

# SOBORNOST

**St. Thomas the Apostle Orthodox Church**

**(301) 638-5035 Church**

**4419 Leonardtown Road**

**Waldorf, MD 20601**

**Very Rev. Father Joseph Edgington,  
Pastor**

**(703) 532-8017**

[fredgington@gmail.com](mailto:fredgington@gmail.com)

[www.apostlethomas.org](http://www.apostlethomas.org)

*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**

**April 7, 2024 – 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday in Great Lent (Veneration  
of the Precious & Life-Giving Cross)**

By St. Luke the Surgeon, Bishop of Simferopol

In Deuteronomy, the fifth book of the great prophet Moses, it is written: “Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree” (Deut. 21:23). The chief priests, scribes and Pharisees, who crucified the Lord Jesus Christ as the villain who ruined the law of Moses, decided to put Him to the most shameful death in order to forever brand His name with a curse.

Oh, envy and human malice! They dared to call Him a villain, a violator of the law, Who raised the dead, raised even the four-days-dead Lazarus, Who opened the eyes of the blind, worked countless miracles, commanded the waves of the sea and the winds. But the Lord Jesus Christ Himself spoke of Himself that He did not come to abolish the law, but to fulfill it.

Whom to believe: is it the one whose tongue, set on fire by the hellish flame, repeated such terrible words, or the Lord Jesus Christ Himself? We believe and confess that it was not a villain hanging on the Cross, but the Most Holy and



Greatest Sacrifice to God for the sins of the whole world. We know that the Lord voluntarily gave Himself up to reproach, anguish and torment.

Let us remember what He said to the Apostle Peter, who drew the knife and cut off the ear of the high priest's servant: "Return your sword to its place, for all who take up the sword will perish by the sword. Or do you think that I cannot now plead with My Father, and He will present Me with more than twelve legions of angels?" (Matthew 26:52-53). He who obeyed the elements could have destroyed all His enemies. But He did not do this: He voluntarily went to terrible torment, He gave Himself up to be crucified.

Countless hosts of Heavenly Powers were waiting for only a mere nod from Him to protect Him from the shameful and terrible death on the Cross. But He did not give a nod, having ascended willingly to the Cross. And all the Powers of heaven bowed in trembling and horror before His Cross, before the One Who gave Himself, His Blood, for the sake of our salvation from sins, from the power of the devil.

Oh, what a terrible, grave sin the ancient high priests, scribes and Pharisees committed, slandering the Lord and betraying Him to a shameful execution! But did they achieve what they so strongly desired, did they bring a curse on His name and on all His teachings? No, on the contrary, they were an instrument of the will of God for the glorification of the Life-Giving Cross and the Savior of the world.

Many martyrs of Christ were crucified on crosses, hung on trees, but they are not cursed by God, but shine in heaven like stars - they are not cursed, but blessed by God. For villains, the gallows will forever remain a disgrace, but the sufferings of the martyrs for the sake of the Lord glorify them both among people and in heaven.

...We, Orthodox Christians, deeply honor the cross of Christ and carry it on our chest all our lives. Jews, Muslims, and all unbelievers do not wear a cross... they do not understand that everything that comes into contact with the most pure Body of the God-man receives great sanctification.

[Protestants] do not honor our Orthodox feasts, including the feast of the Exaltation of the Cross of the Lord, and they know nothing about the miracle that took place in the fourth century in Jerusalem, when Empress Helen, Equal-to-the-Apostles, destroyed the pagan temple erected on Golgotha and found under it three identical crosses. It was necessary to find out which of them is the cross of Christ. How could this be done? This was indicated by God Himself. At that moment a dead man was being carried to his burial. Patriarch Makarios ordered to stop the procession and lay the found crosses on the deceased. And when they laid the third cross on him - the Cross of Christ - he suddenly came to life and sat down.

Love the Cross of Christ, love Christ crucified on it! The more often, the more and more deeply one thinks about the Cross of Christ, about His sufferings, the purer, better, kinder the heart will become, and these thoughts will drive out from it all those black and filthy things that prevents the Spirit of God from creating His abode there.

Is there anything more useful to us than the constant remembrance of the Cross of Christ? Is there a stronger urge to hate the evil of life, to love the good, to love love? No, it cannot be. That is why many thousands of people who later became venerable monastics, shocked by what they heard while reading about the sufferings of Christ on the Cross, forgot everything in the world, left everything, and were no longer interested in anything. For them, as for the Apostle Paul, the whole world was crucified to them, and they themselves were crucified together with Christ. They devoted their whole lives to deep reflection on the sufferings of Christ, contemplated the Cross of Christ all their lives, and hot tears flowed in streams from their pure eyes, leaving inflamed furrows on their cheeks.

