

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

October 29, 2023 – 21st Sunday After Pentecost

**Venerable Father Abramius the Recluse and His Niece,
Blessed Mary | Martyr Anastasia the Roman**

The blessed Abramius was the son of pious parents, and from his youth he frequently attended God's holy churches. There he gladly hearkened to the reading of the divine Scriptures. His parents, who loved him greatly, sought to compel him to marry although this was not his desire. They repeatedly enjoined him to take a wife, and at length he was forced to submit to their will. But seven days after his wedding, as he sat in his room with his bride, the grace of God suddenly shone in his heart like light, and he arose and left his house without saying anything to anyone. Guided by God, he left the city where he lived and took up his abode in an abandoned hut about half a mile away. He settled there with a joyful heart, glorifying God and intent on laboring for his salvation.

Now Abramius' parents and relatives were grieved by his disappearance, and they searched for the blessed one everywhere. Seventeen days after he had departed, they found him in his cell, praying to God. They were amazed by what he had done, but the blessed one said to them, "Do not marvel at this, but give glory to God, Who loves mankind, for it was He Who delivered me from the vain world. Entreat the Lord for me that He grant me to bear His light yoke to the end, and



trouble me no more. Because of my love for God, I wish to live here in silence and to fulfill the Lord's holy will."

When his parents saw that Abramius was not to be dissuaded, they said the amen. The blessed one again besought them not to disturb him with their visits, and then sealed up the door leaving open only a little window, through which food could be passed to him. The blessed Abramius resumed his labors for God, Who enlightened the saint's mind with His grace. Abramius achieved perfection in the eremitic life and lived in great abstinence, pursuing the virtues of humility, chastity, and love. Word of his sanctity spread everywhere, and those who heard of it began to come to see him and to be profited, for he had received the gift of speaking wisely and consoling the hearts of others.

Ten years after the blessed Abramius forsook the world, his parents died, bequeathing him numerous possessions. Since he did not wish to leave his prayer and solitude, he requested a close friend to distribute his entire inheritance to the poor. He thus remained free from cares, for the blessed one's whole desire was to prevent his mind from clinging to anything earthly. Therefore, he had no possessions except a single garment, a hair shirt, a bowl from which he ate and drank, and the mat upon which he slept. Throughout the fifty years he struggled in the monastic life, he never altered his rule, continually laboring for God with love and fervor.

One of the villages that lay near the city where Abramius had lived was very large, and its inhabitants were all heathen, from the least to the greatest. Until that time no one had succeeded in turning them to God. Many priests and deacons had been sent by the Bishop of that region to convert the inhabitants of the village from the deception of idolatry, but not one could endure the afflictions they suffered at the hands of the pagans. Numerous monks likewise strove repeatedly to win the people of that village away from their error, but as they had no success, they departed from their midst. One day, as the Bishop was sitting with his clergy, he brought to mind the blessed Abramius and said, "In all my life I have not met a man who has attained such perfection in every good and God-pleasing work as has our lord Abramius." The clergy replied, "Yes, master, he is truly God's servant and a perfect monk." The Bishop said to them, "I wish to make him a priest for that village of pagans. Perhaps by his love and patience their hearts will be inclined toward him, and they will turn to God."

The Bishop and his clergy departed forthwith and went to the blessed one. After they had arrived and greeted the saint, the Bishop began to tell Abramius of the pagan village, beseeching him to go there. When Abramius heard this, however, he became very sorrowful and said to the Bishop, "Forgive me, holy Father! Leave

me in peace to weep for my sins, for I am a weak man and unfit for the task you wish to lay upon me." The Bishop replied, "The grace of God will enable you to succeed in this undertaking. Do not shirk this good obedience." "I entreat Your Holiness: leave me, the wretch, to bewail my iniquities," said the blessed one. The Bishop answered, "You have forsaken the world and despise all that is in the world, have crucified yourself to the flesh, and have acquired every virtue, but you have not learned obedience." When Abramius heard this, he wept bitterly and said, "I am but a stinking dog. Of what use is my life, if you think of me thus?" The Bishop said, "You sit here alone and save yourself, but in the village you will turn many to the Lord and salvation, with the help of God's grace. Consider, therefore, which of the two will bring you a greater reward: to save yourself alone or to save many." Weeping, the blessed one said, "May the will of God be done! In obedience, I go."

The Bishop led Abramius forth from his cell to the city, where he ordained him. Then he sent him with other clergymen to the pagan village. Along the way, the blessed one prayed to God, saying, "O Good One, Who loves mankind, You see my weakness. Send Your grace to my aid, that Your most holy name may be glorified!" When he reached the village and saw how the people served the idols and were held fast by demonic delusion, Abramius groaned and wept. Lifting up his eyes unto heaven, he said, "O God, Who alone are without sin, disdain not the works of Your hands!"

Abramius then sent word to his dear friend to whom he had entrusted the task of distributing his inheritance to the poor and instructed him to send him a portion of the money which yet remained, that he might use it to build a church. The blessed one quickly began the construction of God's temple, and within a short time a magnificent church was built, which he adorned like a fair bride. While the church was being built, the blessed one would go amid the idols and pray to God without saying a word aloud. After the church was completed, he tearfully offered prayer to the Lord there, making entreaty to God and saying, "O Lord, gather the people which have been scattered, and lead them unto this church. Enlighten the eyes of their mind, that they may know You to be the one true God, Who loves mankind."

