

# SOBORNOST

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*American Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Diocese*

*ECUMENICAL PATRIARCHATE  
OF CONSTANTINOPLE*

## **SERVICES**

***Wednesdays in Great Lent: Liturgy  
of Presanctified Gifts 6 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***

***March 31, 2024 – Sunday of St. Gregory Palamas (2<sup>nd</sup>  
Sunday in Great Lent)***

*By St. Luke the Surgeon, Bishop of Simferopol*

*Sermon given on the Second Sunday of Lent*

If on the first Sunday of Great Lent, as you remember, the Holy Church triumphed at the affirmation of Orthodoxy by Seven Ecumenical Synods, then on the second Sunday she honors the memory of Saint Gregory Palamas, the great defender of Orthodoxy. He lived in the 14th century, almost six centuries after the last Ecumenical Synod. He received a comprehensive education, was close to the Byzantine Emperor and served with him, but then left court life and retired to Mount Athos, for his soul strove for constant and inseparable communion with God. In his days, blasphemy arose against monasticism, and especially against the monks of Athos, who were reviled for devoting their entire lives only to serving God, contemplating God and praying.

Saint Gregory denounced these detractors with great force and stood up in defense of Orthodox monasticism. At the same time, the heretic Barlaam arose, who impiously taught that the Lord Jesus Christ, in His great Transfiguration on Mount



Tabor, shone not with Divine, but with simple, earthly light. Saint Gregory denounced this heretic and affirmed the doctrine of the divine origin of the Light of Tabor.

On the feast day of this great saint, like all saints, you hear the words of Christ in the Gospel reading: “Truly, truly, I say to you: whoever does not enter the sheepfold by the door, but climbs in a different way, that one is a thief and a robber. But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep” (John 10:1-2).

Here all false teachers and heretics are compared to thieves and robbers who do not want to humbly enter the holy faith through the door of Orthodoxy, but strive to climb in elsewhere. But there is only one legitimate holy entrance into the Divine teaching, and we have one Teacher - Christ (see Matt. 23:8), and we must follow only Him, and no one else. “I am the door: whoever enters by Me will be saved, and will go in and out, and find pasture” (John 10:9).

At this door He appointed the holy apostles as guardians of the kingdom of heaven, after whom many other good shepherds received successive ordinations; they all teach the good sheep, the flock of Christ, to listen to the voice of the only Teacher and Shepherd, to follow Christ.

There were and are many leaders whom the human race chooses for itself, many teachers who point out the various paths of life. But the Lord Jesus Christ commands us Christians to follow only Him, the Good Shepherd, who lays down His life for His sheep (see John 10:11).

What do all the leaders of men teach, and how do their teachings differ from the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ? All human teachings are aimed at perfecting our social and political life. They talk almost only about how life should be organized from the outside, what state laws to establish, how to achieve the most perfect form of government. Much wisdom, much greatness, much usefulness is known to us from these human teachings. Before the best and most worthy, before the most just of them, we bow down.

But why do we still follow one Leader, our Lord Jesus Christ? Why do we put His holy teaching above all the political social teachings of the world, even the most just ones? This needs to be understood.

Before the Lord Jesus Christ, the world was deeply alien to what He taught, did not think at all about what He considered the most important and necessary for people, thinking only about the external. The ancient world was convinced that only fair state laws were needed to eradicate evil on earth; and the new world dreams of social equality. But our Good Shepherd spoke about something completely different.

You know that during His forty days of fasting in the wilderness, Satan began to tempt Him. He took Him to a high mountain, showed Him all the kingdoms of the earth and said: "I will give You authority over these kingdoms and their glory ... if you worship me" (Luke 4:6–7). And the Lord answered: "Get away from Me, Satan, for it is written: You shall worship the Lord your God, and serve Him alone" (Luke 4:8).

He rejected political and social power for Himself and did not think about social reforms. And afterwards, on other occasions, He rejected this authority, for when people asked Him to judge their cases, He avoided it, saying: "Who appointed Me to be the judge among you?" (Luke 12:14). And when, before His terrible sufferings on Golgotha, He appeared before Pilate, and he asked Him: "Are You a King?" He answered: "Yes, I am a King, but My kingdom is not of this world" (John 18:33-36). This is important for us - that He is the Leader of a kingdom not of this world, but all the leaders of men are the leaders of the kingdom of this world.

What is the fundamental difference between the teachings of Christ and all human teachings? That He taught us about the kingdom that is within us; taught us to listen to the voice of the heart: "For from within, out of the human heart proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, murders, thefts, covetousness, malice, deceit, lasciviousness, an envious eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness" (Mark 7:21-22) . You will find the same thought in the Gospel of Luke: "A good man brings forth good out of the good treasure of his heart, but an evil man brings forth evil out of the evil treasure of his heart; for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks" (Luke 6:45).

