

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: Confession 4:30 PM

Great Vespers 5:00 PM

Sunday: Matins (Orthros) 8:45 AM

Sunday School 9:30 AM

Divine Liturgy 10:00 AM

January 28, 2024 – 34th Sunday After Pentecost

Ven. Ephraim the Syrian | Holy New Martyrs of Russia

By Protopresbyter Fr. George Papavarnavas

Saint Ephraim was born in the early fourth century in Nisibis of Syria from parents who were Confessors and Martyrs, as he wrote, "I am from a family of martyrs," for during the period of harsh persecution under Diocletian they gave their bold confession for the true God and they sealed it with the blood of their martyrdom. For a teacher he had Bishop James, a man of great theological education, who also ordained him a deacon. He received no other ordination. He was a true ascetic, a fiery orator and a famous writer. They called him a prophet of Syrians, a pillar of Orthodoxy, the mouth and lyre of the Spirit, and vessel of compunction. Shortly before his repose he visited Basil the Great in Caesarea of Cappadocia. He reposed in peace.

We will now enter the fragrant meadow of his inspired writings, in order to reap some flowers, which are full of exquisite fragrances, in order to offer them to those who are addicted to heavenly scents. In other words, we will list extracts from the writings of the Saint, which are always timely, instructive and beneficial.



1. "From the land comes the joy of harvest, from the vineyard fruits that give food, and from the Scriptures teaching that gives life. The land has one season for the harvest, and the vineyard has one season for the vintage, but the Scripture when read always overflows with teaching that gives life. The land when it has been harvested lies fallow and the vineyard when the grapes have been picked is unproductive, but when Scripture is harvested the grapes of those who expound it are not lacking in it. It is picked every day and the grape clusters of the hope in it are never exhausted."

Here the Saint wants to highlight the great value of Holy Scripture and the benefits one gets from studying it. Indeed, Holy Scripture is spiritual food and drink, which nourishes, refreshes and enlivens man, literally "intoxicate" him, and gives wings to hope. But no matter how many fruits one reaps from it, it remains inexhaustible of heavenly meanings and hopeful messages.

2. "Eight are the thoughts that cause sin: gluttony, lust, avarice, anger, despondency, despair, vainglory and pride. Gluttony is healed by temperance and the fear of God; lust by vigil, thirst and the remembrance of death; avarice by indigence and frugality; anger with gentleness, long-suffering, prayer and forgiveness; despondency by not grieving over temporal things, even if we are beaten, mocked, or persecuted, we are not to grieve, but to rejoice, and we should only grieve when we commit a sin. Even then, however, we should grieve within measure, lest we fall into despair and be led to destruction; despair with work, contemplation, prayer and unceasingly standing near God; vainglory by not loving the praises of people, nor leadership, and with self-reproach; and pride with no matter what you do, you should not say you did it by your own effort or bravery, but with God's strength."

Whoever defeats these passions, keeps their nous clear of thoughts. And the purified nous is illumined by the grace of God and acquires remembrance of God and uninterrupted prayer.

3. "Patience is not one, but is found within many other virtues. Because patience is associated with all the virtues. Rejoice then in your troubles, and progress in your sufferings; rejoice in your temptations... in long-suffering it is mature, in love it is perfect, insults it turns to blessings... in fasting it is willing, in prayer it is enduring, in service to others it is polite, in meetings it is pleasant. He who has gained patience, has gained hope, because such a man is adorned with every good work."

Nothing can be done without patience, either physically or spiritually. Patience gives birth to trust and love for God and gives birth to hope. It removes stress, this modern scourge, and gives us inner peace. Then a person becomes polite and pleasant.