When he had finished his prayer, the saint left the church, overturned the altar of the pagans, and destroyed their gods. When the heathen saw this, they fell upon him like wild beasts, thrashed him, and cast him out of the village. But he returned by night to the church and began to cry out, weeping in prayer to God and beseeching Him to save the people from perdition. When morning dawned, the pagans found him in the church praying (for they came every day to the church, not to pray but to marvel at the magnificence and beauty of the building), and they were amazed. The blessed one besought them to acknowledge the one true God,

but they beat him with staves as though he were a lifeless rock. They threw him to the ground, tied a noose about his neck, and dragged him out of the village. Then, thinking he was dead, they laid a stone upon him and departed. But Abramius came to himself in the middle of the night, and scarcely alive, sat up and began to weep bitterly, saying to God, "Why, O Master, have You spurned my lowliness and my tears? Why have You turned Your face away from me and disdained me, who am the work of Your hand? O Master, look down upon Your servant and hearken to my prayer! Strengthen me, and loose Your servants from the bonds of the devil, and grant them to know You, the only true God; for there is no God other than You."

Abramius then went into the village and entered the church, and he stood there, chanting and praying. The next morning, the pagans came and found that he was still alive and were astonished. As they were brutal and merciless men, they again began to torment him cruelly. Having knocked him to the ground, they tied a rope about his neck and dragged him out of the city. The blessed one suffered similar cruelties at their hands for three years: he was persecuted, beaten, reviled, stoned, and endured hunger and thirst. But although the heathen brought all these things upon him, never was he angry with them, neither did he complain nor show cowardice. He bore these things without growing despondent, and torments only served to increase his love for the people and his desire for their salvation. He instructed the elderly respectfully as though they were his own parents and taught the young as if they were his brothers, entreating them to accept the faith. The children he dealt with as though they were his own, even though they mocked and reviled him.

The people of that village could not but be amazed by Abramius's life; and one day, when all of them had gathered together, they began to speak with one another, saying, "Do you not see what patience this man has? Do you not see what love beyond words he has for us? He has suffered much evil from us but has not gone away or said a word of complaint to anyone. He has not turned away from us but endures all things with great joy. Truly, God, of Whom he ever speaks, has sent him to us, that we might correct our lives. He tells us of the kingdom, of paradise, and of life eternal, and his words are surely true. Otherwise, he would be unable to endure such abuse at our hands. Moreover, he has shown us that our gods are powerless, for they proved unable to revenge themselves upon him when he broke them to pieces. He is indeed a servant of the living God, and all that he has said is truth. Come, then, let us believe in the God Whom he preaches!" The people then hastened to enter the church, crying and saying, "Glory to the God of heaven, Who has sent us His servant to save us from the delusion of the devil!"

When the blessed one saw them, he rejoiced exceedingly, and his countenance shone like the light of morning. He opened his mouth and said to the people, "O my fathers, brethren, and children! Come, let us glorify God, Who has illumined the eyes of your hearts, that you should know Him and be cleansed of the impurity of idolatry. Believe in the living God with all your heart, for He is the Creator of heaven and earth and of all things therein, the Lord unoriginate, ineffable, unapproachable, the Giver of light, both dread and just, Who loves mankind. Have faith also in His only-begotten Son, Who is His Wisdom and Power and does His will, and in the Holy Spirit, Who gives life to all things; for if you believe thus, you shall have eternal life." The people answered him: "O our father, the guide of our life! We believe as you say and teach us, and we are ready to do whatsoever you command."

The blessed one immediately took them all and baptized them, old and young, in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. In all they were about a thousand souls. Every day he read to them from the divine Scriptures and spoke of the kingdom of heaven, of paradise, of the fire of Gehenna and of righteousness, faith, and love. Like fertile ground they received the good seed and gave forth fruit, one a hundredfold, another sixtyfold, another thirtyfold. The blessed one, who was like an angel of God, was ever engaged in their instruction, and they hearkened to him eagerly, gladly, and with diligence. They gave close heed to his sacred teaching, for they were bound to him by the bonds of love.

The blessed one lived with the villagers for a full year after their conversion, because he wished to confirm them in the faith. Day and night he taught them the word of God without ceasing. When he saw that they were established in their zeal for God and that their faith was firm, he wished to leave them, knowing that they had come to love and to revere him very much. He feared lest he form an attachment to them, thus betraying his monastic vow. One night, he arose and began to pray to God, saying, "You alone are without sin, O only Holy One, the merciful Master Who alone loves mankind and rests in the saints! You have enlightened the eyes of this people, freed them from the deception of idolatry, and vouchsafed them to know You. Ever keep and preserve them, O Master, and guard this Your flock, which You have acquired in Your great love for mankind. Protect them from every side by Your grace, ever illumine their hearts, and cause them to be altogether pleasing to You, that they may be vouchsafed Your heavenly kingdom. Defend me also, who am feeble and unworthy, and do not count my intention as sin, for You know that I love You and seek after You."

