

# 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**

**February 11, 2024 – 36<sup>th</sup> Sunday After Pentecost**

**Hieromartyr Blaise, Bishop of Sebaste**

By Hieromonk Makarios of Simonopetra

Born in the province of Armenia and a physician by profession, Saint Blaise (Vlasios) led a life like the righteous Job, "being blameless and upright, and one who feared God and eschewed evil" (Job 1:1). His virtues having won him the affection of all his fellow-citizens, he was elected Bishop of Sebaste (Sivas) in Eastern Anatolia. During the Great Persecution, he boldly confessed the Faith and encouraged the holy Martyrs "to fight the good fight" to the end. He visited Saint Eustratios in his dungeon before his glorious martyrdom and served the Divine Liturgy for him. Afterwards he took it upon himself to collect the honorable relics of the Five Martyrs (Dec. 13) in order to present them for the veneration of the Christian people.

After some time, he withdrew to Mount Argea, a short distance from Sebaste, where he lived enclosed in a cave, sending up to God pure prayers free of all distraction. Attracted by the scent of his virtues, wild animals approached him as a



second Adam and waited quietly at the mouth of the cave for him to complete his prayer and give them his blessing or heal their wounds.

In the reign of the Emperor Licinius (c. 316), Agricolaus, the Governor of Cappadocia, came to Sebaste, intent on rounding up the Christians. As he planned to feed those who persisted in the Faith to the beasts in the amphitheater, he detailed a party of soldiers to trap wild animals on Mount Argea. However, to their amazement they came upon a large group of fierce animals, lions, tigers, bears, wolves and others grazing peacefully together outside Saint Blaise's cave. They informed the Governor, who sent them back to arrest the holy hermit. He greeted them cheerfully and told them that he knew from a vision that they were coming for him.

Many pagans who encountered the Saint on his way back to Sebaste experienced the peace and unutterable gentleness which emanated from him, and were converted to Christ. The diseases of both men and animals were cured as he went by. A distraught mother brought him her child who was choking to death on a fish bone. He prayed to the Lord to restore the child to health, as well as all those who in time to come would invoke his intercession in case of similar accidents. Then he returned the infant to his mother in perfect health.

When they reached Sebaste, Blaise was brought before the tribunal. He was unflinching in his response to Agricolaus and roundly condemned the vain cult of vacuous idols. He was beaten with rods, which he bore joyfully, and was then thrown into prison. When put to new torments he told the Governor, "I am not afraid of your tortures because I am looking forward to the good things to come." At this he was thrown back, covered in blood, into his dungeon.

Seven devout women followed him and anointed their faces with the drops of his blood which fell to the ground, as though with the most precious ointment. They were arrested there and taken to the Governor, who threatened them with the direst torments unless they sacrificed to the idols. They made pretense of agreeing and asked for the idols to be brought to the lakeside - the very lake which would soon witness the glorious contest of the Forty Martyrs (Mar. 9) - so that they might reverently wash them before sacrificing. However, as soon as the statues were brought, they threw them into the depths of the lake. Agricolaus was enraged when he heard of this. He ordered a large brazier to be made ready with molten lead and iron wool-combs and told them to decide whether they preferred those torments to the fine clothes and jewels which were also laid out nearby. One woman ran forward and threw the costly outfits into the brazier, encouraged by her two young children who shouted, "Don't desert us! As you have nourished us with your milk, let us follow you to inherit the Kingdom of Heaven!" The tyrant then had the holy women bound to stakes and the tormentors tore their flesh with the wool-combs.

Since they remained miraculously unharmed, even after being thrown into the flames, they were beheaded, while fervently giving thanks to God and to his servant Saint Blaise.

Having failed in his efforts to break Saint Blaise's resolve, Agricolaus condemned him to be drowned in the lake. The holy Martyr made the sign of the Cross at the water's edge and began walking across the surface of the lake as the Savior had done on the Sea of Galilee. On reaching the middle, he invited the pagans to join him, if they believed they could trust themselves to their gods. Sixty-eight of them took up the challenge and drowned, while a bright angel appeared and invited the Saint to return to the shore in order to receive the crown of glory.

When he and the undaunted Two Children were condemned to be beheaded, Saint Blaise, shining with the divine light, sent up a prayer on behalf of all who in time to come would call for his aid in illness and trials. Thereupon the Lord appeared to him in all His glory, saying, "I have heard your prayer and grant your request."