4. "Speak much to God, and little to men. And if you spread you hand out to work, let your mouth chant and your mind pray. Psalmody is calm of soul, author of peace. Psalmody is convenor of friendship, union of the separated, reconciliation of enemies. Psalmody attracts the help of the Angels, is a weapon in night-time fears, repose of the day's toils, safety for infants, adornment for the old, consolation for the elderly, most fitting embellishment for women. It make deserts into homes, market places sober. It is the ABC for beginners, progress for the more advanced, confirmation for the perfect, the voice of the Church. It makes festivals radiant; it creates mourning that is in accordance with God, for psalmody draws tears even from a heart of stone. Psalmody is the work of the Angels, the commonwealth of heaven, spiritual incense. Psalmody is enlightenment of souls, sanctification of bodies."

We usually do the opposite. We usually say many things to people, but speak little or not at all to God. If we want to prosper, we must learn to pray much and speak little. And when we work it would be good to chant, especially if our work is manual. Then our nous will be free of passionate thoughts and our souls will calm. *(from johnsanidopoulos.com)*

Commemoration of the New Martyrs & Confessors of Russia

On the Sunday nearest (or after) January 25, we commemorate the New Martyrs of Russia who suffered under the Soviet yoke. Among them are Hieromartyr Vladimir and Virgin-martyr Olga, commemorated January 28 (old calendar).

Hieromartyr Vladimir was born on June 6, 1889 in the city of Kostroma in the family of Fedor Pyshchulin, who served in the district court. Having graduated from the Vitebsk Gymnasium in 1908, Vladimir decided to follow his father's studies and entered the law faculty of Moscow University. However, he did not like jurisprudence, and he transferred to the Faculty of History and Philology of St. Petersburg University. He graduated in 1914 with the degree of candidate of philological sciences, he received the position of associate professor at St. Petersburg University and taught logic, psychology and literature.

After the February Revolution of 1917, Vladimir Fedorovych moved to Vitebsk and joined the Cadet Party, becoming the secretary of the Vitebsk branch of the party. After the October Revolution, he returned to Petrograd.

On December 24, 1919, Vladimir Fedorovych was ordained a deacon, and on January 1, 1920, he was ordained a priest and appointed rector of the Nikolaev Church on Mokhovaya Street near the Home of the Blind; then he served in the Kazan Cathedral and in the temple of the righteous Saints Zacharias and Elizabeth, in which the future leader of the renovationists, archpriest Alexander Vvedensky,

was the abbot at that time. In 1921, Father Vladimir became a member of the Philosophical Society and an assistant at the Department of Christian Pedagogy at the Petrograd Theological Institute.

In 1922, Father Vladimir was arrested in the case of resisting the confiscation of church valuables, but he was soon released at the request of Archpriest Alexander Vvedensky. On September 5, 1922, Father Vladimir was again arrested on charges of anti-Soviet activity and on September 26 of the same year he was sentenced to three years of exile in Orenburg; here he switched to the renovationists.

Returning to Petrograd, priest Vladimir Pyshchulin was ordained a monk on December 9, 1924 and elevated to the rank of archimandrite. On March 8, 1925, in the Kazan Cathedral of Petrograd, the renovationist bishops consecrated him as bishop of Okhten, vicar of the Petrograd diocese, and in the same year he was appointed bishop of Pskov, but he refused the appointment and retired.

On August 14, 1926, he repented, and was accepted into communion with the (catacomb) Orthodox Church by the bishop of Yamburg, Vicar of the Petrograd Diocese Alexey (Symansky), and was ordained a priest.

On April 6, 1928, Father Vladimir was arrested on charges that he was a member of an illegal religious group and imprisoned in Petrograd. On October 8, 1928, the Board of the OGPU sentenced him to three years of exile in Kazakhstan. At the end of his exile, he moved to Krym and settled with relatives in Simferopol, getting a job in a library. Father Vladimir was arrested on July 5, 1937 and imprisoned in Simferopol.

