in my old age. Having obeyed the instructions of your mother you will truly be my daughters, if you contest for your Lord even unto the shedding of your blood and with fervor submit to death for Him."

Having hearkened with compunction to their mother's words, the daughters were stricken in heart, and they rejoiced in spirit, awaiting the time of their martyrdom as though it were the hour of their nuptials. Being the holy branches of a sacred root, they desired with all their heart that which their most wise mother Sophia had taught them to thirst after. They stored her words in their hearts and prepared themselves for the contest of martyrdom as though they were to enter a bridal

chamber. Girding themselves with faith, bolstering themselves with hope, and kindling in themselves the fire of love for the Lord, they strengthened one another and promised their mother that with Christ's help they would translate into deeds her edifying words to them.

When the third day had come, the saints were brought to judgment before the impious Emperor. Thinking that they were but young maidens who could easily be brought to obey his deceptive words, he began to speak to them thus, "I see, children, that you are fair, and I feel pity for your youth. I advise you as a father to worship the gods who rule the universe. If you obey me and do what I command, then I shall call you my own children. I will summon the eparchs, governors, and all of my counselors and shall adopt you in their presence, and they all will hold you in the highest respect and praise you. But if you do not obey me and do not submit to my ordinance, then much evil will befall you, and you will bring much grief to your mother in her old age. You will yourselves perish at an age when you should be happy and dwell amid the sweet, good things and the joys of this world. I will cause you to perish miserably and will cast out your severed limbs to be food for dogs, and you will be despised by all. Therefore, obey me, that it might go well with you. I care for you and do not wish to destroy your beauty and to deprive you of this present life; rather, I desire to have you as my children."

The holy virgins answered the persecutor as though with a single voice, saying, "God, Who dwells in heaven, is our Father, Who takes care for our life and has mercy on our souls. His love we desire, and we wish to be called His true children. We keep His commandments, and we spit on your gods. Your threats do not frighten us, for we wish to suffer and bear bitter torments for the sake of our sweet God, Jesus Christ."

The Emperor, having heard them answer thus, questioned their mother Sophia as to their names and ages. She replied, "My eldest child is named Faith and is twelve years old. The second is Hope, who is ten years of age. My third child's name is Love, and she is nine years old."

The Emperor marveled at the maidens' spirit, intelligence, and ready answers, especially since they were so young. He then began to attempt to force each of them to submit to his impiety, beginning with Faith, the eldest sister, to whom he said, "Sacrifice to the great goddess Artemis!"

But Faith would not agree to submit. Therefore, the Emperor had her stripped naked and ordered that she be beaten severely. The torturers thrashed her mercilessly, saying, "Sacrifice to the great goddess Artemis!" She remained silent, however, as though it were another's body which bore the suffering. Since the tormentor accomplished nothing by flogging her, he had her virginal breasts cut

off. Seeing milk instead of blood flow forth from her wounds, the people shook their heads and secretly reproached the Emperor for his foolishness and cruelty, saying, "In what has this fair maiden transgressed? Why does she suffer thus? What a pity! Such is the mindlessness of the Emperor and his beastly cruelty that he not only tortures to death the aged but young children as well!"

Then a metal gridiron was brought, which was placed on a great fire which had been kindled. When it had been heated red hot, giving forth sparks, the holy martyr Faith was placed upon it. She lay there for two hours, calling out to her Lord, but she was not burnt at all, to the astonishment of everyone present. Then she was cast into a cauldron filled with boiling pitch and oil, but there too she remained unharmed, sitting as though she were in cool water, singing to God. The persecutor, not knowing what else to do with her to weaken her faith in Christ, pronounced upon her the sentence of death by the sword.

When Saint Faith heard this, she was filled with joy and said to her mother, "Pray for me, Mother, that I may complete my course and arrive at the end which I desire, to behold my beloved Lord and Savior and be filled with the vision of His divinity."

Then Faith said to her sisters, "You know, my dear sisters, to Whom we have promised ourselves and to Whom we have been betrothed. You know that we have been signed with the holy Cross of our Lord to serve Him to eternity. Therefore, let us endure unto the end. A single mother has borne us and has reared and instructed us, so let us accept a common death since we are sisters and share a single will. May I be an example to you, that you both might follow me to our Bridegroom, Who summons us to Himself."