The bodies of the holy Martyrs were laid to rest with honor, and became a source of blessings for those who met annually at their place of burial to commemorate them. Saint Blaise is one of the most venerated of holy healers in both East and West. Saint Blaise is invoked as a sure healer of those suffering neck wounds and having throat problems. *(from johnsanidopoulos.com)*

### **Today's Epistle Lesson – St. Paul's First Letter to Timothy 1:15-17 EOB**

My son Timothy, this saying is faithful and worthy of all acceptance: that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners of whom I am the first. This is how I obtained mercy, so that in me as 'the first,' Jesus Christ might show all his patience as an example for those who would believe in him for eternal life. Now, to the eternal King, immortal, invisible, to God who alone is wise, be honor and glory unto ages of ages. Amen.

### **Today's Gospel Lesson – Saint Matthew 15:21-28 EOB**

At that time, Jesus withdrew into the region of Tyre and Sidon. Behold, a Canaanite woman came out from those borders and cried out, "Have mercy on me, Lord, you son of David! My daughter is severely demonized!" But Jesus did not answer her a word. His disciples came and begged him, saying, "Send her away! She is shouting after us!" However, Jesus answered, "I was not sent to anyone but the lost sheep of the house of Israel." Still, the woman came forward and expressed adoration to him, saying, "Lord, help me." But he answered, "It is not right to take the children's bread and throw it to the little dogs." But she replied, "Yes, Lord, but even the little dogs eat the crumbs which fall from their masters' table." Then Jesus answered her, "Woman, great is your faith! Let it be done to you even as you desire." And her daughter was healed from that hour.

## A Word From the Holy Fathers

Everyone baptized into Christ should pass progressively through all the stages of Christ's own life, for in baptism he receives the power so to progress, and through the commandments he can discover and learn how to accomplish such progression. To Christ's conception corresponds the foretaste of the gift of the Holy Spirit, to His nativity the actual experience of joyousness, to His baptism the cleansing force of the fire of the Spirit, to His transfiguration the contemplation of divine light, to His crucifixion the dying to all things, to His burial the indwelling of divine love in the heart, to His resurrection the soul's life-quickening resurrection, and to His ascension divine ecstasy and the transport of the nous into God. He who fails to pass consciously through these stages is still callow in body and spirit, even though he may be regarded by all as mature and accomplished in the practice of virtue.

Christ's Passion is a life-quickening death to those who have experienced all its phases, for by experiencing what He experienced we are glorified as He is (*cf.* Rom. 8:17). But indulgence in sensual passions induces a truly lethal death. Willingly to experience what Christ experienced is to crucify crucifixion and to put death to death. To suffer for Christ's sake is patiently to endure whatever happens to us. For the envy which the innocent provoke is for their benefit, while the Lord's schooling tests us so as to bring about our conversion, since it opens our ears when we are guilty. That is why the Lord has promised an eternal crown to those who endure in this manner (*cf.* Jas. 1:12). Glory to You, our God; glory to You, Holy Trinity; glory to You for all things.

– St. Gregory of Sinai

### Overflowing Grace





On February 3rd and 4th, Metropolitan Gregory made an action-packed visit to St. Thomas. On Saturday, he united Steven Watts and Mary Vallandingham in the sacrament of marriage. *(previous page)*



Then, on Sunday, Metropolitan Gregory was greeted by parish President Nick Samouris and his wife Annette with bread that was almost too beautiful to eat created by Olga Dewey. *(above)*



Before Divine Liturgy, he tonsured Luke Cooper Reader. *(above)*





Having served Divine Liturgy, he proceeded to bless Acolytes Isaac Hanbury, John Espinal and George and Basil Guy. (*above*)



This was followed by elevating Fr. Joseph to the rank of Oikonomos for his years of service; he is now titled “Very Reverend Father Joseph”. (*previous page*)

With this elevation, he was presented with the epigonation (Greek: ἐπιγονάτιον, literally meaning "over the knee"), or palitza (Russian: палица, "club"), is a diamond-shaped vestment worn on the right side by priests and bishops [*One can be seen worn by +Metropolitan Gregory in the previous picture – Ed.*].

In the Byzantine tradition, the epigonation is awarded to a priest upon his elevation to exomologos (confessor) or the rank of οικονόμος. In the Russian tradition, it is an award given after many years of service. Though a Russian Palitza is identical



in shape, and is obviously related to the Greek epigonation, the most literal Slavonic translation for epigonation is actually "Nabedrennik", which is another vestment, rectangular in shape, which no longer exists in non-Slavic usage.