In our spiritual life, and consequently in all external life, which is in the closest connection with spiritual life, our heart reigns and dominates over our mind, over our will and aspirations. We think the way the heart wants, we believe what the heart likes, we direct our will in accordance with the aspirations of the heart. Feeling, the organ of which is the heart, dominates all our thinking, faith, knowledge, over the whole worldview, over all social and political aspirations.

As our heart is, such is our activity. If the heart is pure, holy, imbued with ardent love for the Lord Jesus Christ, then all deeds, all thoughts, all social and political views, all our philosophy will be imbued with this feeling, these holy commands of the heart. And then, from the good treasure of our hearts, we will bear good fruits in all our activities, and above all, in everyday life, in communication with people around us. And if dark evil reigns in the heart, then, no matter how perfect the social and state structure, no matter how fair the established laws are, it will do evil. No laws, no social order can curb the human heart.

People seek to punish evil with judicial punishments, but evil continues, crimes do not stop. You know that even with the most perfect structure of the state, there are many low, dishonest people who do evil and with all their activities destroy everything good, and with the aspirations of their black hearts hinder it and deprive it of strength; there are many selfish people who care only about themselves, who do not stop at crushing everyone who stands in their way of life. You know how many depraved people there are, and no laws can achieve that all people become pure and kind, so that there are no dishonest people, no egoists.

Only the Lord Jesus Christ can do this, for He brought us His Divine teaching about what our heart should be like, how we should correct it. And with His Blood and His Body, which we partake of, He gives us strength to fight evil, to purify our hearts. That is why He is the only Holy Leader for us, for the eradication of evil cannot and never will be achieved by human leaders. We need Divine grace, Divine power to correct human hearts, we need grace-filled help to people in the fight against evil. How can we not love with all our hearts the Lord Jesus Christ, Who taught us the deepest truth, drew our attention to our hearts, brought the Divine and luminous teaching about love for one's neighbor?

And it should be noted that what He taught - love, mercy, meekness, humility - was deeply alien to the hearts of the pagans. They revered not meekness, but pride, they considered it an inexcusable weakness to give alms to the poor. They had widely developed slavery, degrading human dignity; they did not consider slaves as people and treated them like cattle. Words of love, meekness, humility and mercy would sound wild and absurd among them. But these words were resounded throughout the world in the Divine teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ and gradually conquered human hearts. And instead of the former pride and contempt for people, the recognition of the dignity of precisely these qualities was established.

Therefore, every Christian must remember that one must purify one's heart, eradicate evil thoughts from it, and strive to make it holy. The holy Apostle James says: "Correct your hearts, you double-minded ones; lament, weep and wail; may your laughter turn into weeping, and your joy into sorrow. Humble yourself before the Lord and He will exalt you" (James 4:9-10).

Humble yourself before the Lord, repent of what defiles your hearts, fill your life with the desire for love, goodness and mercy, and then the grace of the Holy Spirit will rest upon you. Amen. *(from johnsanidopoulos.com)*

### **Today's Epistle Lesson – St. Paul's Letter to the Hebrews 1:10-2:3 EOB**

Brethren, of the Son he says, "You, Lord, in the beginning, laid the foundation of the earth. The heavens are the works of your hands. They will perish, but you continue. They all will grow old as a garment; as a mantle, you will roll them up,

and they will be changed; but you are the same. Your years will not fail. Indeed, to which of the angels did he ever say, Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies the footstool of your feet? Are the angels not all ministering spirits, sent out to serve for the sake of those who will inherit salvation? Therefore, we should pay greater attention to the things that we were taught, for fear that we may drift away. Certainly, if the word spoken through angels proved reliable and every transgression and disobedience received a just penalty, how will we escape if we neglect so great a salvation! It was first announced by the Lord himself, and it is confirmed to us by those who heard him.

### **Today's Gospel Lesson – Saint Mark 2:1-12 EOB**

At that time, when Jesus returned to Capernaum, it was heard that he was in the house. Immediately, many people gathered so that there was no more room, not even around the door. As Jesus was preaching the word to them, four men came, carrying a paralytic to him. Since they could not come near Jesus because of the crowd, they removed the roof where he was. When they had broken it up, they let down the mat which the paralytic was lying on. Seeing their faith, Jesus said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven you." But there were some of the scribes sitting there, and they reasoned in their hearts, "Why does this man speak blasphemies like that? Who can forgive sins except God alone?" Immediately, Jesus perceived in his spirit that they were reasoning within themselves in this way. He asked them, "Why do you reason these things in your hearts? Which is easier, to tell the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Arise, take up your bed, and walk?' But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins" - he said to the paralytic - "I tell you, arise, take up your mat, and go to your house!" The man arose, and at once took up the mat, and went out in front of everyone. The people were all amazed and glorified God, saying, "We have never seen anything like this!"

