

# SOBORNOST

**St. Thomas the Apostle Orthodox Church**

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*American Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Diocese*

*ECUMENICAL PATRIARCHATE  
OF CONSTANTINOPLE*

## SERVICES

**Wednesday: Lay Vespers 6:30 PM**

**Saturday: Vespers 5 PM**

**Sunday: Matins 8:45 AM | Sunday  
School 9:30 AM | Divine Liturgy 10 AM**

**December 31, 2023 –**

**Sunday After & Apodosis of the  
Nativity | Sunday before Theophany | Ven. Melania of Rome**

**JESUS CHRIST: THE ETERNAL VICTOR**

The Gospel reading of this Sunday describes the flight of the infant Jesus to Egypt, the slaughtering of the infants by Herod and the return of Jesus to the city of Nazareth. This briefly says that the story of the God-man is tragic from His first days. What is more tragic, however, is the condition of the chosen people who give chase to their Savior. Nevertheless, God interferes and directs the steps of Joseph. Does this alleviate human responsibility? Of course it doesn't.

**The position of Joseph is that of every spiritual person**

The beginning of the life of the Lord on the earth teaches us many things. It teaches us that we must expect temptations and plotting from the beginning. What does this mean? It simply means that when someone is deemed worthy of undertaking a spiritual ministry, he should expect tragedies and perils. He should not, however, be upset. He must accept everything courageously, knowing that this is exactly the course of the spiritual life. It has temptations conjoined to it, because these "good" temptations weave the life of the righteous.

St. John Chrysostom says that the temptations are not met with the strength of the body, but with the disposition of the soul. This is why the sky is not as bright with



its captivating reflections and colors, as the souls of those persons who endure their temptations by the grace of their Lord and transform them into joy and spiritual life experiences. The road towards sanctity is not inhibited by any temptation or human obstacle. This is because we are not alone, but have God inside us and around us, who opens the way of Divine knowledge. This is the road that leads to the beautiful Gate of Paradise.

### **The position of Herod is that of every unjust person**

St. John Chrysostom, interpreting the rage of Herod on account of the mockery of the Magi, says that when a soul is ungrateful and incurable, she does not retreat before anything and especially does not accept that she seeks after unfeasible things. Human beings, when they reject the faith and remove from their souls the fear of God, not only dare, but put to practice everything. An ungodly human being becomes a wild beast, and for this reason, woe to them who may fall into the hands of ungodly persons.

Since Herod acted unjustly, why did God allow this? In the Old Testament, Israel is the son of God, whose position has now been taken by Jesus Christ. In the last analysis the chosen people of God is now restricted to the one and unique Person, Jesus Christ. It is from Jesus Christ that a new people will be born, whom God will lead out of Egypt, according to the prophesy of Hosea, which now finds its full meaning. God, then, allowed this because the plan of the Divine Economy is never aborted.

When the righteous is treated unjustly, then, we ask, why does God allow this? The answer is given by St. John Chrysostom: “Whatever we may suffer unjustly in the hands of another, God will count this injustice either to cover some of our sins or to give us a reward.” In other words for all the injustices which we endure, we either wipe out sins, or earn brighter rewards if we have no sins. This is why we never put such questions to God, especially if we want our faith to be like that of Abraham, and to have the privilege to serve actively the will of God.

### **In the Person of Christ there is everyone who is treated unjustly**

Jesus Christ was pursued from the very beginning and he had to flee from his place because of the murderous fury of Herod. The one who left was He who would save His people according to the order that Joseph received from the Angel. What does this mean for us? It means that we must never be anxious, when what is done to us is contrary to what we expect. God often fulfils His plans by contradictory events, giving us in this way the greatest proof of His power. Let us never forget the saying, “Mine is the retribution. I will recompense, says the Lord.” In other words, to God belongs both the retribution and the recompense (Heb. 10:30).