It represents a shield, originating from the thigh shield worn by soldiers during the days of the early church. The epigonation holds a dual meaning. First, it denotes the celebrant as a "soldier" of Christ. Second, it symbolizes the Word of God, fighting the wiles of the enemy. In historical use it was a purse, representing the finances of the Church.

Finally, he and Fr. Joseph consecrated the new icons in the iconostasis with chrism using a telescoping surveyor's pole provided by Bernie Vallandingham. (*above left*) Eis polla Eti Despota!

### **What's an Oikonomos?**

The οἰκονόμος (steward) is an ecclesiastical rank in the Orthodox Church. The word οἰκονόμος is a compound word from οἶκος (home) and the verb νέμω (dispense) which meant, in ancient Greek, the one who takes care of the house. In modern Greek, it means one who wants to economize.



## **In the Eastern Church**

In the Church of the fourth century, the *οἰκονόμος* was an official responsible for managing ecclesiastical property, under the supervision of the bishop. He was chosen by clergy and laymen who had some experience with the law. In the medieval era, the *οἰκονόμος* was a trustee and steward of the items necessary for the orderly functioning of his church, or of his monastery (if he was a monk). In Constantinople, during the early period, an *οἰκονόμος* was a high official in the service of the Church and not necessarily himself in the clergy. At least one Ecumenical Patriarch, Kyriakos of Constantinople (595–606), served as *οἰκονόμος* and treasurer of the Great Church of Hagia Sophia in Constantinople prior to his election to the patriarchal throne.

The Fourth Ecumenical Council of Chalcedon (451) decreed in Canons 9 and 26 that local bishops should appoint an *οἰκονόμος* only from the ranks of the clergy. This was so that the bishop might be spared this taxing kind of work and so that there would be no overlap between the private purse that the bishop brought with him when he assumed the office of bishop of a particular see and the property of the local church. The Council made this decision because Bishop Ibas of Edessa in Mesopotamia was accused of mismanagement of ecclesiastical property and promised in front of the Council that he would appoint an *οἰκονόμος* who would be responsible for managing ecclesiastical property. According to canon law, the bishop is responsible for ecclesiastical property. Therefore, whatever wealth he might acquire after his ordination would belong to the Church, and he should appoint an *οἰκονόμος*, from the clergy of his diocese, who would manage it according to instructions from the bishop. He would be assisted by notaries and secretaries. Thus, the *οἰκονόμος*, by decisions of the Ecumenical Councils, was recognized as an important officer of the Church in each diocese.

During the reign of Justinian I (527–565), when ecclesiastical property began to increase rapidly, a corporation was created that represented the Church, which granted the Church the legal right to own property. This was done because various donors ceded property to the Church and to philanthropic institutions of the Church, but not to a diocese itself. The management of these institutions was assigned as a special duty to the *οἰκονόμος* of the Church or the *οἰκονόμος* of the institution appointed by the bishop. The Fourth Ecumenical Council had previously decided (Canon 25) that in the event of the bishop's death, the *οἰκονόμος* would continue managing the ecclesiastical property until a new bishop would decide upon the position of the *οἰκονόμος*.

The Church's income came from its property. The Church rented property to various people, and the rental was called "tenure" (*ἐμφύτευσις*). The *οἰκονόμος*



was also responsible for all collections and all other income from the property of the Church. He was expected to live up to his responsibilities with financial assistance to the poor, the widows, and the orphans. He was obliged to send reports regularly to the bishop and once a year submitted a normal written account. Patriarch Photios (858–867 and 877–886) writes that Justinian I, in his legislation, decreed that the οἰκονόμος should present statements of receipts and disbursements of the ecclesiastical property to his bishop at the end of each year. Photios also writes that if a bishop does not appoint an οἰκονόμος to manage the ecclesiastical property, then the archbishop of the larger district is required to make the appointment. This manner of managing ecclesiastical property continued until the eleventh century at which time a new group of officials came into the Church, the ἐξωκατάκοιλοι (“those living away from the diocesan offices”). At the head of the group was the οἰκονόμος known as the Great Oikonomos. A Great Oikonomos took on new duties and was responsible for managing the properties of Hagia Sophia as well as the properties of the Ecumenical Patriarchate. Until 1057, the Great Oikonomos was appointed by the emperor. In 1057, Emperor Isaac I Komnenos transferred this right to Patriarch Michael Cerularios (1043–1059), because the Patriarch had helped him ascend the throne. From then on, only the Patriarch selected the Great Oikonomos and all his officers.