When Abramius had finished his prayer, he signed himself with the Cross and secretly departed to another place where he hid himself from the villagers. The next day, the newly enlightened people went to the church, according to their

custom. They searched for the godly one but did not find him, and in their confusion they wandered about like lost sheep seeking their shepherd, for whom they wept as they called out his name. Having looked everywhere and not found him, they became very downcast and hastened to the Bishop to tell him what had happened. The Bishop likewise was saddened when he learned of this, and as he saw how Abramius' flock wept and besought God to return their father to them, he sent a number of his servants without delay, to seek for the blessed one. The servants diligently sought for him as though he were a precious stone but could not find him. Therefore, the Bishop went with his clergy to the village, and seeing that all its inhabitants were steadfast in the faith and their love for Christ, he chose from their number worthy men, ordaining them presbyters and deacons. Then, after blessing them, he departed.

When the blessed one heard what the Bishop had done, he rejoiced greatly. He gave glory to God and said, "O my good Master! What shall I render unto You for all You have done for me? I worship and glorify Your divine providence!" After praying thus, Abramius joyfully returned to the cell where he had formerly lived. A little way from the first cell he built another, in which he shut himself up. But seeing Abramius' great struggles and how the saint rejoiced in God his Savior, the devil burned with envy toward him and began to strive in every way to cast down Christ's good warrior. Seeking to stir up proud thoughts in him, Satan tempted him with words of praise. Once, as the blessed one stood at prayer at midnight, a light as bright as the sun suddenly shone in his cell, and he heard what seemed to be a divine voice, saying, "You are blessed indeed, O Abramius! Truly, you are blessed, for no other man has done my will as you have. Because of this you are truly blessed!"

Abramius at once perceived the delusion of the adversary, and he lifted up his voice and said, "May you perish in darkness, O Satan, full of deceit and wickedness! I am a sinful man, but I trust in my God's succor and grace. I do not fear you, and your illusions do not frighten me, for the name of Jesus Christ, Whom I love, is my invincible rampart. In His name I adjure you to depart!"

Immediately the devil vanished like smoke. A few days later, however, as the blessed one was praying by night, Satan again appeared, holding an axe, with which he began to destroy Abramius' cell. When it seemed that the cell had been ruined, the devil cried out to his companions, "Hurry, my friends; make haste and let us strangle him!" But the blessed one answered, All the nations compassed me round about, and by the name of the Lord I warded them off. Straightway Satan vanished, and the cell was seen to have suffered no harm. But only a few days after this, as the saint was praying at midnight, Abramius saw that the mat on which he stood was about to be consumed by raging fire. The godly one trampled down the

flames, and he said, "Upon the asp and the basilisk shall I tread, and I shall trample upon the lion and the dragon and on all the power of the enemy in the name of my Helper, Jesus Christ my God." Satan took flight and cried out with a loud voice, "I shall conquer you yet, vile one, for I have devised a new snare for you!"

One day, as the blessed Abramius was eating, the devil again entered his cell, this time in the guise of a youth. He drew near the saint and pretended that it was his intention to dash to the floor the vessel from which Abramius ate. Seeing this, the blessed one held on to the bowl and continued to eat, not showing the least fear as the devil stood before him. Then the devil set a burning candle on a candlestand and began to chant with a loud voice, "Blessed are the blameless in the way, who walk in the law of the Lord."

Satan chanted the psalm through to the end, but the saint did not answer him until he had finished eating. He then made the sign of the Cross and said to the devil, "Vile dog, thrice-wretched, impotent, and cowardly! If you know that the blameless are blessed, why do you trouble them? Truly, all who love God and trust in Him with their whole heart are blessed and thrice-blessed." Answered the devil, "I vex them in the hope of vanquishing them, and I tempt them to turn them away from every good work."

The blessed one said to him, "May it not go well with you, accursed one! May you not overcome or lead astray any of those who fear God. It is those like you who have fallen away from their God that you deceive and conquer, for God is not with them. You are forced to vanish before those who love God even as smoke vanishes in the wind. Their prayer alone suffices to drive you away as the wind sweeps away dust. My Lord lives and is blessed forevermore; He is my glory and my boast, and even if you should stand here for a year or more, you will not cause me to fear you. You unclean dog! I will never do your will, for I despise you as a filthy cur."

The devil disappeared when the blessed one spoke thus; but five days later, as the saint was concluding his midnight chanting, the enemy again appeared, accompanied by what seemed to be a multitude of people. They encircled his cell with a rope, and pulling it tight, cried out to one another, "Let us cast his cell into the abyss!" Seeing this, the blessed one said, They compassed me about like unto bees around a honeycomb, and they burst into flame like a fire among the thorns, and by the name of the Lord I warded them off. To this Satan could only say, "I do not know what else to do; lo, you have utterly prevailed over me. You have overthrown my power and caused me to be held in disdain, but nevertheless, I will not leave you in peace until I vanquish and humble you." The blessed one said, "O unclean one, may you and all your works be cursed, but to God our Master, Who

alone is holy, be glory and worship! Learn now, O wretched and shameless one, that we fear neither you nor your spectres."

The devil warred thus with the saint for a considerable time, seeking to frighten him with various apparitions, but he could not vanquish that steadfast struggler and was himself overcome. The blessed one continued to add to his labors, and his love for God grew so that he came to love the Lord with his whole heart. His manner of life was such that he was filled with God's grace, and because of this the devil could not prevail over him. During all the years he was a monk, a day did not pass when he failed to weep, and he never succumbed to laughter. He did not partake of oil in his food, and he never washed his face, but lived each day as though he were about to die.