Having said this, Faith kissed her mother, and embracing her sisters, she kissed them and then submitted herself to the sword. Her mother did not sorrow for her daughter, for her love for God overcame her maternal love and pity for her children. She only feared that one of her daughters might renounce the Lord, so she said to Faith, "My daughter, I bore you and on this account endured suffering. But you will redeem my suffering if you die for Christ's sake, confessing Him and shedding the blood which you received in my womb. Go to Him, my beloved offspring, stained with your blood, as if clothed in crimson. When you appear most fair before the eyes of your Bridegroom, remember before Him your lowly mother and pray to Him for your sisters, that He strengthen them so that they might have the same patience which you possess."

And so Saint Faith's honorable head was cut off and she departed to Christ God her Master. Her mother took her much-suffering body, and as she kissed it, she rejoiced and glorified Christ God, Who had received her daughter Faith into the heavenly bridal chamber.

Then the impious Emperor had the second sister, the holy virgin Hope, brought before him, and he said to her, "Good child, I appeal to you as a father who loves you. Heed my advice and worship the great Artemis so that you might not perish as your elder sister did. You have seen her bitter death. Do you wish to suffer likewise? Believe me, child; I pity your youth and would have you as my daughter if you would agree to obey my command."

But Saint Hope replied, "O Emperor, was it not my sister whom you put to death? Were we not born of the same mother? Were we not fed with the same milk? Did I not receive the same Baptism as my holy sister? I grew up with her, and from the same books and the same maternal instruction I learned to know the one God, our Lord Jesus Christ, and to believe in Him and to worship Him alone. Therefore, O Emperor, do not imagine that I shall reason, think, or desire other than as did my sister Faith. I am ready to follow her path; therefore, do not delay or weary yourself with much speaking, but begin that which you have resolved to do. You will see that I am of the same mind as my sister who has gone before me."

When the Emperor heard this reply, he handed Hope over to the torturers. His henchmen stripped her as they had Faith, and they beat her so long and mercilessly that they grew weary. But she remained silent as though she suffered no pain. She only gazed upon her mother, the blessed Sophia, who stood nearby and who valiantly looked on as her child underwent torment, fervently praying to God that He grant her daughter firm patience.

Then the wicked Emperor commanded that Hope be cast into fire, but she remained unharmed, praising God like the Three Youths. After this, she was suspended and scraped with iron claws. Her flesh was torn off, streams of her blood gushed out, and a wondrous fragrance came forth from her wounds. Her countenance shone with the grace of the Holy Spirit, and she mocked the persecutor because he was unable to overcome even a young maiden. She said, "Having Christ's help, I fear no torments; rather, I desire them as I desire the sweet things of paradise, so sweet is my Lord to me. But unending fiery torments and the demons which you regard as gods await you in Gehenna."

These words greatly angered the tormentor, who ordered that a cauldron be filled with pitch and oil and heated over a fire and that the saint be cast into it. When the cauldron had come to a boil and the Emperor's servants were preparing to hurl the saint into it, the kettle suddenly melted down like wax, and the hot pitch and oil poured forth from it upon all who stood nearby.

Such was the wondrous power of God which guarded Saint Hope. Although the persecutor saw all these things, he did not wish to know the true God, for his heart was ensnared by demonic darkness and pernicious error. Thus, seeing himself put

to shame by a young maiden and not wishing to bear further humiliation, he condemned the saint to beheading.

When the maiden heard that she was to be put to death, she hastened joyfully to her mother and said, "Peace and salvation to you, mother: remember your child!" Her mother embraced and kissed her, saying, "My daughter Hope, you are blessed by the Lord God on high in Whom you trust and for Whose sake you have not spared your blood. Go now to your sister Faith, to stand in the presence of our Beloved."

Hope then kissed her sister Love, who had been watching her torture, and she said to her, "Do not linger here, sister, but hasten, that we might enter the presence of the Holy Trinity together." Then she went to the headless corpse of her sister, Saint Faith, and kissed it lovingly. Nature compelled her to shed tears, but love for Christ turned her tears into joy. Then she bowed her head beneath the sword, and thus Saint Hope was beheaded. Her mother took her body and glorified God, rejoicing over the courage of her two daughters. She then inspired her third daughter with sweet words and wise counsels to contest in like manner.

The persecutor summoned Love, the third maiden, seeking to entice her to abandon the Crucified One and to worship Artemis, but the deceiver labored in vain. For no one has so desired to contend for our beloved Lord as did Love, even as it is written, "Love is as strong as death; many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it."