The rank of οἰκονόμος exists in monastic life as well. He is responsible for managing monastic properties and for their income and expenses. The οἰκονόμος was subject to the ἡγούμενος (abbot) and to the bishop of his diocese, in accordance with the regulations that were determined in the typikon of the monastery and the canons of the Church. In addition to the daily expenses of the monastery, the οἰκονόμος was responsible for the monastery’s financial obligations to the diocese and for the payment of taxes to the state in view of the fact that monasteries were not always exempt from taxation. The οἰκονόμος was assisted in his duties by a παροικονόμος (assistant *oikonomos*) of the monastery. Later, as monastic life developed and expanded with annexes, cloisters, and chapels, a need arose for a co-ordinator who would head the financial affairs of the entire monastic community. He was called the Great Oikonomos and took over the management of all the properties. The duties of the οἰκονόμος were fulfilled by a canonically ordained clergyman.

After the fall of the Byzantine Empire, the rank of οἰκονόμος disappeared as an active post of the Church. It remained simply an honorary title to be awarded to presbyters by the bishop for exceptional service to the Church.

According to the *Great Euchologion*, the clergyman or monk is elevated to the title of *Oikonomos* through a special ecclesiastical service, “Order for the Ordination of the Oikonomos.”

## **In the Western Church**

The position of *oeconomus* is also found in the Western Church with the same duties both in the Church and in monastic life. The Council of Seville (in 618 ce) stated (Canon 9) that each bishop is obliged to appoint an *oeconomus* from the ranks of the clergy to manage the ecclesiastical property in accordance with the decisions of the Synod in Chalcedon. The Synod of Toledo (633), in Canon 48, decreed that every bishop is required to choose from clergy of his diocese, officials whom “Greeks call *oecunomus*” on behalf of the bishop. The Council of Meaux in France (845), in Canon 47, decreed that the clergy of each diocese could not choose an *oeconomus* to manage the secular needs, even on a temporary basis, without the consent of the bishop. If the bishop, due to old age or illness, cannot exercise his duties, then the archbishop of the larger district, can proceed to elect an *oeconomus* with the consent of the bishop. The Synod of Pontigo (876), Canon 14, decreed that in the case of the bishop’s death, the *oeconomus* takes on duties as the executor of the will and guardian of the property of the diocese. After the death of the Bishop of Salonon in Dalmatia, Gregory the Great (590–604) wrote that the *oeconomus* who was vicar (*locum tenens*) of the diocese would continue to manage finances and should prepare a report of receipts and disbursements to the newly elected bishop. The duties of the *oeconomus* are outlined clearly in detail by Bishop Isidore of Seville (560–634). The *oeconomus* would be responsible for the maintenance of church buildings; manage all legal problems of the church; supervise the fields, vineyards, and ecclesiastical real estate; distribute money fairly among clergy; offer financial assistance to the poor, orphans, and widows; supply clothing for clergy and all personnel of the diocese. In all aspects of his work, the *oeconomus* is under the supervision of the bishop. The *oeconomus* is also mentioned in the legislation of Charlemagne the Great (742–814). We find here the title of *archioeconomus* who is possibly the head of all the *oeconomi*, with special duties.

Within the monastic world of Latin Christianity, the *oeconomus* may carry the variant titles *equonimus* or *custos monasterii* (“guardian of the monastery”), or the supervisor responsible for the internal and the secular matters of the monastery, the purchase of wheat and lumber, and the acceptance of gifts and tributes from the faithful.

## *Oikonomos* **in Holy Scripture**

He was the director or overseer of someone’s household. For example, Eleazer was a servant to Abraham, entrusted with the care of his family. And, in managing his household, Joseph served as οἰκονόμος to Potiphar, who “made him overseer in his house and all that he had he put into his hand.” All the kings of Israel had

*oikonomoi* as managers of the palaces, as did David, “and stewards over all the property and possessions of the King,” and King Elah (886–885 bce) appointed Jesse of Sama. Every wealthy man would have an οἰκονόμος to manage his home and to take care of his children. Many times he was a servant, but sometimes he was a free man.