“The investigation has data that until recently you were in hostile positions in relation to the Soviet government. Do you admit it?” - the investigator asked the priest. “I am not an enemy of the Soviet government, although on some issues of the policy of the Soviet government I stand in sharply negative positions, that is, I am an opponent of the anti-Christian policy of the Soviet government, as well as materialism, which negates the idea of religion,” Father Vladimir answered.

On December 10, 1937, the NKVD troika sentenced Vladimir's father to be shot. Priest Vladimir Pyshchulin was shot on February 10, 1938 and buried in an unmarked mass grave near Simferopol.

Saint Olga (Olga Vasilievna Evdokymova) was born on July 11, 1896 in the village of Novo-Rozhdestvenskoe, Ramensky Volost, Bronnytskyi District, Moscow Province. Olga's father worked as a forester on the estate of the landowner Ilyin. Olga graduated from a rural school and married a peasant, Pyotr Matveevich Evdokymov; during the war in 1905 he was drafted into the army, after the war he began working at a factory in Ramenskoye, and since 1914 as a

guard in the village of Mykhnevo; he died in 1921, and Olga was left with two children. Since childhood, she was a parishioner of the church of John the Baptist in the village of Novo-Rozhdestvensky and took an active part in all events related to the church.

After the church was closed in 1937, Olga Vasilievna was arrested on September 4, 1937, along with the priests, the psalmist, and the church warden, imprisoned in the Tagansky prison in Moscow, and interrogated on the same day.

Here is a record of her interrogation:

- Give a detailed testimony about your connections with parishioners.
- My relationship with the clergy was expressed on the basis of religious beliefs and church rites, that is, I actively visited the church, hosted priests in my apartment, and I consider the clergy my spiritual mentors, with whom I still do not lose ties.
- Give a detailed testimony about your counter-revolutionary shouts at the representatives of the Soviet government in the crowd of churchmen.
- I said that the church should not be closed, but that a person should be chosen and sent to Moscow with a request to leave the church behind us. In addition, she said that here, they say, is freedom, but here again we are being oppressed, and what is oppressing us, the believers, is our rural power.
- Who told you to snatch the keys from the church elder and give them to Kopeykina, who threatened her not to give the keys to the church to representatives of the authorities?
- I did not snatch the keys from the church elder, but only said that the keys are here for nothing - they will hang a seal or close it with a second lock, and our keys will remain no matter what.
- Who put you on the path of open anti-Soviet agitation with a call to fight against Soviet power regarding the decisions of the Soviet government to close the church?
- No one suggested this to me, I myself deliberately set out on this hostile path, because the Soviet government did the wrong thing by closing the church in our village.

On October 17, 1937, the NKVD troika sentenced Olga Vasilievna to ten years in a correctional labor camp. Olga Vasilievna Evdokymova died in prison on February 10, 1938 and was buried in an unmarked grave. (*from newmartyrs.ru*)

Today's Epistle Lesson – St. Paul's Letter to the Colossians 3:4-11 EOB

Brethren, when Christ who is our life is revealed, then you will also be revealed with him in glory. Therefore, put to death what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, depraved passions, lust and greed (which is idolatry). Because of these things, the wrath of God is coming on the children of disobedience. You also used to live in those things when you lived among these people; but now, put them all away: anger, rage, evil, slander, and shameful language. Do not lie to one another. You have put off the old self with his doings and you have put on the new self who is being renewed in knowledge according to the image of his Creator. Here, there cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free; but Christ is all, and in all!

Today's Gospel Lesson – Saint Matthew 22:35-46 EOB

At that time, one of them, a lawyer, then asked him a question in order to test him. "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the law?" Jesus said to him, "'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the first and great commandment. The second is likewise, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' The entire law and the prophets depend on these two commandments."

Now while the Pharisees were assembled, Jesus asked them a question, saying, "What do you think of the Messiah? Whose son is he?" They answered, "[He is the son] of David." Jesus said to them, "How, then, does David, in the Spirit, call him 'Lord,' saying: 'The Lord said to my Lord, sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet?' If then David calls him Lord, how is he his son?" No one was able to answer him a word, and from that day on, no one dared to ask him any more questions.