Now the blessed one had a brother according to the flesh, who had one daughter. When her father died, the girl was left an orphan. She was at that time seven years old, and she was taken to her uncle by acquaintances of her father. He ordered that she be left in his outer cell while he withdrew into seclusion in the inner chamber. There was a small door between the two through which he taught her the Psalter and the other books of Holy Scripture. Thus, the maiden began to live the monastic life, fasting and praying like her uncle, and she exercised herself in every monastic labor and virtue. Although her father had left her considerable wealth, the saint commanded that it be distributed to the poor at the very hour of his brother's death.

The blessed one often shed tears as he besought God to care for the maiden and to guard her from the vanity of this world, and she would herself often entreat her uncle to pray God that she be delivered from every snare of the devil. She strove to emulate her uncle's monastic life in every way; and the elder rejoiced when he saw her zealous labors, her tears, humility, silence, meekness, and love for God. She labored with him in monasticism for that time like a pure lamb or an unblemished turtledove. But at the end of that time, the devil laid his snares to trip her up and to catch her, hoping by this to grieve the blessed one and to tear his mind from God.

There was a certain monk who frequently visited the saint under the pretext of receiving instruction from him. When this monk (who was a monk only in name, not in deed) first saw the blessed maiden, he was filled with lust for her. He wished to speak with her, for his heart burned with a mad love. He longed for her thus for a whole year until one day, with the help of Satan, he opened the door to her cell and entered, seducing and defiling her.

After she had fallen into sin, Mary (for this was the maiden's name) was filled with terror. She rent her garment and beat her face, and in her grief she wished to put an end to her life. She said, "I have slain my soul and ruined my life; I have brought to nought all my monastic labors, my fasting, and my tears! I have angered God,

destroyed myself, and cast my godly uncle into bitter sorrow. I have become the devil's plaything; why should I continue to live? O woe is me; what have I done? What a grievous pit I have fallen into! A dark gloom has covered my heart, and now I do not know what to do or where I may hide myself. Where shall I go? Into what abyss shall I fling myself? Where now is the teaching of my venerable uncle, where the instruction of his friend Ephraim, who said to me, 'Be heedful and guard your soul undefiled for the immortal Bridegroom, for He is a holy and jealous God.' But I no longer make bold to lift my eyes to heaven, for I have perished before both God and man. I cannot remain here, for I am a sinful woman, altogether defiled; how can I dare speak with my holy father? If I should approach him, fire will issue forth from the door of his cell and burn me up. It would be better for me to go to another land where no one knows me, for I have perished, and no hope of salvation remains for me."

Mary immediately arose and journeyed to another city where she changed her attire and took up her abode in a brothel. Now as these things took place, the blessed Abramius saw a dream. He beheld a fearful and enormous serpent, which hissed menacingly. This serpent slithered into his cell where it found a dove and swallowed it up. Then the serpent withdrew, returning to its den. When the saint awoke, he was sorely troubled and wept bitterly, saying, "Can it be that Satan has raised up a persecution against the Holy Church? Perhaps many have forsaken the faith or the Church is troubled by schism."

Two days later, Abramius saw in another dream that same serpent creep out of its pit and into his cell, but this time it placed its head beneath his feet and burst asunder. The dove which was in his belly, however, remained alive, and when the blessed one stretched out his hand to take it, he found that it had suffered no harm. After the blessed one arose, he called out once or twice to the maiden, his co-struggler, and said, "This is the second day that you remain slothful and have not opened your mouth to glorify God!"

As there was no answer, Abramius opened the door and saw that his niece was gone. He then perceived that the vision pertained to her, and he began to weep and to say, "O woe is me! The wolf has snatched away my ewe-lamb! My child has been stolen from me!" Then the saint lifted up his voice and lamented tearfully, "O Savior of the whole world, return Your lamb Mary to the fold of life, that grief may not cast me down into Hades in my old age. Disdain not my supplication, O Lord, but quickly send Your aid, that she may be delivered from the maw of the serpent."

Mary lived away from her uncle for two years, but he did not cease to pray for her day and night to God. Then someone told the saint where his niece was to be found

and what sort of life she was leading. Abramius begged one of his acquaintances to go to that place to verify the truth of what he had heard. The man went, found the place, saw Mary, and returned to assure Abramius that the report was true.

When the saint had confirmed these things, he asked that he be brought the garb of a soldier and a horse. He then broke open the door of his cell and came forth from his seclusion. After he had clothed himself in military uniform and put upon his head a high-crowned hood that concealed his face, he took a gold piece, mounted the horse, and rode away. When he came to the brothel, he glanced about to see if Mary was there and gaily said to the proprietor, "Friend, I have heard that you keep a certain fair wench. It would please me to have a look at her." The innkeeper saw his hoary grey hairs and laughed in his heart, since he supposed that Abramius wished to have her. He replied, "The lass does live here, and she is very comely," for the blessed maiden was indeed uncommonly handsome. Then the elder said jestingly, "Call for her, that I may amuse myself with her this night."