In the New Testament, the term οἰκονόμος means an “overseer.” The οἰκονόμος was either a servant, as in Matthew 24:5, or a free man, as in Luke 16:12. He would be responsible for managing the business affairs of his master and his family and was obliged to render financial reports whenever asked. The term οἰκονόμος is used both literally and figuratively: literally – “who then is the faithful and wise steward,” “there was a rich man who had a steward,” and again, “and the steward said to himself;” and figuratively – “ministers of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God,” “the bishop must be blameless as the steward of God,” and elsewhere, “good stewards of the manifold grace of God.” In the Epistle to the Romans, Erastus is called the “*oikonomos* of the city.” He was the financial manager of the city of Corinth and a faithful Christian. (from *archons.org*)

## **The Office of Reader**

A **reader** is the second-highest of the minor orders of the Orthodox Church. It is a clerical order to which a man is tonsured and ordained, setting him apart as blessed by the bishop to read in services and in the Divine Liturgy. In the past, low literacy rates meant that a Reader reading in church was the main way that people would hear Scripture read. Some have argued that in societies with high literacy rates, the office of Reader is superfluous. Others, however, counter that in such societies where high literacy has caused information without meaning, the value of a dedicated Reader to prayers, psalms and epistles with parishioners is even more vital.

This order is higher than the doorkeeper (now largely obsolete) and lower than the subdeacon. The office of a reader subsumes that of a *taper-bearer*, and the service of ordaining a reader mentions both functions.

Byzantine icons often show readers and church singers wearing a stikhar-like garment (more loose and flowing than the modern stikhar) and a pointed hat with the brim pulled out to the sides (see [here](#), lower left corner). This distinctive garb is now obsolete.

### **Ordination**

Immediately before ordination as a reader, the candidate is tonsured as a sign of his submission and obedience upon entry into the clerical state. This is a separate act, making a layperson into a clergyman, and occurs immediately prior to his ordination as a reader. The ordination itself is, like that of the subdiaconate,



through *Cheirothesia* - literally, "to place hands" - as opposed to *Cheirotonia* - "to stretch out the hands" - which is practiced at the ordination of bishops, priests and deacons.

After being tonsured, the reader is vested in a sticharion, which the reader generally wears thereafter whenever he performs his liturgical duties.

A reader is usually tonsured by the bishop, though in some traditions, an archpriest or archimandrite may do the tonsure with the bishop's blessing if he is not available. In monastic communities, the ruling archimandrite may tonsure those monks over which he rules.

### Terminology

It is through ordination - not the tonsure - that one is made a reader or subdeacon; this is highlighted by the fact that the tonsure is performed only once and is not repeated before the ordination of a subdeacon. The confusion has arisen by the common reference to a man being "tonsured a reader" which, while widespread, is not technically correct.

### Vestments

All degrees of clergy, beginning with Reader, wear the sticharion. The sticharion is a long-sleeved tunic that reaches all the way to the ground. It reminds the wearer that the grace of the Holy Spirit covers him as with a garment of salvation and joy. A reader can be distinguished from an acolyte because the reader will wear an undercassock under his sticharion, and (generally) because a reader's sticharion will be joined together by buttons on the side of the garment, where an acolyte's will be sewn up the sides.

### Duties

An ordained reader has the following duties:

- Read Old Testament readings during services,
- Read the epistle during the Divine Liturgy and other services,
- Chant psalms,
- Chant the verses for prokeimenons, the alleluia, the antiphons,
- Sing other appointed hymns during the divine services.
- Care for the parish's liturgical books.

In addition to this, the reader will usually:

- Construct the services according to the typicon.
- Sing in the choir.

As a member of minor clergy, a reader - according to his abilities - might be entrusted with the duties of:

- Cantor
- Catechist
- Other leadership roles in the community.

#### Allowances and Expectations

In contemporary practice, any layperson may receive the priest's blessing to read on a particular occasion, particularly in the absence of an ordained reader. A layperson so blessed, even permanently, may not take on any of the prerogatives of an ordained reader, i.e. may not wear a cassock or sticharion within or outside of services.

Readers are permitted to wear a cassock, although many do so only when attending services; this is done as a sign of his suppression of his own tastes, will and desires, and his canonical obedience to God, his bishop and the liturgical and canonical norms of the Church. Even in those jurisdictions which favor them, readers will generally not wear a clergy shirt.

While reading in church, the reader will generally wear a sticharion; and in some places, will do so when receiving communion. What a reader wears while conducting his duties can vary, however, and many bishops and priests will allow a reader to perform his function dressed only in a cassock.