## **A Word From the Holy Fathers**

Prooimion I – In the time of Noah You washed sin away; at the of the Last Judgment, You will save the race of man through baptism, I Christ God, and You intend to purify the earth again with fire. Hence, we make supplication for those who worship You as merciful; save all from Your anger through Your love for us, Redeemer of all.

Prooimion II – In Your anger in the time of Noah, You washed away the sea of sins through Your power; in the Last Judgment, O Christ god, You will renew the world through baptism, and later You shall purify the earth with fire; but save us from Your anger though Your love for us, Redeemer of all.

When I consider the threatening of the guilty ones, which they survived in the days of Noah, I tremble as I think of the terrible charges against me – charges full of condemnation. As for them, the Creator threatened them in a way that was pointed out to them in advance, whereas, in our case, it is not known when the day of the Last Judgment will come nor indeed has it been revealed to the angels the day in which Christ, the Lord before all time, will come, borne on clouds, as Daniel observed, to judge the earth. Before the critical moment of the end is upon us, let us beseech Christ and cry out to Him, “Save all from Your anger through Your love for us, Redeemer of all.”

In order that we may know the events of the day of Noah, let us listen to the words of the Scripture, for the Lover of men spoke clearly to Noah when He saw the wickedness of the men of old: “A critical time for all mankind has come to my attention, for earth is full of every kind of evil; now I shall bring them and all their offspring to ruin to eradicate sin, since all things are full of corruption. Of all their race, you are the one and only person who is just and pleasing in my sight; you have flourished in the manner of a rose among thorns. So, heed my words to bring about my will as you cry to me, 'Save all from Your anger through Your love for us, Redeemer of all.'”

“Obtain, then, some logs of wood that have not rotted, and you will make an ark just as I wish it to me, of the kind that I shall show you so that it will bear, as in a womb, the seeds of future races; and make it like a house in the image of the church, in the proportions that I dictate to you. You will make the birds' nests and, having strengthened the ark with tar, build it three hundred cubits in length by fifty in width; assemble and build the roof thirty cubits high. You will prepare for the ark a second third story, set in a cubit above. Make a door in the side of the ark. And in it, I shall protect you as you cry out in faith, 'Save all from Your anger through Your love for us, Redeemer of all.'”

When he heard these words from the Lord, he neglected nothing of what had been told him, but he hastened to follow out the instructions quickly as God had said. As a dutiful servant, he constructed the craft just exactly as the Creator had ordered it. He made nests for the birds and cages for the wild beasts, as the Scripture reports: in the circular space of the decks, ground floor, and second story, a refuge for the beasts; in the same way on the third floor, a refuge for reptiles and winged creatures. He finished everything with faith so that he would not neglect the words of God and seem culpable as he cried out to Him, “Save all from Your anger through Your love for us, Redeemer of all.”

Intelligently, the chosen one completed the work, but the people without knowledge, looking within, knew what had been accomplished, but they considered it some fantasy. The righteous man cried out in faith to those without

faith: “Even now escape the wrath of God, for it will come quickly, and the faithlessness of those now alive will not be connived at unless you are converted, for a sudden and raging flood will come, and the waters will conceal the mountains that you see, and they will destroy the earth, which you lose because of your deeds; but lament bitterly and cry to God, 'Save all from Your anger through Your love for us, Redeemer of all.'”

Seeing the faithlessness of the hostile people and their limitless inhumanity, Noah was sore distressed and prayed for them that they might repent. Seeing the inhabited earth almost to be brought to an end, he groaned in his heart as he cried out to the people, “Turn aside at once from your terrible sin; throw off your wickedness; repent of what you have done; wash away with your tears the filth of your souls; propitiate the power of God in faith. Before the sudden onset of the anger of God comes upon you, wiping you out, call out to Him, 'Save all from Your anger through Your love for us, Redeemer of all.'”

Wishing to educate them by a miracle, when He heard the prayer of the righteous man, the Lord brought together all the beasts in the mountains into the presence of Noah, as formerly in the presence of the first man. The wild beasts feared the anger of God; the animals were afraid, but the mortals, like dumb beasts, did not reject their wickedness but considered that they were seeing visions. The thrice-blessed Noah addressed them, “You do not believe my words; believe, then, the dumb beasts whom you see there – for the wolves and the lambs stand together; serpents are with birds – yet you do not cry to God, 'Save all from Your anger through Your love for us, Redeemer of all.'”

Praying with wise teaching, he did not convert the sons of disobedience; indeed, they even added to their evil deeds, and the wretched ones remained obdurate. Such hardness of heart appeared in Egypt in the disobedience of the people of Pharaoh. Does a hard heart, blinded by folly, not direct itself to death? That is what was revealed in another case; the giants of old were destroyed in a flood, just as the Egyptians were along with Pharaoh in the sea, and the impious people dwelling in Sodom were immediately destroyed. Of the Sodomites God saved Lot who cried out, “Save all from Your anger through Your love for us, Redeemer of all.”