The innkeeper called Mary, and she came to her uncle. When the saint saw her bedecked as a harlot, he could scarcely hold back his tears, but he constrained himself so that she would not recognize him and flee. They sat down together and began to drink, and that wondrous man made merry with her. Mary took him in her arms, but when she began to kiss him, she smelt the fragrance that came forth from his pure body, which had been mortified by numerous ascetic labors. She called to mind the past when she lived in abstinence, and she sighed and wept, saying, "O woe is me!"

The innkeeper said to her, "Mary, you have now been with us for two years, and never have I heard you sigh thus and say such things. What is it that troubles you?" Mary answered, "I would be happy if I had died before I came here!" Not wishing her to recognize him, the blessed Abramius said to Mary sharply, "Ah, you only remembered your sins when you came to me!" Then Abramius took out his gold piece, gave it to the innkeeper, and said, "Friend, make us a fine supper, that I may sport with this wench tonight, for I have come a long way for her sake."

O the divine wisdom and spiritual discernment of the godly one! O the condescension which he showed her! He who in fifty years as a monk had not once eaten his fill of bread or drank his share of water now eats flesh and drinks wine, in order to save a lost soul. Even the ranks of the holy angels in heaven marveled at the wisdom, compassion, and good judgment of that blessed father. He ate meat and drank wine to snatch a drowning soul from the defilement of sin. O surpassing wisdom! O understanding beyond measure!

After they had eaten and made merry, the maiden said to Abramius, "Sir, let us go and lie upon my bed, that we may sleep." The saint said, "Very well." When they

entered the chamber, Abramius saw a large bed, thickly spread with covers, and he sat down upon it. Then he said to Mary, "Close the door. Come here and remove my shoes." Mary locked the door and sat down beside the saint. He said to her, "Come closer to me."

Abramius took hold of Mary firmly so that she could not flee, removed the hood from his head, and kissed her. Weeping, he said, "Mary, my child, do you not recognize me? Am I not he who reared you? What has become of you, my child? Who has brought you to ruin? Where is the angelic habit you once wore, my daughter? What has become of your abstinence and the tears you once shed? What of your vigils and your sleeping upon the ground? You have fallen from the heights of heaven into this wretched pit. O my child! Why did you not tell me when you fell into sin? My beloved friend Ephraim and I would have taken your labors of repentance upon ourselves. Why have you brought me to such grief? Can you not see the sorrow into which you have cast me? My child, who except God alone is without sin?" When Mary heard this, she became like a lifeless stone in his arms, stricken with fear and shame. Then the blessed one said, "Have you nothing to say to me, my child Mary? Have you nothing to say to me, O my heart? I will answer for you, my child, on the day of judgment; I will take the penance for your sins upon myself."

The saint continued to entreat her thus until midnight, weeping and exhorting her. Little by little she took courage and said to him tearfully, "I cannot bear to look upon you because of the shame of my face. How dare I pray to God when my lips are so defiled?"

Abramius said to her, "Child, may your sin be upon me! May God require recompense for your sin from my hands! Only heed me, and let us return to our cell. I know that Ephraim will also pray to God for you, my daughter. Show mercy upon my old age, O my heart. Come now, child, depart with me."

Mary answered him thus: "If you are certain that I can repent and that God will accept my prayer, I will come, falling down before your holiness. I kiss the soles of your sacred feet, for you have shown great compassion for me by coming here to lead me away from this vile and unclean place." She then placed her head upon his feet and wept through the night, crying, "How can I make amends for all my sins, O Master!"

When morning dawned, Abramius said to the girl, "Arise; let us be gone." She said to him, "I have some gold and clothing here. What would you have me do with them?" Said the blessed one, "Leave it all here, for it is the devil's portion."

Without delay they departed. The saint set Mary on the horse and led her away, walking before her. As they went on their way, the blessed one rejoiced in his heart

like a shepherd who has found his lost sheep and taken it upon his shoulders. Reaching his dwelling, Abramius immediately shut her in the inner cell. She put on a hair shirt, and calling upon God's help, fervently devoted herself to monastic labors. Weeping and fasting, guarding herself in meekness and humility, she gave herself over to repentance with much zeal. Such was her penitence and such her prayer that our repentance in comparison seems but a shadow, and our prayer to be nothing whatsoever. And the compassionate God, Who does not will that any man should perish but desires that all come to repentance, had mercy upon His handmaiden, whose penitence was true; and He forgave her sins. Moreover, as a sign of the remission of her sins, Mary was granted the grace to heal the illnesses of those who had recourse to her.

The blessed Abramius lived for ten more years. Seeing Mary's great repentance, her tears, fasting, labors, and her fervent prayer to the Lord, he was consoled and gave glory to God. He was seventy years old when he reposed in the Lord. After his death almost all the inhabitants of the city assembled to approach his precious body, through which healing was bestowed on the infirm.