#### Expectations

In addition to living the Christian life, the newly-ordained Reader is, on the day of his ordination, instructed to read Scriptures daily. As a member of the first step of the priesthood, he must also pray daily.

In addition to this, it is expected that the Reader will have memorised commonly-used liturgical prayers, will be familiar with Tones, Troparia and Kontakia, as well as the books to construct services - the Horologion, the Epistle Book, the Menaion, the Triodion and the Pentecostarion.

The ordination service specifies that the Reader should prepare himself for a higher degree by living a holy life, thus implying that, while a Reader should still be living a Christian life, he is not immediately expected to be held to the standard of higher clergy, but to work towards this. (adapted from *orthodoxwiki.org*)

### **The Office of Acolyte**

In the Orthodox Church, an **acolyte** or an **altar boy** is a term used for someone who, though unordained, performs liturgical duties such as lighting altar candles, preparing charcoal for incense, and assisting the major orders with the liturgy.

The Orthodox Church no longer possesses an exact equivalent for this office. The order of acolyte has fallen into disuse with other minor orders, such as doorkeepers and exorcists.

At one time there was a rank of minor clergy called the taper-bearer, responsible for bearing lights during processions and liturgical entrances; however, this rank has long ago been subsumed by that of the reader; the service for the ordination of a reader mentions both functions.

The functions of an acolyte or taper-bearer are therefore carried out by readers, subdeacons, or by unordained men or boys. Subdeacons wear their normal vestments consisting of the sticharion and crossed orarion; readers and unordained servers generally wear the sticharion alone.

While in other Christian entities the term Acolyte is used for someone preparing for the major orders of clergy, this is not implied in Orthodox usage. [Notwithstanding the above, +Metropolitan Gregory explicitly told the newly-blessed acolytes that this was the first step toward higher orders. - Ed.] (*from orthodoxwiki.org*)

## **The Mystery of the Priesthood**

Metropolitan Hierotheos of Nafpaktos and Agiou Vlasiou

The mystery of the Priesthood, my beloved brethren, is the sacred ceremony through which special Grace is transmitted to some people to become Clergy in the Church, who are the ministers of the people for their salvation.

The Priesthood is divided into three degrees, that is, there is the Bishop who is in the type and place of Christ, there is the Presbyter, who is sent by the Bishops, as the Apostles were sent by Christ, and there is the Deacon, who helps the Bishops and the Presbyters in the performance of the Mysteries. All these three degrees have a special mission and special work within the Church. According to Saint Dionysius the Areopagite and others after him, such as Saint Maximus the Confessor, Saint Niketas Stethatos and Saint Nikodemos the Hagiorite, the work of the Deacon is to help people purify their hearts from the passions, the work of the Presbyter is to help people illumine their nous, and the work of the Bishop, along with the above, is to lead people to deification.

The work of the Clergy is twofold: one is to perform the Holy Mysteries and the second is to heal people so that they can participate in the mysteries in the proper way and, of course, a combination must be made between the two. This is because performing the mysteries without healing does not help people, and healing without the mysteries is impossible. And this is said because the Clergyman is not a psychologist, who guides people with psychological and dutiful advice, but he is



the spiritual healer, who heals people so that they participate in the right way in the Holy Mysteries and thus the Grace of God through the Mysteries will be active.

To become a Clergyman you must have the necessary spiritual and canonical qualifications. The basic precondition is love for God and people, a love which is not of an emotional nature, but spiritual, which is the "fruit of dispassion". The candidate Clergyman, because he will be engaged in the performance of the mysteries and the healing of people, must know from experience the therapeutic healing method and science. It is not possible for one to practice the function of a doctor and cure physical illnesses if one has not studied this science for many years. The same happens with the Clergyman. The Clergyman must know from experience what is purification of the heart, what is illumination of the nous and what are the states of deification. He must know the way of deification in order to guide people in this way, because otherwise the words of Christ "physician heal thyself" would apply. And because the proper Clergy are not usually found as the sacred Tradition of the Church wants, that is why the Holy Fathers of the Church set some basic preconditions for one to enter the sacred Clergy. When one has the so-called impediments of the Priesthood then one is prevented from becoming a Clergyman, because it shows that one has no experience of the spiritual life, that is, of purification, illumination and deification, and will not yet be accepted by the people to be their appointed healer. In order to be able to practice one's healing ministry, one must have a "guarantee of worthiness". One cannot approach the Holy Mysteries if their life is not in a proper perspective and condition.