When he collected a large number of the wild beasts, and the birds and serpents were all in one place – for all were lined up in order by the command of the Creator, ready to enter the ark – the servant begged the Judge with a prayer unswerving in faith to keep him blameless in all circumstances. He wisely led the innumerable animals into the rooms of the three stories, just as the All-Powerful One had said. The impure, he enclosed in twos; and the pure, as it is written, in

groups of seven; and as he divided them, he cried out to the Exalted One, “Do not desert me, Savior, who sees all, but save me always as I cry to You in faith, 'Save all from Your anger through Your love for us, Redeemer of all.'”

After that he scorned the stupid men and their immeasurable inhumanity; he despised them all and thought only of what was to come, as he prayed to God through his tears: “O my God, formerly You brought me forth from my mother; save me also in this good ark. I am shut up in it as in a tomb; from it, I shall come forth through Your power just as from a tomb at Your command. In it, I shall be the prototype of the resurrection common to all men, in which You are to save the just from fire, as You save me from the midst of the impious, snatching me away in the ocean of evil as I cry out in faith you You, the Merciful Judge, 'Save all from Your anger through Your love for us, Redeemer of all.'”

Then when the wise man had done everything in orderly fashion, according to the command of god, he quickly went into the ark along with his sons and their wives, only eight people. Groaning ceaselessly, the servant prayed, “Do not destroy me, O Lord, along with the sinners; even now the created world is thrown into confusion, and the elements are agitated in fear as the universe is shaken; clouds have been made ready and the sky is overcast; the angels run ahead as precursors of the threat.” As he said this, God made the ark secure and sealed it, while the man of faith cried out, “Save all from Your anger through Your love for us, Redeemer of all.”

From Heaven on high, the Judge then gave orders and at once the floodgates were opened up, letting loose the torrents, streams, and the pelting storm to the ends of the earth; and the sources of the rivers of the abyss broke asunder in fear, inundating every spot of the earth. Even the loftiest mountains disappeared, and dry land was nowhere seen, but it was as it had been in the beginning. The waters rose up even to fifteen cubits, and everything was concealed that had appeared from the beginning, because of the anger of god, since mortals remained in hardness of heart and did not hasten in faith to cry out to Him, “Save all from Your anger through Your love for us, Redeemer of all.”

Crowds of dumb beasts were pressed close together, and mortals were destroyed along with them; the valleys were torn asunder, and the hills disappeared, passing into the infinite. The abyss resounded and the thunder crashed; lightning vividly cast its flashes; mountains sank into the depths of the sea as the earth was engulfed and as the winds came up in hurricane violence. The giants were destroyed, men in ancient times; the endlessly provoked the Lord to anger from the beginning. Because they disregarded Him, they were submerged in the magnitude of the rains,



and they were buried in the abyss, since they did not cry out, “Save all from Your anger through Your love for us, Redeemer of all.”

When all heedlessness and corruption had been removed, and when all those in the flesh were brought to ruin, the rains did not stop until everything existing on the earth was entirely destroyed. For forty days and an equal number of nights the water rose to great heights. Then the Lord remembered His chosen one, and suddenly He withdrew the clouds as He sent forth a breath of peace. He confined the abyss and covered over the springs, and so the waters separated from the dry land at His command; and in the tenth month, the Scripture says, the tops of the mountains were seen, and the man of faith cried to Him, “Save all from Your anger through Your love for us, Redeemer of all.”

When the All-Merciful One had separated the waters in His incomprehensible power, having stilled His wrath, in His kindness of heart He pitied all those in the ark. The Merciful One was mindful of His image, which He had fashioned with His own hands through love. He let loose the winds, caused the water to recede for several days, I think, and to return to what it was before, in its normal channels; and the dry earth appeared. And so the ark rested, as the Scripture says, on Mount Ararat; and straightway the flood was brought to an end and withdrew from it, as the man of faith prayed with acceptable plea, “Save all from Your anger through Your love for us, Redeemer of all.”

After that, the choir of angels, on seeing the people, corporeal beings, destroyed, cried out, “Now may the just prevail to the ends of the earth, for the Creator gladly saw those made in His image.” That is why He saves His saints as His own. Noah opened up a window, looked at the sky, and cried out to his family, “do not be depressed; take courage.” the saint at once sent forth the raven and it did not come back, since it wintered outside, for it always prefers the winter season, rejoicing in the north wind – and so it did not return to those who cried out, “Save all from Your anger through Your love for us, Redeemer of all.”