Our Lord Jesus Christ, by becoming man and going through all the events of the Divine Economy “came out as a victor to accomplish victory.” In other words, He was given the crown of victory, and departed as a victor in order to accomplish new victories. One of these, which is the most substantial, will be the one in which God will come to dwell among the people for ever, and will wipe out every tear from their eyes (Rev. 21:3-4). “O Lord may Your kingdom come.” AMEN! (*from johnsanidopoulos.com*)

### **Venerable Melania the Roman**

*Not with a physical hand and ink Melania, did Christ record you among the living after death. \*\*\* On the thirty-first Melania was taken away from life.*

This Saint lived during the reign of Emperor Honorius (393-423), son of Theodosius the Great, and was from a wealthy and illustrious and glorious family. Because she loved the Lord with all her soul, she preferred to live a life of virginity. Her parents however joined her in marriage against her will with a man. [*She married her paternal cousin, Valerius Pinianus, at the age of fourteen. - Ed.*] By this she became the mother of two children. Later the parents lost their children to death. For this reason the blessed one left the city of Rome, and went to live in its suburb, and there she pursued every form of asceticism and virtue. [*Melania and Pinianus left Rome in 408, living a monastic life near Messina (Sicily) for two years. In 410, they traveled to Africa, where they befriended Augustine of Hippo and devoted themselves to a life of piety and charitable works. Together they founded a convent, of which Melania became Mother Superior, and cloister of which Pinianus took charge. - Ed.*] She took care of the sick, received strangers who came to her, and visited those in prison or exile. After this she sold all her many belongings and properties, and gathered from them twelve myriads of gold, namely one hundred and twenty thousand florins. These she distributed to churches and monasteries.

Initially, she ate once every two days. After these things, she fasted five days a week, eating only on Saturdays and Sundays. The renowned one was in the habit to exercise every form of asceticism with much knowledge and discernment, and produced calligraphy that was very beautiful and artistic. Later she went to Africa, where she lived for seven years. Having distributed most of her wealth, she went to Alexandria. [*Melania had "vast domains in Sicily" and also held land in Britain. Moreover, she owned grand estates in Iberia, Africa, Numidia, Mauretania and Italy. Gerontius her biographer describes one of her estates as follows: "On one side lay the sea and on the other some woodland containing a variety of animals and game, so that when she was bathing in the pool she could see ships passing by and game animals in the woods... the property included sixty large houses, each of them with four hundred agricultural slaves." Thus, this one property contained*

*24,000 slaves. - Ed.] From there she went to Jerusalem. There the blessed one enclosed herself in a cell. [In 417, Melania and Pinianus traveled to Palestine by way of Alexandria, living in a hermitage near the Mount of Olives, where Melania founded a second convent. After the death of Pinianus c. 420, Melania built a cloister for men, and a church, where she spent the remainder of her life. She reposed in 434. Melania is known as "the Younger" because her grandmother, Melania the Elder, is also considered a Saint and it is meant to distinguish them. - Ed.] By her example, she drew towards a similar form of asceticism ninety virgins and nuns, to whom she gave without ceasing the needful things of life. Because she was overcome by pain on her side, she became very ill. Therefore she invited the Bishop of Eleutheropolis, and received from him Divine Communion. Bidding farewell to all the sisters, she departed voicing as her last words those of Job: "As it seemed good to the Lord, so has it come to pass" (Job 1:21 LXX). Then the renowned one immediately delivered her soul into the hands of God. (from [johnsanidopoulos.com](http://johnsanidopoulos.com))*

### **Today's Epistle Lesson – St. Paul's Letter to the Galatians 1:11-19 EOB**

Brethren, as regards the Good News which I preached, I proclaimed this to you, brethren, that it is not of human origin. I did not receive it from man and I was not taught [this Good News] by man, but it came to me through a revelation of Jesus Christ. You have heard about how I used to live in Judaism, how I persecuted the Church of God beyond measure, and how I ravaged it. I advanced in the Jewish religion beyond many of my own age among my countrymen, as I was more extremely zealous for the traditions of my forefathers. But when it was the good pleasure of God, (who had set me apart from my mother's womb and called me through his grace, to reveal his Son in me so that I might preach him among the Gentiles), I did not immediately confer with flesh and blood: I did not go up to Jerusalem to visit those who were apostles before me, but I went away into Arabia. Later on, I returned to Damascus. Then, after three years, I did go up to Jerusalem to visit Peter and I stayed with him for fifteen days. However, I did not see any of the other apostles, except James, 'the Lord's brother.'