A Word From the Holy Fathers

Regarding the life of the blessed Elijah, who can narrate it? For he so lived upon the earth, that before his translocation he might be thought to live in the heavens, and associate with the incorporeal Angels; he who obtained nothing at all upon the earth; he who was wrapped only in sheepskin, and to those who wore crowns and royal robes he appeared dreadful, not because of the strength of the body, but by the power of landlessness and self-control, and by the grace of the All-Holy Spirit, which he obtained by his good life; he who had nothing, and yet possessed everything; he who refused all the comforts of this life; he who parted the river with his command; he who commanded the sky not to rain on the earth for three years and six months; he who shunned all the vain glory of this life; he who quenched the flame of sin with the coolness of temperance; he who never thought

of anything carnal; he who rebuked the blasphemies of the prophets of delusion, and slaughtered the priests of Baal; he who commanded fire to come down the third time from heaven, and consumed the unbelievers, and rebuked the king for his diversion; he who had so much boldness and courage of speech; he who bound the clouds.

Thus, so great and so important a prophet did not live on earth without sorrows and temptations, but on the contrary, after the presentation of such great miracles, for fear of the woman, he became an exile and an emigrant, and was forced to travel forty days a path while fasting, but even so he did not find relief, but again another trial followed him, that is, the death of the widow's child. For after the kindness of hospitality, that blessed woman saw that her child had died, and while she expected to receive from the prophet a reward of blessing, she received as a reward the most painful of all for her: for she who expected to have consolation in her life, she lost him in the presence of the prophet.

How much sorrow then for the prophet? How much weakness? For the woman asked for her child, and he who bound the clouds was troubled by her, as she asked him for her child. Therefore, because he was pressed by her, he embraced the child seven times, mouth to mouth, and beseeching God for a long time, he gave the child to her who gave birth to him, after raising him from the dead. Because he had fasting and landlessness as his helper in the work.

You saw, brethren, the power of landlessness and self-control; how he abolished death and gave life to the child, and from trials and dangers they saved him, and with a chariot of fire they prepared him to ascend to the Master, without suffering anything from the fire. And because his life was refreshed by temperance and purity and the grace of God, with these and other virtues, while he was still in the body, he lived with the incorporeal Angels.

– St. Ephraim the Syrian, *Discourse on What the Lord Said, That in This World You Will Have Sorrow, and That Man Must Be Perfect*

The Mystery of the Divine Eucharist

Metropolitan Hierotheos of Nafpaktos and Agiou Vlasiou

Since so far, my beloved brethren, we have analyzed Baptism and Chrismation, today we must emphasize a few points about the great mystery of the Divine Eucharist. Of course, for this mystery we highlighted what was needed in last year's liturgical sermons. But now we must emphasize some points that have to do with the spiritual life and the Divine Eucharist.

Man is first born, then he must have movement and energy in him and of course in order to live he needs to be nourished. If someone after his birth has no energy and

does not eat, there will come a time when he will die. The same is true of spiritual birth. First one is reborn from the spiritual womb of the Church which is the Font, then one is anointed with Holy Chrismation and acquires movement, and then one comes to Divine Communion and communes of the Body and Blood of Christ to live.

This combination between Baptism, Chrismation and Divine Communion was evident in the early centuries of the Church, when Baptism took place during the Divine Liturgy, during which they immediately received the Body and Blood of Christ for the first time. Today the Divine Communion, since the mystery of Baptism takes place outside the Divine Liturgy, is received in the first Divine Liturgy. However, we are baptized and chrismated in order to commune of the Immaculate Mystery. There is no spiritual life without Divine Communion, without Christ.