Christ's ewe-lamb Mary lived in great abstinence for five years after the repose of her uncle. She prayed to God tearfully day and night so that many heard the voice of her weeping and boundless lamentation as they passed by her cell. They would stop and marvel, giving glory to God. Such was the perfect repentance by which the blessed Mary pleased God! She reposed in peace, and now, having shed copious tears, she rejoices with the saints, who exult in the Lord. To Him be glory unto the ages. Amen. *(from The Great Collection of the Lives of the Saints, Vol. 2: October, compiled by St. Demetrius of Rostov)*

Martyr Anastasia the Roman As A Model for Our Lives

By Protopresbyter Fr. George Papavarnavas

She was born and lived in Rome in the third century under Emperor Decius. After settling in a monastery as a nun she was arrested, courageously confessed her faith, and after terrible tortures she completed her life in a martyric way.

While she was alive she was a benefactor to people with her holy life and her prayer was pleasing to God. After her death she became even more of a benefactor and consoler. She has a living presence to those who piously run to her intercessions. Her sacred Relics, which exude the fragrance of the Holy Spirit, are a source of healing and treatment of various diseases, both of the soul and body.

When I, as a young student, first visited the Holy Mountain with my friends and in particular Gregoriou Monastery, the fathers offered to us the sacred Relics of the Monastery, that we may venerate them and receive their blessing. These are the fragrant flowers of the Garden of the Panagia and one of the most valuable gifts the

Athonite fathers offer to pilgrims. Among the other sacred Relics, I also remember that of the Venerable Martyr Anastasia the Roman, who is among the triad of patron saints of the Monastery (together with Saint Nicholas the Bishop Myra in Lycea and the Venerable Gregory the founder of the Monastery). Besides the fragrance of her sacred Relic there remained etched in my memory the stories of the fathers about her miraculous (which for them were done at critical times) interventions, and especially how the Saint is for them a "refuge in afflictions", a firm protector and consolation.

When she was arrested and martyred she was young in age, but she was well beyond her age in wisdom and a valiant spirit. She did not bend before cruel tortures, and after the cutting off of her breasts they tore her flesh with fire-heated iron. She remained rigid until it came to the point that they cut off her head.

Her holy life, admirable martyrdom and great love that manifests itself over time to those who rely on her, as well as the hymns of our Church, give us the occasion to emphasize the following:

The Venerable Martyr, like all the saints, had pure thoughts. Through asceticism and the observance of the commandments of the Gospel she was purified and through the optical part of the soul, the nous, she was able to discern the uncreated energies of the Grace of God from created demonic energies. She learned not to hold on to and entertain impure thoughts (*logoismoi*), but turned them away before they entered her nous, and from there they would have entered the heart and turned to action.

Logoismoi are thoughts combined with images, which with the help of imagination and the passions captivate the nous. Care is needed that they do not enter the nous, but that they remain in the reasonable part of the soul. First one holds on to the good logoismoi and removes the evil ones by turning them into good ones. But then it is desirable to not entertain even good logoismoi, because they may not be completely free from passionate concepts.

Victory against the devil and sin or on the contrary our defeat and enslavement, begin with logoismoi. Whoever emerges victorious in the area of the logoismoi, can progress to higher levels of the spiritual life. This is why the Holy Fathers call the fight against logoismoi the art of arts and science of sciences. Saint Anastasia did not deny Christ or sacrifice to idols, but she conquered and wiped out the tyrants by remaining constant in her faith as a steadfast pillar, because she did not lose the fight against the logoismoi.

The struggle with logoismoi is among the most important chapters in the spiritual life. This influences not only our spiritual progress and salvation, but also our way of life and daily behavior, because virtue, as well as evil, have social implications.

Anyone tormented by logoiismo and is unable to find peace by himself, negatively affects the community around them, since it is not possible to find it also with others. Whatever happens daily around us we must accept with good and simple logoiismo, without delving into complex processes, of the type that ask *how* and *why* and *perhaps this* and *perhaps that*, which complicate matters worse and create problems out of nothing. The simplicity of which the Apostle Paul speaks is not unconnected with the logoiismo and are a true wealth, "enriched unto all simplicity". Victory in the field of logoiismo valorizes man on the social level, and primarily leads him to a living communion with God. (*fr. 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 – Saint Luke 8:26-39 EOB

At that time, they sailed to the country of the Gadarenes, which is opposite Galilee. When Jesus stepped ashore, a man from the town who had had demons for a long time came to meet him. This man wore no clothes, and he did not live in a house, but in the tombs. When he saw Jesus, he cried out and fell down before him. With a loud voice, he said, "What do I have to do with you, Jesus, you Son of the Most High God? I beg you, do not torment me!" (For Jesus was commanding the unclean spirit to come out of the man). The unclean spirit had often seized the man and he was kept under guard, bound with chains and fetters. [But he had been] breaking the chains and was driven by the demon into deserted places. Jesus asked him, "What is your name?" He replied, "Legion," for many demons had entered into him. And they begged him not to command them to go into the abyss. Now, there was a large herd of swine feeding on the mountain, and the demons begged him that he would allow them to enter into those [pigs]; and Jesus allowed them. The demons came out from the man and entered into the pigs. Then the herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and [the swine] were drowned. When the people who fed the pigs saw what had happened, they fled and told the story in the city and in the countryside. Then, people went out to see what had happened.

They came to Jesus and found the man from whom the demons had gone out. He was sitting at Jesus' feet, clothed and in his right mind; and they were afraid. Those who had seen it told the people how the demon-possessed man had been delivered. All the people of the surrounding country of the Gadarenes asked Jesus to depart from them, because they were extremely afraid. So he got into the boat and went back. The man from whom the demons had gone out begged to go with Jesus, but Jesus sent him away, saying: "Return to your house and proclaim what great things God has done for you." So the man went on his way, proclaiming throughout the whole city what great things Jesus had done for him.