### **Today's Gospel Lesson – Matthew 2:13-23 EOB**

After they had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, "Arise! Take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt. Stay there until I tell you, for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him." So Joseph arose and took the young child and his mother by night, and departed into Egypt. They remained there until the death of Herod, so what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet might be fulfilled: 'Out of Egypt I have called my son.'

When Herod saw that he had been outwitted by the wise men, he became extremely angry. He dispatched [his men] and killed all the male children who lived in Bethlehem and all the surrounding countryside, two years old and under, according to the exact time which he had learned from the wise men. And so, what had been spoken by the prophet Jeremiah was fulfilled: 'A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation, a weeping and great mourning: Rachel weeping for her children. She would not be comforted, because they are no more.' But when Herod died, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream when he was in Egypt, saying: "Arise! Take the young child and his mother, and return the land of Israel; those who were trying to kill the young child are dead." Joseph arose and took the young child and his mother, and they came into the land of Israel. However, when Joseph heard that Archelaus was ruling over Judea in the place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. Being warned in a dream, he withdrew into the region of Galilee. He thus arrived and lived in a city called Nazareth, so that what had been spoken through the prophets might be fulfilled, "He will be called a Nazarene."

## **The Church and Her Mysteries**

By Metropolitan Hierotheos of Nafpaktos and Agiou Vlasiou

These short sermons, my beloved brethren, will refer to the great subject of the Mysteries of our Church and will briefly present the main points of each mystery, both to emphasize their value and to participate in them. Today's introductory sermon will address the topic "The Church and Her Mysteries".

We have repeatedly emphasized that the Church is not a human organization but a God-man organism, not a human association but the God-man Body of Christ. Everything that happens in the Church is full of the Grace of God and the entirety of life in the Church is blessed. Even a prayer that one addresses, as a member of the Church, to God, with compunction and contrition, is a cause of blessing and experience, to varying degrees, of the Grace of God. It has been said that there are Seven Mysteries, namely Baptism, Chrismation, Divine Communion, Confession, Priesthood, Marriage and Unction, of which four are obligatory and the other three are optional. But the truth is that there are three basic Mysteries of the Church, namely Baptism which is called the introductory mystery, through which we enter the ecclesiastical life, Chrismation which is the seal of the gift of the Holy Spirit, and Divine Communion through which we partake of the Body and the Blood of Christ. Saint Nicholas Cabasilas says that Baptism is the spiritual birth of man, Chrismation is movement, and Divine Communion is life.

Finally, we must emphasize that the mysteries are the taps through which we receive the water of Grace of the Holy Triune God, and of course we participate in

God's gifts according to our spiritual state, that is, according to the degree of the purifying, illuminating and deifying energy of God.

Saint Nicholas Cabasilas writes that the Church is "shown in the mysteries", that is, the Church is revealed through the mysteries, which means that through the mysteries we experience that we are members of the Church. Saint Gregory Palamas writes that the Church feeds us as infants with her two breasts, which are Baptism and the Divine Eucharist. Without them we cannot live, nor can we claim to be true members of the Church.

And, of course, we must be well aware that our participation in these mysteries has preconditions, that is, to have faith in the divinity of Christ and our salvation, proper spiritual preparation and a sense that we are members of the Church of Christ. We must partake of the Mysteries of the Church to be true members and to feel that we belong to a spiritual family. *(from johnsanidopoulos.com)*

## A Word From the Holy Fathers

The education of children must begin from infancy, so that the child's mental faculties may, from their very first appearance, be directed right from the beginning toward the good, the gentle, the true, and may be removed from the evil, the obscene, and the false. This age can be regarded as a most immovable foundation upon which the child's moral and intellectual formation will be built. This is why Phocylides says, "You must while he is yet a child instruct him in good works, for it is from childhood, as from a starting line, that a man sets off on the race he is to run in life." And Basil the Great declares, "The soul, while it is still easily moulded and soft, while it is still like wax that is easily melted and that easily receives the impression of the shapes that are pressed upon it, must straightway and from the beginning be urged on to every exercise of virtues; so that, when the faculty of reason has come and the habit of discrimination has appeared, the soul's course may proceed from first principles and from the impressions of piety that have been handed down to it, with the faculty of reason suggesting that which is useful and the moral character producing an ease of accomplishing it." And who, indeed, does not acknowledge that those first impressions that have come during childhood prove indelible? Who doubts that in early childhood influences are so powerfully impressed on the child's tender soul, that they remain vivid throughout his whole life?