Noah sent forth a dove, which is pure among the birds, and it immediately turned back to the righteous one since it found no place to rest. Then, waiting seven days, he sent it forth again, and it returned about evening, having an olive branch in its beak. This was a sign from God symbolizing His mercy for the truly happy man. Noah straightway came forth from the tomb, according to the order he received, along with all who were within; but it was not as it was formerly with Adam, for he had not eaten of the tree that brings death, but he had produced the fruit of repentance when he cried, “Save all from Your anger through Your love for us, Redeemer of all.”

Since corruption and iniquity are dead, the upright man conquered through his belief, acceptable in his faith, he and his descendants shining on the earth as they did in the beginning. Then the just one offered up to the Lord a blameless sacrifice with oft-repeated prayer. The Creator breathed a sweet-smelling scent, and He was invoked in His mercy. Strengthening His promise with an oath He declared, "Never again will the universe be destroyed by flood, even though all men are given over to wickedness. Now I establish with them a covenant not to be broken, showing my bow as a token to those on earth, so that they may cry out to me, 'Save all from Your anger through Your love for us, Redeemer of all.'"

When the wise man saw the whole earth crowned with many colored flowers, he sowed seed on the arable land, awaiting the fertility of the earth. He planted a vine and started an olive tree; soon he received a fruitful harvest. In gathering the vintage, he found solace for sorrow; but drinking too much, he became drunk, and as he slept and snored he was naked. Then the Slanderer, not bearing it when he saw a mortal without care, by trickery incited one of the brothers to laugh at his own father, and the wise man, when he sobered up cursed Cain and blessed the other two because they had covered him up. He said, "Save all from Your anger through Your love for us, Redeemer of all."

Adam fell because of his transgression, and Cain was found guilty through his transgression. The Scripture inquired into these things by way of warning, and for our reproof. So, avoiding error, let us conquer all the wiles of the tricky Enemy through faith. Becoming children of baptism without stain, let us not be led into sin like Judas, the lover of silver; for he left behind the true vine and produced thorns. When he became arid he was destroyed. Therefore, let us be the vine of the Lord Sabaoth, we who love Christ, as we show good deeds and cry out to Him, "Save all from Your anger through Your love for us, Redeemer of all."

– St. Romanos the Melodist, *Kontakion O.40 On Noah*

## **Faith and Works: An Orthodox Philokalic Perspective**

By Dr. George D. Panagopoulos

(continued from last week) **3. Roman Catholic "created grace" and Protestant "sola fide": An Orthodox Philokalic Response**

As is known, Roman Catholic theology understands justification as the result of the infusion (infusio) of grace into man as a supernatural state (habitus) or attribute, since the justice of God the Father was "satisfied" through the death of the Savior on the cross (Anselm of Canterbury). Created grace raises (gratia elevans) man to the level that now allows him, as a new creation, to lovingly respond to God's grace by performing good works. The grace of justification (gratia gratum faciens) is thus understood as a created measure that is added to and exists in the believer

(*gratia inharens*) in order to make his will to turn to God with perfectly formed faith, love and hope (*fides caritate et spe formata*). The works performed in this state of justification are considered meritorious (*merita*) and are therefore rewarded by God after death with eternal life, which, according to Roman Catholic theology, lies in the beatific vision (*visio beatifica*) of the divine essence and of the intra-trinitarian projections (in this regard see the most representative modern Roman Catholic Dogmatic: G. L. Müller, *Katholische Dogmatik*, *passim*).

This is a metaphysical-religious approach that is incompatible with the Judeo-biblical and patristic testimony. No wonder that they were soon to receive what we may call "arrows from home". In fact, late Scholastic theologians, such as the great Duns Scotus, will challenge this teaching by pointing out its impermissible theological implications, especially regarding divine freedom: How is it possible that a created existence (such as justifying grace or meritorious works) compels God to reward man with eternal life? In the end, nothing created is of its kind capable of evoking God's salvific response out of necessity ("*Nihil creatum formaliter est a Deo acceptandum*").

The countdown to Luther's revolution had begun. And nothing could symbolize this revolution more than the rejection of meritorious works and the ultimately obsessive promotion of the "soloistic" triptych: *solus Christus, sola gratia, sola fide*. However, it is worth noting that both Western traditions (Roman Catholic and Protestant) work on a common basis: The goal is not the therapeutic change of man, but the change of God's attitude towards man. God accepts the "satisfaction" that Christ offered to His justice offended by man's sin with His death on the cross, and thus creates in the soul the created existence of justifying grace to make man sufficient for the merits of eternal life (Vatican), or He offers the believer the certainty of salvation by His grace alone and by faith alone (Protestant). In both traditions, the Cross of Christ primarily refers to His relationship with the Father, and not to the crushing of death and "he who has its power" (Heb. 2:14); and in both traditions, salvation does not follow directly from the mystery of the Cross and the Resurrection, but it is mediated either by an institutional mechanism or by a judicial decision on an individual level!