Homily on the Beatitudes 1

By Metropolitan Hierotheos of Nafpaktos and Agiou Vlasiou

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 5:3).

In this [series of] homilies we will interpret the eight Beatitudes, which Christ said at the beginning of His activities, in the region of Galilee, on the renowned Mount of Beatitudes, according to Matthew the Evangelist.

This sermon of Christ reminds us of when the Prophet Moses went up Mount Sinai at God's command, and there encountered the pre-incarnate Word in the darkness, from Whom he received the commandments, enabling the Israelite people to distinguish truth from falsehood, God from the devil, the path towards truth from the path towards error.

In the Old Testament the pre-incarnate Word gave the Ten Commandments, because people had been led astray by the devil in Paradise, falling out of communion with God, plunging into deep darkness, and this is why the written law was needed, so that people could come to know the will of God. Now, in the New Testament, the incarnate Word gives the perfect law, not to replace the old Law of Moses, but to supplement it and fulfill it. The Sermon on the Mount begins with the Beatitudes, in which Christ shows us the path towards deification and sanctification. There are nine phrases that begin with the word "blessed", but the last two have a uniform meaning, so that, according to interpreters, there are in fact eight Beatitudes of Christ.

The word "blessed" can be interpreted as "happy", but not happiness as a material or biological state. According to the Fathers of the Church, blessedness is the source of goodness, of unspeakable and incomprehensible good things, the true Light. When Christ praises someone, it means He establishes them as a model of life. And in fact He tells us to imitate them and be like them. Thus, the Beatitudes of Christ are not optional propositions, but commands. That is, when Christ says "blessed", it means that we should apply that thing which is praised as being blessed.

In the first beatitude, poverty of spirit is praised. "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven," or blessed are those who feel their spiritual poverty, who sense they are poor before God. Essentially, blessed are those who are humble in soul. With the word "spirit" is meant "soul". Also, the result of this state of being is determined, which is the participation in the kingdom of heaven. In this beatitude we observe, therefore, two specific points: First, that the "poor in spirit" are proclaimed blessed, and second those who have this gift possess the kingdom of heaven.

The "poor in spirit" are the humble and broken in soul, because they feel their spiritual poverty. They see themselves as not having what God wants for His creation. "For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works" (Eph. 2:10). We were created to live in the Light, to live according to God, to have spoken communication with God, to converse with Him as a friend does with another friend, just as Moses spoke with God atop Mount Sinai. When we sense that we were created for another state and know with the darkening of our nous we don't have communion with God and thus are spiritually poor, then the beatitude of Christ begins to operate in our hearts.

This in actuality is true humility, not just humble formalities and humble words, but the sense that we are far from our true destination, from God. This sense creates brokenness in the soul, which is why, when Christ says, "blessed are the poor in spirit," in reality its as if He is saying: "Blessed are the broken in soul." By placing this beatitude first, Christ wants to correct us spiritually, because Adam fell due to pride, due to a feeling of self-sufficiency and arrogance which removes us from a divine life.

It is important to know that those who feel their spiritual poverty by the energy of divine Grace - just as we feel our face unclean when light shines on it - have within themselves the kingdom of heaven. In Holy Scripture, the kingdom of heaven is the communion of man with God, with the Light of divine life. Thus, with our spiritual humility the kingdom of God begins to operate within us.

The first beatitude of Christ is the basis of the spiritual life, and from it comes all spiritual good things. The self-sufficiency observed in many Christians is an example of the darkening of the nous and pride, proof that one has not begun to live spiritually. While the sense of spiritual poverty, humility, is the beginning of the spiritual life. *(from johnsanidopoulos.com)*

A Word From the Holy Fathers

Lest some suppose, from what has been said by us, that we say that whatever happens, happens by a fatal necessity, because it is foretold as known beforehand,

this too we explain. We have learned from the prophets, and we hold it to be true, that punishments, and chastisements, and good rewards, are rendered according to the merit of each man's actions. Since if it be not so, but all things happen by fate, neither is anything at all in our own power. For if it be fated that this man, e.g., be good, and this other evil, neither is the former meritorious nor the latter to be blamed. And again, unless the human race have the power of avoiding evil and choosing good by free choice, they are not accountable for their actions, of whatever kind they be. But that it is by free choice they both walk uprightly and stumble, we thus demonstrate. We see the same man making a transition to opposite things. Now, if it had been fated that he were to be either good or bad, he could never have been capable of both the opposites, nor of so many transitions. But not even would some be good and others bad, since we thus make fate the cause of evil, and exhibit her as acting in opposition to herself; or that which has been already stated would seem to be true, that neither virtue nor vice is anything, but that things are only reckoned good or evil by opinion; which, as the true word shows, is the greatest impiety and wickedness. But this we assert is inevitable fate, that they who choose the good have worthy rewards, and they who choose the opposite have their merited awards. For not like other things, as trees and quadrupeds, which cannot act by choice, did God make man: for neither would he be worthy of reward or praise did he not of himself choose the good, but were created for this end; nor, if he were evil, would he be worthy of punishment, not being evil of himself, but being able to be nothing else than what he was made.'