As educators for this age nature has ordained the parents and, especially, the mothers. It is necessary, then, because of this lofty duty of theirs, this duty of the educator, that we instruct these mothers suitably and raise them carefully, for they will serve their own children as images and models – images and models of which

the children will become casts. To such an extent does the child imitate the virtues or the faults of his mother, and likewise her voice and manners and moral character and deportment, that one can quite appropriately compare children to the brass disks of the phonograph, which first receive the foot-prints of the voice and then send the voice out again with the same pitch, the same expression, and the same color with which it was originally articulated. Every gesture, every word, every movement, and every action of the mother becomes the gesture and word and expression and movement and action of the child. This is why Asterios (*Homily 5 on Matthew*) says, "For one of the children preserves the likeness of his mother's voice, another assumes the greater part of her temperament, another with respect to the state of his moral character has been given the shape of her who bore him." By constant togetherness with the child and by the continuous display of the same dispositions, the mother influences the child's soul and moral character, and she is the first to give the first push toward the good.

The mother by a single glance, by a single kiss, by her sweet voice and her delicate caresses, can immediately arouse in the child's heart the leaning and inclination toward the good. Likewise, by a single disapproving glance, by a single tear falling on her cheeks, by a single expression suggestive of her heart's sorrow, she can remove the child from the most destructive danger of the heart. The child, nurtured in his mother's bosom and warmed in his mother's embrace, begins to love before he learns the concept of love, and he begins to subordinate his will to the moral law before he learns the concept of the moral law, and it is the mother alone who is most suited to arousing in the child's heart his first conception of God. Because of this, Basil the Great says (*Letter 223*), "The conception of God which I received in childhood from my blessed mother – it was this conception, brought to maturity, that I had within myself. For I did not change from one set of opinions to another in the maturation of my reason, but rather I brought to completion the beginnings handed down to me by her." And the greatest of modern educators, Pestalozzi, assigning all the child's religious upbringing to the mothers, exclaims, "I believed in my mother. Her heart showed me God. My God is my mother's God. The God of my heart is the God of my mother's heart. Mother, mother! You showed me God in your instructions, and I found Him in my obedience. Mother, mother! If I should forget God, I must even forget you."

But just as every good action, every good word, and every good disposition of the mother constitute the corner-stone of the subsequent good actions, words, and dispositions of the child, so too do every bad action, word, and disposition of the mother contain the corruptive seeds of the subsequent bad actions, words, and deeds of the child, wherefore the child turns out to be such as his mother is. If, then, the mother's soul is ugly and malignant, or dark, or corrupt, or hard and

harsh, and her inclinations evil, and her conduct scandalous and indecent, or if she tends toward irreverence, or toward anger, or toward frenzied passions and hatreds, there will quickly sprout up from the child as well the buds of these malignant vices. But if, on the contrary, the mother's soul is godlike, pure, cheerful, innocent, and full of the fear of God, and her inclinations generous and holy, and her dispositions peaceful, God-loving and mankind-loving, then the child's soul too, mirrored in such a mirror and imitating her unawares, turns out like her and, as time goes on, exhibits the sprouting of the good seeds. This is why, when the great Napoleon asked an eminent educator, Henriette Campan, "What does France need in order to acquire good and honorable men?" this most thoughtful woman replied to the monarch, "Mothers." "Then," said the great man, "appoint enough such women for this great national purpose."

Because of the great influence they possess over their children, mothers can fashion them according to their own character, just as the potter fashions the clay in accordance with his own design. Concerning the easy moldability of childhood, Diogenes used to say the following, that "the upbringing of children is like the moldings of potters; for just as potters, while the clay is soft, shape it and proportion it as they wish, but are no longer able to mold it after it has been fired, so too the young, having been educated without toil, when they have become full-grown, become incapable of being remolded." And Plutarch (in *On the Education of Children*) declares, "Youth is a thing easily molded and pliant, and lessons are readily absorbed by their still-soft souls." During the child's tender years, then, mothers can more effectively and more profoundly influence the child's soul and thought and emotion and mind and imagination and moral character, since in the subsequent years, as the child's heart hardens, education becomes, if not impossible, exceedingly difficult, as the divine Chrysostom rightly declares: "You should have anticipated these faults from the beginning and, when he was docile and still very young, you should have bridled him with strictness, accustomed him to the performance of duties, brought him to order, arrested the diseases of his soul. You should have cut the thorns down then, when the work was easier, when, being of a tenderer age, they would have been uprooted more easily, and the passions would not, neglected and growing, have become hard to work. This is why the Scripture says bow down their neck from their youth (Ecclesiasticus 7:23), for thus may the upbringing of children proceed more easily" (Chrysostom, *Homily on 1st Timothy 5:9*).