Despite the highly concise and unavoidably simplistic presentation of Roman Catholic and Protestant soteriology, it becomes evident that the Orthodox doctrine of grace, works and justification is far from being identified with or similar to any of them. This erroneous view was previously even found in Orthodox dogmatic manuals. For example, the great Christos Androustos (*Dogmatics of the Orthodox Eastern Church*, 251) regarded the Roman Catholic teaching on "merits" and "infused grace" and virtues as identical with the Orthodox.

But even in our days, the Russian dogmatician Oleg Davydenkov (*Dogmatic Theology*, Moscow 2016, Russian, 466) teaches, obviously influenced by the scholastic distinctions of grace, that man cannot use the grace that is given to him "objectively" in Baptism but also needs "outside" divine help (sic). He overlooks here that Baptism, but also in the baptismal life of the believer, where Christ himself unfolds through the mystery of Pentecost, acts in accordance with the uncreated power of the Cross, on the one hand, towards the destruction of sin, and on the other hand, the growth of the believer until he is filled "in all the fullness of God". In fact, the "illumination" of Baptism takes place in the Holy Chrismation, which in the Orthodox liturgical tradition is temporally linked to Baptism and makes the believer "active" in terms of spiritual energies (Nicholas Cabasilas). From then on, divine help is not required from "outside", but from within and, of course, is constantly renewed in those with "willing good dispositions" (Maximus the Confessor). And this since the one who through asceticism and martyrdom goes through "the stages of Christ" (Symeon the New Theologian), living the life of Christ in the mysteries and in his life! In any case, a look at Saint Diadochos or Saint Mark - among many others - would have convinced Davydenkov of the superficiality of his point of view.

Therefore, nothing is more misleading than such opinions. Even at those points where the same terminology is used in Orthodox contexts as Roman Catholics, the theological conditions and pastoral implications are diametrically opposed. And this for the following reasons, which the Philokalic literature puts forward and confirms:

- a) The grace of God, and of course the energy of justification in Christ, is an uncreated essential energy of the triune God that is shared in the Church as a foretaste of the Eschaton of the incorruption of the Spirit (Saint Gregory Palamas gives special emphasis to this point; cf. B. Tsingos, *Prologue to the Theological Epistemology of Saint Gregory of Palamas*, Thessaloniki 2010, passim).
- b) Salvation and eternal life do not lie in the vision of the divine essence in the hereafter (such a doctrine is regarded by the Fathers as blasphemous), but in the communion of the sanctifying and divine-making or at least illuminating energy of the Triune God and a prior participation in the uncreated Glory and His Kingdom already from within in the life of selfless love, which treads the threshold of death unscathed (cf. Rom. 8:35).
- c) This charismatic state begins from the very beginning of the historical navigation of the Church (in statu viae) and will be completed or rather it will be perfected without end during the General Resurrection with the "redemption" of our body, hence also our true life and divine adoption will be revealed with Christ and in Christ to the glory of God the Father.

d) For these reasons, justification is understood as vivification through communion with the uncreated grace of the mystery of the Cross within the resurrected humanity of the Lord of the Church in a specific place and time (the irreplaceable importance of the local "synaxis" of the Church "in the same place" ). It ends in selfless love, which is the other facet of glorification!

e) In light of this, finally, the works of believers born again in Christ are not and cannot be worthy of reward (meritorious), since nothing that man naturally performs can "force" God to reciprocate; rather, they are healing (therapeutic), which means that they cleanse us from passions, and they protect our freedom given in Christ by grace (Mark the Ascetic; John Chrysostom, *PG 57*, 233 and *PG 60*, 515; Nicholas Cabasilas, *The Life in Christ*, in *Sources Chretiennes I*, 90).

According to this, even when the Fathers teach that God honored man with free will, "in order that God might belong to him as the result of his choice, no less than to Him who had implanted the seeds of it" (Gregory the Theologian, Homily 38, 12), they emphasize that the freedom of the human will is God-given and its participation in the process of sanctification is necessary; however, they do not mean that good works are worthy of reward (meritorious) in the sense of a "rewarding" supposedly binding on God. Such a thing, moreover, would conflict with the clear assurance of Christ himself: "When you have done all that you were commanded, say, 'We are unworthy servants; we have only done what was our duty'" (Lk. 17:10; cf. also the Psalm: "You are my Lord, because you have no need of my good things" Ps. 15:2; Ezek. 36:22: "I do not this for your sakes, O house of Israel, but for mine holy name's sake"; and Is. 64:6). (*from johnsanidopoulos.com*)  
(to be continued next week)

### **Called to be Conquerors by Fr. Stephen De Young**

[The idea of conquest] is not always necessarily bad. Why do I say that? Well, because we also [see] that word and that concept, briefly, [in] the letters to the seven churches in the book of Revelation. That terminology is actually used in all seven of them, and it's used in terms of the promise. Depending on your translation, it'll say "to the one who overcomes," or just straightforwardly, "to the one who conquers." To the one who conquers, this will be given: a white robe will be given, a new name will be given. They will sit upon Christ's throne with him.