The many waters of the world's temptations did not quench the fire of love for God in that maiden, neither was it drowned in the floods of misfortunes and sufferings. Her great love was made manifest in that she was prepared to lay down her soul for her beloved Jesus Christ, for "greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for another."

The persecutor, realizing that he was unable to accomplish anything with his flatteries, began to torture Love, hoping by various torments to separate Love from the love of Christ. But she replied with the words of the Apostle, "Who shall separate me from the love of Christ? "Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?" Nay, in all these things, I am more than a conqueror through Him that loved me."

The persecutor began her torture by ordering that she be stretched out upon a wheel and beaten with rods. The saint's young body was stretched in such a way that her members were pulled from their sockets, and she was beaten until she had been dyed as red as scarlet by her blood, which watered the earth like rain.

The tormentor then showed the saint a furnace which had been heated white hot, and he said, "Maiden, say only that the goddess Artemis is great, and I will release you. But if you will not, you will without delay be burnt in the fiery furnace." The

saint said, "Great is my God Jesus Christ, but may you perish, together with Artemis!"

The persecutor became enraged, and he ordered those standing nearby to hurl Love into the furnace. The saint did not wait for another to cast her into the furnace, but she hastened to enter it herself. She walked into the furnace but was not burned, and she rejoiced as though she were in a cool place, singing and blessing God. And at once fire shot forth from the furnace, consuming the unbelievers standing nearby, burning some to ashes and scorching others. The Emperor himself was singed, and he fled far from the furnace. Within the furnace other radiant persons could be seen rejoicing together with the martyr. Thus the name of Christ was magnified while the impious were put to shame.

When the furnace was extinguished, the saint, Christ's fair bride, emerged radiant and unharmed as though from a bridal chamber. The torturers, in accordance with the Emperor's command, seized her and bored through her members with drills, but God's help strengthened the saint as she endured these torments so that she did not die. For how could she otherwise bear such torments and not perish immediately? Her beloved Bridegroom, Jesus Christ, strengthened her so that the impious might be filled with shame and so that she might receive a greater reward and that God's mighty power might be glorified in a frail vessel.

Finally, the persecutor, stricken with pain from being burned by the fire, commanded that the saint be beheaded by the sword. When she heard that she was to be beheaded, she rejoiced and said, "I sing to You, and I bless Your much-hymned name, O Lord Jesus Christ, Who has loved Your handmaiden Love! Number me together with my sisters, and count me worthy to suffer for Your name, even as they suffered."

Her mother Saint Sophia did not cease praying to God for her third daughter, that He grant her patience to the end. She said to Love, "My third offspring, my beloved child: endure to the end! You are traveling along the path which is good, and a crown has already been woven for you. The bridal chamber has been prepared and stands open for you. The Bridegroom awaits you, looking down from on high on your contest so that when you have bent your head beneath the sword, He might receive and embrace your pure and immaculate soul and grant you repose together with your sisters. Remember me, your mother, in the kingdom of your Bridegroom, that He might be merciful to me and not deprive me of an inheritance and portion with you in His holy glory."

At that moment Saint Love was beheaded by the sword. Her mother took her body and laid it in a beautiful coffin, together with the corpses of Faith and Hope, adorning their bodies as was fitting. She placed them in a chariot, took them

several miles outside the city, and reverently buried her daughters there upon a lofty hill, weeping for joy. She sat by their grave, praying with compunction to God for three days, after which she slept the sleep of death in the Lord and was buried by the faithful in that same place, together with her daughters. She was deprived neither of an inheritance with them in the heavenly kingdom nor of a martyr's crown, inasmuch as she suffered for Christ, not in the flesh but rather in her heart. Thus the most wise Sophia wisely finished her course, having brought as a gift to the Trinity her three virtuous daughters, Faith, Hope, and Love.

O holy and righteous Sophia! What woman has been thus saved through childbearing as you, who bore children who were betrothed to the Savior and suffered for Him and now reign and are glorified together with Him? In truth you are a wondrous mother, worthy of remembrance, for having beheld the cruel and bitter torments which your beloved children underwent and their death, you have not, as is the custom with mothers, suffered grief, but you rejoice, comforted by the grace of God. You encouraged them to accept martyrdom and to pray, that they might not weaken and preserve their fleeting lives but that they should instead resolutely offer to shed their blood for Christ. And now exulting in the vision of His most radiant countenance, together with your holy daughters, enlighten us, that we may be preserved in the virtues of faith, hope, and love and be deemed worthy to glorify and stand in the presence of the most holy, uncreated, and life-bestowing Trinity, unto the ages of ages. Amen.