The Divine Liturgy is the most supernatural mystery, the center of the spiritual life, the purpose of all mysteries, the completion of our path to God. Many Christians who are baptized and chrismated, consider themselves Christians, but do not commune. It is as if a dinner is being prepared and while we are invited to it we do not come or we come to the dinner and we do not eat from what was prepared.

The partaking of the Honorable Gifts, however, is not done unconditionally, that is, the necessary preconditions are needed. One precondition is to have received Orthodox baptism. If I have been baptized with the method of another denomination, as Latins and Protestants do, and belong to another religious denomination, I cannot commune. The gift of Christ must also be active in his heart, that is, he must have repentance, awareness of his condition, and of course repentance must be active and affirmed by a spiritual father. And this is necessary, because Divine Communion acts according to the state of every Christian. Of course, Divine Communion is medicine, but medicines also act and are taken according to each occasion. They can help in the treatment of man, when taken with the necessary doses and as long as the body endures, the stomach, while when not taken with these conditions, then they create side effects. The same is true of Divine Communion.

We must commune with the permission of our spiritual father. But still, before Divine Communion we should read the Service of [Preparation for Holy Communion] in order to strengthen our spiritual organism that we may withstand the reception of this solid spiritual food, but even after Divine Communion we should read the special service that has been written by holy people [*After-*

Communion Prayers – Ed.], so that with our contemplation and repentance the Body and Blood of Christ may act within us.

We must remember the word of Christ: "Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, you have no life in you" (John 5:53). Real life is given by Christ who is the true life of men. Spiritual death reigns outside of Christ. (from *johnsanidopoulos.com*)

Also Commemorated Today

Venerable [Theodosius](#), abbot, of Totma (Vologda) (1568).

St. [Theodore Bogoyalvenskyi](#), confessor, priest (1933).

New Hieromartyrs [Ignatius](#) bishop of [Skopinsk](#) & Hieromartyr [Bartholomeus](#) (1938).

Venerable [Leontius](#), confessor (1972).

Venerable Ephraim, abbot, wonderworker of Novotorzhok (1053) (incorrupt).

Venerable [Ephraim](#), bishop of Pereyaslavl (Kiev Caves) (1098).

Venerable [Palladius](#) the Hermit of Antioch, wonderworker (4th c.).

Venerable [Isaac](#) the Syrian, bishop of Nineveh (ascetic writer) (7th c.).

Venerable James the Ascetic of Porphyreon in Palestine (Greek).

St. Cannera of Inis Cathaig, Virgin (Cainder, Conaire, Kinnera) (c. 530)

St. Glastian of (MacGlastian) Kinglassie, Bishop of Fife (830)

St. Jean of Réomé (John of Reomans), hermit (539) (Gaul)

Pilgrim-Martyrs Brigid (Britta) and Maura in Picardy (4th c.) (Gaul)

St. John the Wise of Malmesbury, monk (8th c.)?

St. Antimus, abbot of Brantôme (8th c.) (France)

Martyr Flavian, deputy-prefect of Rome (c. 304) (Italy)

St. Odo of Beauvais, bishop (880) (Gaul)

St. Valerius, bishop of Saragossa (Zaragoza) (315) (Spain)

St. Arnoul (Arnulf, Arnold) of Cysoing, martyr in Flanders (8th c.) (Belgium)

Martyrs Thyrsus, Leucius, Callinicus, and 15 companions (of Sisteron?) (250)

St. Alopecia (Pelade), Bishop of Embrun (5th c.)

St. Liberate (Livrade), virgin-martyr of Aquitaine (4th c.)

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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, Anna Meinhold, David & Kathryn Newman, Bobby Nutter & family, Nicholas Pavlik, Weston Perry & family, John Reece, Mary Reed, Marge Rusnak, Rose Song, Fr. Nectarios & Ia, Mother Virginia Marie & the Carmelite Nuns of Port Tobacco, the suffering people of Ukraine & the Holy Land, and those in need of our prayers. (Please advise Fr. Joseph of changes.)