– Martyr Justin the Philosopher, *First Apology* 43

Also Commemorated Today

Venerable [Abramius](#), archimandrite of Rostov (Valaam) (1073).

New Hieromartyrs [Nicholas](#) priest and with him [Cosma](#), Victor, Naum, Philip, John, Paul, Andrew, Paul, Basil, Alexis, John and Virgin-martyr Agaphia (1918).

New Hieromartyr [John](#) priest (1930).

New Hieromartyr [Eugene priest](#) (1937).

Virgin-martyr [Anastasia](#) (after 1937).

New Hieromartyr [Leonid](#) priest (1941).

Martyrs [Claudius](#), Asterius, Neon, and Theonilla, of Aegae in Cilicia (285).

Venerable [Anna](#) (known as Euphemianus) of Constantinople (826).

Venerable Abramius, recluse of the Kiev Caves (12th-13th c.).

Venerable-martyr Anastasius.

Venerable Ermelindis ([Ermelinda](#)), hermitess (6th c.) (Neth.).

Martyr [Savvas](#) the General

New Martyr [Athanasius](#) of Sparta, at Muatanach (1653) (Greek).

Martyr [Timothy](#) of Esphigmenou Monastery, Mt. Athos (1820) (Greek).

Martyr [Melitene](#) of Marcionopolis (Greek).
Martyrs [Cyril](#), Menas, and Menaeus of the Viglention quarter of Constantinople (Greek).
St. Rostislav, prince of Moravia, Czechoslovakia (870).
St. [Serapion](#) of Zarzma, Georgia (900) (Georgia).
St. [Colman](#) of [Kilmacduagh](#), Bishop (632)
St. [Kennera](#) of [Scotland](#), Virgin Martyr (5th c.)
St. [Bond](#) (Baldus), hermit in Sens (France)(7th c.)
St. [Elfleda](#) of Ramsey, Abbess (1000)
Martyr [Eusebia](#) of Bergamo (c. 303)
Martyrs [Hyacinth](#), Quintus, Felician and Lucius of Lucania (Italy)
St. [John](#), bishop of Autun (Burgundy)
St. [Sigolinus](#) (Sighelm) of Stavelot, abbot (Belgium)(c. 670)
St. [Stephen](#), Bishop of Caiazzo (Italy)(1023)
St. [Terence](#) of Metz (France)(520)
St. [Theodore](#) (Theudar), abbot in Vienne (c.575)

Social Team for November 5

Team 4 – Vallandingham, Andrew and Katy Matthews, Joseph Frey . Thank you!

Pray for our priests!

Prayer is powerful, and we need more priests in our Diocese. So, this year, Metropolitan Gregory is asking that each one of us pray daily that we have more vocations to the priesthood. He also wants us to pray by name for our clergy and seminarians--they aren't sick! The clergy that we are to pray for are: Fr. Kevin Greenwood, Fr. Andrew Gromm, and Deacon Donald Koch. The seminarians are: Deacon Peter Sodini, Nicholas Woroby, Seamus Murray, Samuel Loposky, Timothy Paproski, Nicolas Laliberte and Ignatios Leonardo. We started this two years ago, and we already have more seminarians! I can't wait to see what happens next!

Prayer for vocations

Master of all, You promised us, “I will be with you always, even until the very end of the world,” and You have taught, “I will build My Church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” Mindful of this pledge, we beseech Your great goodness to inspire men to the Holy Priesthood, the service of Your Holy Orthodox Church, so that she may properly be able to fulfill Your will for Your people in this age. There are children to baptize, the sick to heal, and the dying to care for. There is the Bread of Life to distribute, and the Word of God to teach. There are sins to forgive, and charity to be done in Your Name. Send Your Church

in this hour and in every age “vessels of clay” to be instruments of Your presence. Hear us, O Lord, and have mercy.

Prayer for the priesthood

O Lord Jesus Christ, Good Shepherd of Your sheep, light the fire of ardent love in the hearts of all Your priests, that they may ever and in all things seek only Your glory. Remember especially, Lord, our Metropolitan Gregory, and our spiritual father Joseph, who are laboring in Your vineyard for the salvation of all those whom You have entrusted to them. Remember also, O Lord, our priests Fr. Kevin Greenwood, Fr. Andrew Gromm, and Deacon Donald Koch, and seminarians Deacon Peter Sodini, Nicholas Woroby, Seamus Murray, Samuel Loposky, Timothy Paproski, Nicolas Laliberte and Ignatios Leonardo. Make their lives as holy as the word they preach. Keep them from being discouraged. Hear their prayers for our salvation. Give them wisdom and courage to proclaim Your truth. Make them priests after Your own heart. For You are a merciful God who loves us, and to You we give glory, together with Your eternal Father and Your all-holy, good and life-giving Spirit, now and ever and forever. Amen.

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

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In Your Prayers – Please Remember... His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch BARTHOLOMEW, His Eminence Metropolitan GREGORY, Fr. Joseph & Family, His Grace Bishop Neofitos of Nyeri & Mt. Kenya, Bennett family, Tatyana & Slava Chumak & family, Luke & Marlena Cooper, Roberta Corson, 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.)