— St. Dmitri of Rostov

Venerable Anastasios the Weaver of Peristerona, Cyprus

Regarding the life of Saint Anastasios, we have sources that say he came to Cyprus from the Holy Land in the seventh century with the Arab invasion, and others that he came with the Alaman Saints as a soldier of the Crusades in the twelfth century to the Holy Land and later found refuge from the Arabs in Cyprus. In both cases, he came to Cyprus with 300 other Christians.

Leontios Machairas, the 15th century chronicler, reports that Saint Anastasios was one of the 300 clergymen and lay people who fled to Cyprus from Jerusalem, in 638, in order to escape the wrath of the Arabs who had just conquered the city:

"When the Saracens took the promised land, then the poor Christians came out from their hiding-places and went wherever they found refuge. There were archbishops, bishops, priests and lay people and they went wherever they could reach. And one group came to famous Cyprus. They were about 300 in number and, hearing that Greeks were in charge there, they went, from fear, from one place to another, digging the ground and going in there

and praying to God … Saint Anastasios the Wonderworker found himself in Peristerona."

An old Synaxarion of the Saint records:

"This man, our blessed Father Anastasios, was in the time of the Emperor of the Christians, Alexios Komnenos and his son John. Together with 300 other Orthodox from Alaman [Germany], he lived the monastic life in Palestine, which was then subject to the Orthodox Emperor. When the so-called Holy War was declared and was undertaken supposedly for the holy pilgrimage sites, these soldiers also came with the others. Seeing that the Orthodox were abused in wars by the Latins, who were commanders of the earthly army, they enlisted with the Heavenly King. They took the arms of the monastic state in Cyprus, where, living in deserts and mountains, dispirited, mortified and under attack from demons, they defeated every temptation by the power of Christ, Who strengthened them. Through their great virtues they also were able to work many miracles, not only while they lived but also after death. Thus, to this day, those who approach the grave of Saint Anastasios with reverence find him to be an excellent physician, who is swift to help those who invoke his aid. By his prayers, Christ our God, have mercy upon us, O lover of mankind."

From this we can likely conclude that Anastasios was a genuine Orthodox Roman monk who came to Cyprus with a large number of Christians, since the number 300 is symbolic for a large number.

Saint Anastasios never stopped working in order to earn his daily bread. In a hewn-out cave, which he chose for his ascetic life, he set up his loom and wove sacks in which cereals could be kept or transported. On his grave, on a little ledge, the wooden shuttles he used were kept, in very good condition, until August 1974. People wanting his help would rub themselves with them in order to be cured. Later they were placed before his icons in the two neighboring churches, the old monastery one and the new one. Pilgrims would also bring wax figurines on his account.

The memory of Saint Anastasios is celebrated on the 17th of September.

Miracles

A) From the Narratives of Papa-Theodore Kakouris

1. Before I became a priest, in the old church there had long been a wax effigy of a child. We later gave it to candle sellers to melt it. When I became a priest, one Sunday after the Divine Liturgy two women approached me. I opened for them the old church in order to venerate. In the meantime I saw them looking around with

curiosity. One of them even said: "I'm looking for one thing, my Father, and I can't find it. I had sent here a wax offering of a child and I don't see it." I told her that we had it for many years and we had sent it to be melted. I asked her where she was from and she answered me: "I'm from Cyprus, but now I live in Australia." She continued saying: "I lived in Australia with another woman and I had a child that was paralyzed for twelve years. I took him to many doctors, but unfortunately he was not cured. One night, while we were sleeping, I heard a loud bang. I got up and put on my cross, because it was a strange noise. The other woman asked me: 'What happened?' Meanwhile the entire house was full of light and two men appeared. One of them, who was slightly tall, pointed to the other and said: "This is Saint Anastasios and he will heal your child." Then they immediately disappeared, along with the light. The next day, when the child awoke, he was completely well. Afterwards I sent money to a relative of mine in Skala to have a wax figurine made for an offering, and I commissioned her to find where Saint Anastasios was in order to bring it."