It is a great honor for someone to be found worthy to become a Clergyman. In this way he expresses his love for God, but he also accepts the love of God. With the mystery of the Priesthood one participates in the Priesthood of Christ and performs a regenerative work for the people, that is, he performs the mysteries for the salvation of the people, heals people, prays incessantly to God, reconciles people with God and their fellow human beings, and sometimes also cures physical ailments. Because when man makes peace internally, then he becomes a factor of peace and tranquility for the whole world.

We need worthy Clergy, who will guide people on the path of salvation. With this sermon I call on all those who have a small spark in their hearts to hear the voice of their Bishop and to desire to become Priests of the Most High God. It is a great honor and blessing. *(from johnsanidopoulos.com)*

### **Saint Gobnata of Ballyvourney**

Saint Gobnata (or Gobnait, Gobnet, Deborah, Abigail) was born in County Clare of Ireland at the end of the fifth, or the beginning of the sixth century. Later she fled to the Aran Islands to escape from some enemy. An angel appeared to her one day

and told her to leave that place, for it was not to be the place of her resurrection, and to keep walking until she found nine white deer.

She saw three white deer at Clondrohid, County Cork, and decided to follow them. Then at Ballymakeera, she saw six white deer. Finally, at Ballyvourney she came upon nine white deer grazing in a wood. There she was given land donated by the O'Herlihy family for a women's monastery by her spiritual father Saint Abban of Kilabban, County Laois (March 16), and he installed her as abbess. Excavations in 1951 proved that indeed there had been an early Christian settlement on the site.

Saint Gobnata was renowned for her gift of healing, and there is a story of how she kept the plague from Ballyvourney. She is also famous for her skill as a bee-keeper (Gobnata means "Honey Bee", which is the equivalent of the Hebrew "Deborah"). One day, Saint Gobnata was watching from a hill overlooking a valley as an invading chieftain and his army came through, destroying crops and driving off cattle. She sent the bees to attack them, and they were thrown into such confusion that they left without their plunder.

In fact she seems to have been very able in dealing with brigands. Set in the wall of the ruined church at Ballyvourney there is a round stone, which she is said to have used as a sort of boomerang to prevent the building of a castle by another brigand on the other side of the valley from her monastery. Every time he began building she sent the stone across and knocked down the walls, as fast as he could build, until he gave up in despair.

The holy maiden Gobnata fell asleep in the Lord on February 11. The exact year of her death is not known, but it probably occurred in the sixth century. Although she is regarded as the patron saint of Ballyvourney, she is venerated throughout southern Ireland. There are churches dedicated to her in Waterford and Kerry, for example, and she is also revered in Scotland.

There is a field near to Ballyvourney called the Plague Field commemorating the area she marked out as consecrated ground, across which the plague could not pass. The "Tomhas Ghobnata", which is the Gaelic for Gobnat's measure, a length of wool measured against her statue, is still in demand for healing, and in the church a much worn wooden statue of the thirteenth century is preserved and shown on her festival. At Killeen there is Gobnat's Stone, an early cross pillar that has a small figure bearing a crozier on one side.

A well still exists at Ballyvourney that is named after her. Her grave in the churchyard at Ballyvourney is decorated with crutches and other evidence of cures obtained through Gobnata's intercession. Her beehive has remained a precious relic of the O'Herlihs. The round stone associated with her is still preserved. In art, Saint Gobnata is represented as a beekeeper. Gobnata was originally a patron of

ironworkers. Excavation at the church in Ballyvourney yielded considerable evidence of ironworking on the site. (*from johnsanidopoulos.com*)

### **Hieromartyr Gaudin, Bishop of Soissons**

Saint Gaudin, third successor of Saint Drausin in the see of Soissons, was very vehement in reprimanding vices. Having therefore unleashed his eloquent indignation against the insatiable avarice of certain usurers, these men, in hatred of the evangelical truth that he preached, surprised him in an ambush, dragged him into a street, then called Merlin, and now Saint-Gaudin. There they tortured him variously, and as he refused to retract what he had said, they threw him into a well where he drowned, around the year AD 700, and he thus deserved to be inscribed in the catalog of martyrs.