The question is: Who or what are we conquering? And what St. John is talking about in Revelation...really, Christ—those letters were dictated by Christ to St. John in the book of Revelation—what Christ is talking about there is not setting up an empire on this earth—business, political, military, whatever, popularity, likes, as an influencer. What Christ is talking about ... where he talks about the fact that he himself had conquered, and he himself conquered—not the Roman Empire

literally, in the sense of he didn't go to Rome and kill Caesar and make himself Caesar. He conquered the very demonic powers that we've been talking about all evening.

So if that's what Christ did, what does it mean for *us* to conquer? What are we called upon to conquer as Christians, to be the one who overcomes, the one who conquers? Allow me to suggest that who we each need to conquer is ourselves.... Our self, our soul, is the territory that we need to conquer, and to conquer it we're going to have to drive out the evil spirits and their influence that has taken up residence.

So ...here's what that looks like. We're going to have to conquer our pride; we're going to have to conquer our ego. You don't do that by sitting around thinking about how horrible you are and moping, or putting on big displays of humility. That's not conquering pride. In fact, that kind of still is pride. What conquering pride looks like is that your ego cannot make you do anything. Someone cannot walk up to you and insult you and thereby ruin your day, cause you to sin against other people, cause you to want to take revenge against them. If you've conquered your own ego, then the worst insult that can be leveled at you, you will take as food for thought: "Is there something legitimate here I can learn from?" Maybe not, but maybe there is.

It means we need to conquer our envy and our jealousy. What does that look like? That looks like, when someone around us is rejoicing and is happy and has had something good and wonderful happen to them, we're rejoicing and happy with them as if it happened to us. We're not bitter and angry that they got something we didn't or didn't have or wanted. We're not jealous. We don't resent them. But we're actually happy, in fact, maybe even happier that it happened to them than that it happened to us, no matter who they are, whether we like them or not, whether we get along with them or not. That's what actually conquering and mastering jealousy and envy in yourself looks like.

And we could say the same about any other sin, whether it's on the list of seven deadly sins or not. Conquering ourselves, mastering ourselves, means that there is no force, there is no passion, there is nothing outside of us that can *cause* us to react and to do anything; that we are able to set our own limits, that we are able to choose to do that which we want to do in following Christ and in becoming like him. And that's not something that you just do on a Wednesday. "Today I mastered myself; today I conquered myself." This is a battle that goes on throughout our entire lives. The day when we can say whether or not we are the one who conquers is when Christ tells us so when we reach the end. Until then, we fight—to purify ourselves, to purge ourselves, from these dark and evil influences, to set ourselves right.

...Repentance is not about feeling bad. It's not about moping; it's not about wearing a hair shirt—unless you're St. John of the Hair Shirt. But repentance is about fighting back and about taking back your own life and your own self and your own soul, by mastering yourself, so that hopefully we can be those ones on the last day, whom Christ rewards with a palm branch and a white robe and a new name, and ultimately to come to share in his reign and to rule over his creation. (from the Lord of Spirits episode "[Fall of Man Part 3: The Gate to Heaven](#)", August 11, 2022)

## **Hieromartyr Hypatios the Wonderworker, Bishop of Gangra**

*A woman slays by casting a stone in a vital area, Hypatios, alas wretched woman!  
On the thirty-first Hypatios was carried off to life.*

Hieromartyr Hypatios was bishop of the city of Gangra in Paphlagonia (Asia Minor). In the year 325 he participated in the First Ecumenical Synod at Nicea, at which the heresy of Arius was anathematized. After defeating and burning a dragon that had entered into the treasury of the emperor, the Saint departed Constantinople.

When Hypatios was returning in 326 from Constantinople to Gangra, followers of the schismatics Novatus and Felicissimus fell upon him in a desolate place. The heretics ran him through with swords and spears, and threw him into a swamp. Like the Protomartyr Stephen, Saint Hypatios prayed for his murderers.

An Arian woman struck the Saint on the head with a stone, killing him. The murderers hid his body in a cave, where a Christian who kept straw there found his body. Recognizing the bishop's body, he hastened to the city to report this, and the inhabitants of Gangra piously buried their beloved archpastor.

After his death, the relics of Saint Hypatios were famous for numerous miracles, particularly for casting out demons and for healing the sick. Portions of his relics can be found in various places, including Iveron Monastery at Mount Athos and Prophet Elias Monastery in Zacholi of Corinth.