2. Sometime around 1960-61 one Sunday, after church, there came from Ormideia a car with 5 or 6 pilgrims. One of them said to me: "This Saint is my doctor. When I was young, I was completely paralyzed from the waist down. One day my father took a rock and made the sign of the cross over me saying: 'My Saint Anastasios, heal my child.' He then took me up and brought me to bed. A half hour later I got up and I was completely cured."

3. Giakoumis Poullis told me the following miracle: "On the day of the feast of Saint Anastasios someone came from Lefkoniko and told me, 'Every year I come to your village for the feast, because Saint Anastasios made me well. Once I was paralyzed and I couldn't walk. My father, to cure me, would bring me here to venerate and to rub his instruments on me. One year, when we came to the grace of the Saint for the feast, on the road as we departed, between Lefkoniko and Peristeronopigi, I got out of the vehicle and walked."

B) From the Narratives of Matthew Fikardos of Limmasol

4. In 1967 I worked at the post office of Lefkoniko. A week before September 17 I went with my wife to Limmasol to see my sister-in-law, who had a sick child named Andrew Furlis. The child was 14 or 15 years old then and he often had a seizure and foam would come from his mouth. As I was chatting with my wife, I stated that September 17 was the feast of Saint Anastasios. Then my sister-in-law asked for more information, to find out where the Saint was. When I explained to her, she told me: "I have seen Saint Anastasios dressed in white with his church three times in my dreams, and he told me, 'You have taken your child to many doctors and clinics. I am Saint Anastasios and I have two clinics. Bring your child to my old clinic.'"

So my sister-in-law took Andrew on September 16 to Peristeronopigi. As they passed the village in order to first go to Lefkoniko so we could go to the Saint together, she saw the church from afar and yelled: "That's the church I saw in my dreams!" The others in the bus asked why she yelled such a thing, and she explained to them her dream. Then they arrived in Lefkoniko, and before we departed the child suffered a brief crisis. Arriving at Peristeronopigi we first venerated in the new church. We then went to the old church and went down to the tomb of Saint Anastasios. There, as soon as we rubbed with the tools, the child, whom my wife held by the hand, said to us: "uncle, I am now relieved from the burden." From that moment the child became well and never suffered from his illness again. Now Andrew lives in Australia. *(from johnsanidopoulos.com)*

Also Commemorated Today

New Hieromartyrs [Paul](#), Theodosius, Nicodemus and Seraphim (1918).

Virgin-martyr [Irene](#) (Irina) Frolova (1931).

New Hieromartyr [Sergius](#), Bishop of Narva, with priest Chariton and nuns Anna S., Anastasia Z., and Eudocia S. (1937)

Martyr [John](#) (Ioann) Korotkova (1941).

Virgin-martyr [Alexandra](#) Khvorostyannikova (1943).

Martyr [Theodota](#) at Nicaea (230)

Martyr [Agathoklea](#) (Agathocleia)

Martyrs [Maximos](#), Theodotos, Hesychios & Asklepiodota (also comm. Feb. 19)

156 [Martyrs](#) of Palestine, including bishops Peleus and Nilus, the presbyter Zeno, and the noblemen Patermuthius and Elias (310).

St. [Joachim](#), patriarch of Alexandria (1567).

Martyrs [Lucy](#), & son Geminian of Rome (303) (per BHK, Lucy died in peace).

Hieromartyrs [Heraclides](#) ([Heraclius](#)) & his successor Myron, bishops of Cyprus (1st c.).

Martyrs [Socrates](#) and Stephen of Monmouth, Wales (c. 303)

St. [Lambert](#), hieromartyr of Maastricht (704) (Neth.).

100 Martyrs of Egypt. (Greek).

Venerable Eusipius of Cyprus (Greek).

Martyrs [Charalampus](#), Panteleon and others (Greek).

Martyr [Columba](#) of Cordoba (853)

Martyr [Flocellus](#) of Autun (2nd c)

Hieromartyr [Justin](#), priest of Rome (259)

Martyrs [Narcissus](#) and Crescendo of rome (c. 260)

Ven. [Satyrus](#) of Milan (376)

Ven. [Theodora](#) of Rome (c. 305)

St. [Uni](#) (Unni, Unno, Huno), bishop of Bremen-Hamburg (936)

St. [Rodingus](#) (Rouin), priest-monk of St. Maurice in Tholey (Germany)(c. 690)



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Social Team for September 24

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, Jacob, 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.)