Accordingly, mothers, both on account of their lofty vocation and on account of their subjective value independent of this office, must receive from infancy the upbringing that befits them. And the upbringing that befits them is that which has as the object of its formation the mind and the heart, for these two things are the



two poles around which both the intellectual and the moral formation of the human person revolve. If one of the two is neglected, the person's formation turns out defective and impaired. The mind and the heart, although they are organs of a single soul, nevertheless require different means and manners of formation, for the heart, because of its intuition, belongs to the supernatural world, but the mind, because of its reason, belongs to the natural world. Because of this, each of the two must be instructed thoroughly in its proper truths. And their proper truths are these: of the mind, learning, but of the heart, religion. We must, then, give our girls both learning and religion, so that they too may pass these things on to their own children. Learning and religion are two bright lighthouses guiding seafaring man on the billowy course of his life and protecting him from every shipwreck and removing him from every dangerous reef. They are the two eyes of the soul, through which she looks out around her and without stumbling advances into happiness and salvation. They are the two spiritual organs that perfect a man and present him worthy of his lofty origin and of his lofty position in the world. Only thus formed can mothers present virtuous children, good citizens, and brave men. We have before us as radiant examples the mothers of all great and virtuous men. We have before us as radiant examples the mothers of the Holy Three Hierarchs Basil the Great, Gregory the Theologian, and John Chrysostom.

These mothers, desiring to educate their children as perfectly as possible and to polish their minds through Greek learning and knowledge, did not at all hesitate to entrust them to pagan teachers, so that they might be suitably developed intellectually. They considered the teachers' heterodoxy of no importance, because they had confidence in themselves, confidence that by their own example they had wholly channeled their own love for true learning and their fervent zeal for religion into their children's hearts. They recognized that nothing would be strong enough to shake their sons' religious principles and convictions, because these principles and convictions had been carefully built upon a rock! Consistent, then, with their convictions, Nonna and Emmelia, the good and noble mothers of Basil and Gregory, sent them off to Athens, to the hearth of learning and enlightenment, but the center also of idolatry, where the pagan religion was enthroned with all its magnificence. But their confidence was not disappointed, for the two young students, having alive in the hearth of their heart the fire of faith in Christ, remained uninfluenced during the whole period of their studies. For being neither shaken by the teaching of professors systematically waging war against Christianity, nor seduced by the magnificent ceremonies of the pagan religion, but remaining vigorous and lively in their religious convictions, they returned to their mothers, presenting themselves to them as a reward for their labor of child-rearing, for their motherly care, and for their virtue. And the reward was rich indeed, for

they were receiving their sons back as members of Christ, as members, that is, of themselves. For he that is not a member of Christ is not a member of a Christian mother either, for a Christian mother, being a member of Christ, cannot have a foreign member, a rotten member, a corrupt member. Had the sons wandered away, then, it would have meant their perdition! We can, therefore, fittingly call their sons' keeping of the faith in Christ a reward for them, a reward which would never have come about had the mothers not been formed in a Christian manner.

John's mother, too, the good and noble Anthusa, widowed at the age of twenty and having only one son, devoted herself entirely to his upbringing, valuing the attention paid to her son's upbringing above a second marriage. But likewise, when he who was most dear to her, her only-begotten son, had come of age and was in need of further education, this same woman did not hesitate to entrust him into the hands of a pagan teacher for the development of his intellectual powers. Her confidence in her faith was confidence in her child, for she knew that she had poured it all out into her beloved son. And she was not disappointed, for immediately after the completion of his studies, having briefly pursued the work of a teacher of rhetoric, John gave himself up to the service of the Church. Libanius, John's teacher, was greatly pained at his failure to convert John to his own religion, and, "Alas!" he exclaimed, "What manner of women there are among the Christians!" indicating by these words the cause of this failure. How truly beautiful! What radiant examples we have before us in these pious mothers! What wondrous images! What wondrous models! Who can deny that it is the mothers who produce great and virtuous men? This is why Rousseau says in his *Emile*, "Men wish always to be such as the women would wish them to be; if you wish the men to be great and virtuous, teach the women what greatness and virtue are." We must, then, form the mothers in accordance with these examples that lie before us, and we must begin this care from their childhood, so that we may be sure of the future fruitfulness and results.