His body was transferred to the cathedral church, with the bodies of Saint Principe and Saint Loup, bishops, and Saint Agricola, priest. On June 1<sup>st</sup>, his relics were uncovered and placed in a silver shrine, which was plundered in 1567 by heretics, at the same time as the relics were burned. The place consecrated by his martyrdom continued to be frequented by the devotion of people until the time of the French Revolution at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. (*from the Little Bollandists; Lives of the Saints Vol. 2*)

### **Hieromartyr Lucius, Bishop of Adrianople**

Saint Lucius (Loukios) of Adrianople or Hadrianople, was bishop of that city in the fourth century, succeeding St. Eutropius. He was expelled from his see by the Arian party, then predominant in the East, under the emperor Constantius II, the son of Constantine the Great; and went to Rome to lay his cause before the pope, Julius I, apparently in the year 340 or 341. Several other bishops were at Rome on a similar errand, about the same time; and the pope, having satisfied himself of their innocence and of their orthodoxy, sent them back to their respective churches, with letters requiring their restoration, and other letters rebuking their persecutors. The Arian bishops in the East appear to have rejected the pope's authority, and sent him back a remonstrance against his rebukes. Lucius, however, recovered his see by the authority of the emperor Constantius, who was constrained to restore him by the threats of his brother Constans, then emperor of the West. This restoration occurred before the council of Sardica, AD 347, which he attended. When the death of Constans (A. D. 350) was known in the East, the Arian party, whom Lucius had provoked by the boldness and severity of his attacks, deposed him, bound him neck and hands with irons (as they had done at least once before), and in that condition banished him. He died in exile. The church commemorates him as a martyr on the eleventh of February. (*Adapted from A Dictionary of Greek and Roman Biography and Mythology*)



## Also Commemorated Today

St. [Vsevolod](#) (in holy baptism Gabriel), prince and wonderworker of Pskov (1138).  
Venerable [Demetrius](#), monk of Priluki (Vologda), w/w (1392).  
St. [Theodora](#), wife of Emperor Theophilus the Iconoclast (867).  
St. [Gregory](#) of Sinai (1346)  
Venerable [Caedmon](#) of Whitby, monk (680) (Celtic & British).  
Venerable [George](#) (Kratovac) the Greatmartyr of Serbia (Greek).  
Finding of the Relics of [Zachariah](#) the Prophet, father of the Forerunner (409)  
St. [Benedict](#), abbot of Aniane (821) (Gaul).  
St. [Ecian](#) (Etchen), Bishop of Cluain-foda in Ireland (577)  
St. [Desideratus](#) (Désiré), bishop of Clermont (6<sup>th</sup> c.) (Gaul)  
[Guardians](#) of the Holy Scriptures, martyrs of NW Africa (c. 303)  
St. [Calocerus](#), Bishop of Ravenna (c. 130) (Italy)  
Hieromartyr [Desiderius](#) (Didier), Bishop of Vienne, defender of Orthodoxy (608)  
(Gaul) (translation; martyred May 23)  
St. [Gregory II](#), pope of Rome (731)  
St. [Lazarus](#), Archbishop of Milan (c. 450)  
St. [Priscus](#), Bishop of Capua and priests Castrensis, Tammarus, Rosius, Heraclius, Secundinus, Adjutor, Mark, Augustus, Elpidius, Canion and Vindonius, confessors (5<sup>th</sup> c. ?)(N. Africa)  
Martyrs [Saturninus](#) (priest), Saturninus (reader), Felix (reader), Dativus, Felix, Ampelius, Victoria (virgin), Mary (virgin), [Hilarion](#) (child), Thelica, Emeritus, Rogatian, and 34 companions of Carthage (304)  
+St. [Severinus](#), Abbot of Agaunum (c. 507) (Switzerland)  
St. [Ardaing](#) (Ardan, [Ardagno](#)), abbot of Tournus (1056) (Burgundy)

## Social Team for February 18

Team 5 is up next week – Marlena Cooper, Mary Watts, Andrew Joseph. Thank you!

## Upcoming Conference

The Institute for the Study of Eastern Christianity at The Catholic University of America is hosting a two day conference on the topic: **Ascetic Practices and the Mind: Mental Healing in Eastern Christianity.**

It will take place at The Catholic University of America on 1-2 March 2024 (Great Room B in the Pryzbyla Center).

This is a conference exploring the early Christian and Byzantine traditions of monastic training in dialogue with current medical therapies derived from neurological research and therapeutic practice and will be a fascinating dialogue between theology and science. Speakers include Athonite monks, theologians, and psychologists. The program includes a prayer clinic and an iconography clinic.

For more information and registration directions, see <https://trs.catholic.edu/lectures-and-events/ascetic-practices-and-the-mind/index.html>

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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.)