A large church was built in his honor in Gangra where his relics rested, but it was destroyed by the Truks in 1922. In 1975 a new church was built in his honor in the village of Antigonos in Florina, Greece by refugees who had come from Gangra in 1922 and there they placed the icon of the Saint that was in his old church.

From of old the Hieromartyr Hypatios was particularly venerated in the Russian land. Thus in the year 1330 the Ipatiev Monastery was built at Kostroma, on the place where the Mother of God appeared with the Pre-eternal Christ Child, the Apostle Philip, and the Hieromartyr Hypatios, Bishop of Gangra. This monastery

later occupied a significant place in the spiritual and social life of the nation, particularly during the Time of Troubles.

The ancient copies of the Life of the Hieromartyr Hypatios were widely distributed in Russian literature, and one of these was incorporated into *The Menaion* of Metropolitan Macarius (1542-1564). In this Life there is an account of the appearance of the Savior to Saint Hypatios on the eve of the martyr's death.

The entry for the Saint's Feast consists of his Life, some prayers, and words of praise and instruction. The pious veneration of Saint Hypatios was also expressed in Russian liturgical compositions. During the nineteenth century a new service was written for the Hieromartyr Hypatios, distinct from the services written by Saint Joseph the Studite, contained in the *March Menaion*. (from *johnsanidopoulos.com*)

### **Venerable Catulle of Paris**

Ven. Catulle was a wealthy matron of Paris in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century. While Hieromartyr Denis and his companions Rusticus and Eleutherius (Oct 9) were imprisoned and underwent trials for their faith in 258 during the persecution of Valerian, St. Catulle courageously assisted them. After their martyrdom, she dared to gather up the mutilated remains and buried them in a field belonging to herself, later included in the possessions of the abbey of Saint-Denis. A basilica, superbly ornamented and famous for the miracles wrought there, was raised upon Catulle's field long before the invasion of the Franks toward the end of the 5<sup>th</sup> century. (adapted from *A Loiterer in Paris* by Helen W. Henderson)

### **Also Commemorated Today**

Repose of St. [Jonah](#), metropolitan of Kiev, Moscow, and all Russia (1461).

St. [Innocent](#) of Moscow, enlightener of Alaska and Siberia (1879).

New Hieromartyr [John](#) priest (1938).(OC)

New Hieroconfessor [Anthony](#) (Galysnky-Mikhailovsky), Archbishop (1976)

St. [Hypatius](#) the Healer of the Kiev Caves (14th c.).

Venerable [Apollonius](#), ascetic of the Thebaid (395).

Martyrs Abdas ([Audas](#)) the Bishop, Benjamin the Deacon and those with them, of Persia (424).

Venerable [Hypatius](#), abbot of Rufinus in Chalcedon, w/w (446).

Martyr [Theophilus](#) and his family of Crete (unk)

[Appearance](#) of the "Iberian" ("Iveron") Icon of the Most Holy Theotokos.

Righteous [Joseph](#) the Fair, son of Jacob (ca. 1700 B.C.).

38 [Martyrs](#), beheaded by the sword under Julian (361-363).

Saint [Akakios](#) the Confessor, Bishop of Meletinia (249-251).



Venerable [Blaise](#) of Amorium and Mt. Athos (908) (Greek).  
Martyr [Menander](#) (Greek).  
St. [Stephen](#) the Wonderworker, monk (Greek).  
St. [Aldhelm](#) (Adhelm, Aldelmus), bishop of Malmesbury (Sherbourne) (709)  
(translation; reposed May 25)  
St. [Aldo](#), abbot of Hasnon (late 8<sup>th</sup> c.)(Belgium)  
St. [Balbina](#), virgin of Rome (c. 130)  
St. [Guy](#) (Guido), abbot of St. Severus (1046)(Italy)  
St. [Renovatus](#), bishop of Merida (c. 633)(Spain)  
Martyrs [Theodulus](#), Anesius, Felix, Cornelia, and companions (unk)(N. Africa)  
St. [Catullus](#), matron of Paris, who buried St. Denis and companions (3<sup>rd</sup> c.)  
St. [Derhel](#) (Arhel), hermit of Guidel in Brittany (6<sup>th</sup> c.)  
St. [Dreno](#), hermit of Tregor in Brittany (6<sup>th</sup> c.)

### Social Team for April 7

Team 2 is up next week – Carrie LaMere, Phyllis Kopan. Thank you!

#### Follow Our Diocese On-Line

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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, Marlene Doukas, Linda A. Georgiev, Sandi Hebel, Howl family, Helen P. Janowiak, John M. Janowiak, Johnson family, 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, Fr. Nectaros & Ia, Mother Virginia Marie & the Carmelite Nuns of Port Tobacco, the suffering people of Ukraine & the Holy Land, the newly reposed handmaiden of God Mary Diane David, and those in need of our prayers. (Please advise Fr. Joseph of changes.)