It is necessary, then, that we form our daughters religiously and intellectually, so that we may present them worthy of their vocation. It is necessary, then, that reverent education and educated religion exist side by side, for these two things are the only sure provisions for traveling in this life, provisions that are able to help a man in manifold ways.

A one-sided upbringing is reprehensible and leads to the following two unseemly things: either to superstition or to contempt for the things of God. A plight such as these is the natural consequence and direct result of the kind of education that has been given.

Intellectual formation and religious formation are two trees of different kinds planted on the same ground, which need to receive equal attention and care for their parallel growth. For an unequal cultivation will bring about disproportionate growth, which will have as its result the increase of the one and its dominance and the withering of the other and its diminution. For if attention revolves around the mind only, sickness of the man's religious perception is unavoidable. But if our care revolves around religion only (and that not the educated kind), the intellectual faculties will wither and become dull. The result of the first situation will be irreligion and atheism, upon which follow boundless horrors; the result of the second, however, will be superstition, that curse of humanity, which, holding in its hands fire and the sword, threatens death to everyone who has a differing opinion. Such are the results of a one-sided education and the incomplete upbringing of mothers.

— St. Nectarios of Agina, *Nativity Message of 1935*

## **Saint Zoticus the Feeder of Orphans as a Model for Our Lives**

By Protopresbyter Fr. George Papavarnavas

Saint Zotikos came from a noble family and lived in the fourth century. He was raised in Rome, in an environment of great piety, and he received a wonderful education. From a young age he was distinguished for his great love towards his fellow man, whom he wanted to serve with the same feeling as if he was serving Christ Himself, whose commandments he tried to apply in their entirety. Constantine the Great honored him for his many gifts, and invited him to Constantinople-New Rome, along with other pious men, where he became a privileged co-worker of his.

Saint Zotikos showed great love for the poor, and especially orphans and abandoned children, whom he took care of like an affectionate father. But he also showed great love and affection for lepers, who, as is well known, were exiled and lived away from society isolated and despised. The Saint approached them without fear, helped them economically, and above all took care of them personally, strengthening and comforting them. The lepers loved him and considered him to be more than their guardian angel. Yet after the repose of Constantine the Great, his son Constantius did not honor the work of Saint Zotikos as he should have, and sadly he mistreated him, with the result that this holy man faced hardships and tribulations, which caused him to leave this vain world prematurely. After the repose of the Saint, however, Constantius sincerely repented, and to honor him he built a Leper Hospital, in which lepers found affection and love. Indeed he endowed this Foundation with many properties, estates and incomes so as not to deprive even a little these distressed people.

The example of Constantius was imitated later by other emperors, such as Constantine VII Porphyrogenitos (913-959), John Tzimiskes (969-976), and Romanos III (1028-1034), who cared for the existence and proper functioning of the Leper Hospital which, thanks to the initial efforts of Saint Zotikos, served numerous lepers and made their lives as humane as possible.

His life and disposition give us the opportunity to highlight the following:

Leprosy is an infectious disease and was until the middle of the last century incurable. Unfortunately, for many centuries this created a racist mentality among people, which created also too many problems for the families of patients and for society at large. The aversion to patients with the disease of leprosy resulted in the isolation of lepers, with all that it entails. That is, it separated married couples and even parents from their children, and children from their parents forever, since they usually never saw one another. It was, that is, a singular death, since lepers in their isolation were in fact the living dead. When they left their homes they said goodbye to their loved ones knowing that there was no chance for their return. That is, there was no way for them to come out of quarantine unless some sort of miracle was done, or if in the meantime a drug was developed that would cure leprosy. Faint hope always existed, since hope dies always at the end, however reality was harsh, since daily life was intolerable and inhumane. This is why they accepted manifestations of love from healthy people, whenever it occurred, as if it was manna from heaven.

Saint Zotikos, steeped in selfless love, which is not simply sentimental, but the fruit of the Holy Spirit who resided in his pure heart, exceeded the mindset of many who abhorred lepers and were living far off from them, and he did not just approach them and socialize with them, but nourished them personally, as did Basil the Great. This fact, moreover, reveals that there are people that do not fear death, because they have exceeded it in the limits of their own personal lives, and also because "perfect love casts out fear". This is why they abolished by their way of life every kind of racism that divides people and sterilizes love. It even shows that faith in the Triune God, who "is love", creates true people, who are truly a blessing for humanity.

Nowadays, of course, leprosy is cured, but the racist mentality has not disappeared and continues to exist in another form. That is, people may not be separated today between the healthy and those with the disease of leprosy, but they are differentiated between the healthy and those with HIV or AIDS, between "locals" and "outsiders", between "ours" and "theirs", between rich and poor, etc. This mindset is unlikely to disappear as long as people are not reborn spiritually by the

Grace of God and their own personal struggle, and it remains among us with all it entails, as long as a person is hermetically sealed to themselves and does not care for others. However, wherever one encounters people, true people that is, who are imbued with the spirit of sacrifice and selfless service for others, it affirms that there is abolished every form of discrimination and racist attitudes, for our fellow man is to be regarded as an image of Christ and as a true brother.

A true person is one who by the Grace of God and their own personal struggle transforms selfishness into selfless love. According to Saint Maximus the Confessor, selfishness is unreasonable love towards the body and it is this which impedes a person from encountering God in a loving manner, as well as other people. The existentialist philosophers would say: "I think, therefore I am." The Saints, however, who are true people, say: "I love, therefore I am."

The greatness of the Church is manifested moreover in that it "manufactures" true people, who by their life and disposition abolish any notion of racial discrimination and are a source of blessing for society, and for the whole inhabited world. (*from johnsanidopoulos.com*)

### **Also Commemorated Today**

New Hieromartyr Michael priest (1937).

Martyr Peter (1938).

Holy Confessor [Dositheus](#), metropolitan of Zagreb (1941).

St. [Peter](#) Mogila, metropolitan of Kiev (1646).

Venerable [Gelasius](#), [monk](#), of Palestine.

Venerable [Gaius](#), monk.

Venerable [Theophylactus](#) of Ochrid (1126).

Ten [Virgin](#)-martyrs of Nicomedia (*Greek*).

St. Anysius, bishop of Thessalonica (406).

Venerable [Sabiana](#), Abbess of the Samtskhe Monastery (11th c.).

Martyrs [Busiris](#), [Gaudentius](#) and [Nemo](#) (*Greek*).

Martyr [Olympiodora](#)

St. [Theophylact](#), Archbishop of Ochrid and Bulgaria

St. [George](#) the Wonderworker, Machoromenos

St. [Kyriakos](#) of Bisericani (1660)

St. [Sylvester](#), Pope of Rome (335)

St. [Barbatian](#) of Antioch, priest (5<sup>th</sup> c.)

Martyr [Columba](#) of Sens and companions (273)(Gaul)

Martyrs [Donata](#), Hilaria, Dominanda, Nominanda, Paolina, Paulina, Rogata,

Rustica, Saturnina, Serotina, and companions of Rome (unk)

Martyr [Peter](#), abbot of Subiaco (1003)

Martyrs [Sabinian](#) and Potentian, 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> bishops of Sens (c. 300)  
Martyrs [Stephen](#), Pontian, Attalus, Fabian, Cornelius, Sextus, Flos, Quintian,  
Minervinus, Simplician, and companions of Catania (Sicily)(unk)  
Sts. [Lochán](#) and Énna (Endae) (Ireland)(8<sup>th</sup> c.)

### **Additional Services This Week**

We will commemorate St. Basil the Great and the feast of the Circumcision of our Lord with a divine liturgy on Monday, January 1 at 8 AM.

We will celebrate the Feast of the Theophany with a vigil and the Great Blessing of Water followed by Divine Liturgy on Saturday, January 6 beginning at 8 AM.

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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. Nectaros & 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.)