We are far from them, but it is very good that on these holy days you come to the temple and listen with tenderness to the Passion of Christ, because it will be a balm for the soul, a cure for vices, for the evils nesting in the heart, the conscience will torment and anguish, with memories of the Passion of Christ. Look more often at the Cross of Christ and shed at least one tear for Him Who is crucified on it for our accursed vices, for our countless sins!

Come, all faithful servants of the Lord Jesus, let us bow down with love and venerate His Cross, by which He saved us from the power of the devil. Amen.  
*(from johnsanidopoulos.com)*

### **Today's Epistle Lesson – St. Paul's Letter to the Hebrews 4:14-5:6 EOB**

Brethren, Since we have such a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold on firmly to our confession. Certainly, we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our infirmities, but one who has been tempted in all things just as we are, yet without sin. Therefore, let us approach the throne of grace with boldness, so that we may receive mercy and find grace for assistance in time of need.

Every high priest is selected from among men and is appointed for their sake in matters pertaining to God, so that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for [their] sins. The high priest can deal gently with those who are ignorant and going astray since he himself is also subject to weakness. Because of this, he must offer sacrifices for the sins of the people, as well as for himself. Moreover, nobody assumes this honor by himself but one is called by God, just as Aaron was.

Likewise, Christ did not glorify himself to be made a high priest, but it was God who said to him: “You are my Son: Today I have become your father.” As he says also in another place: “You are a priest forever, According to the order of Melchizedek.”

### **Today’s Gospel Lesson – Saint Mark 8:34-9:1 EOB**

At that time, Jesus called the multitude to himself with his disciples and said to them, “Whoever wants to come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me. Indeed, whoever wants to save his life will lose it; and whoever will lose his life for my sake and for the sake of the Good News will save it. What does it profit if someone, to gain the whole world, loses his life? For what will someone give in exchange for his life? Whoever will be ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man also will be ashamed of when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.” Jesus said to them, “Amen, I tell you that there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the Kingdom of God come with power.”

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

Prooimion I – Now the flaming sword no longer guards the gates of Paradise; it has been mysteriously quenched by the wood of the Cross! The sting of death and the victory of hell have been vanquished; for You, O my Savior did come and cry to those in hell: ‘Enter again into Paradise’.

Prooimion II – Nailed to the form of the Cross as truly a ransom for many, You redeemed us, Christ our God, for by your precious blood in love for mankind You snatched our souls from death. You brought us back with you again to Paradise.

Prooimion III – All things in heaven and earth rightly rejoice with Adam, because he has been called again to Paradise.

Three crosses Pilate fixed on Golgotha, two for the thieves and one for the Giver of life, whom Hades saw and said to those below, ‘My ministers and powers, who has fixed a nail in my heart? A wooden lance has suddenly pierced me and I am being torn apart. My insides are in pain, my belly in agony. My senses make my spirit tremble, and I am compelled to disgorge Adam and Adam’s race, given me by a tree. A tree is bringing them back again to Paradise’.

When he heard this, the cunning serpent ran crawling and cried, ‘Hades, what is it? Why do you groan for no reason? Why produce these wailings? This tree, at which you tremble, I carpentered up there for Mary’s child. I intimated it to the Jews for our advantage, for it is a cross to which I have nailed Christ, wishing by a tree to do away with the second Adam. So do not upset yourself. It will not plunder you.

Keep hold of those you have. Of those whom we rule not one escapes again to Paradise.’

‘Away with you, come to your senses, Beliar’, cries Hades ‘Run, open your eyes, and see the root of the tree inside my soul. It has gone down to my depths, to draw up Adam like iron. Elisha of old painted its image in prophecy when he drew the axehead from the river. With a light object the prophet dragged a heavy one, warning you and teaching you that by a tree Adam is to be brought up from wretchedness again to Paradise.’

‘Who gave you such an idea, Hades? Whence now this cowardly fear, where once there was no fear, of a worthless tree, dry and barren, made for the removal of malefactors and those who welcome bloodshed? For Pilate discovered it, persuaded by my counsels. And do you fear it, and reckon it powerful? The universal executioner: will it in your view prove a savior? Who has misled you? Who has persuaded you that he who fell by a tree is being raised by a tree, and, that he may dwell there, is being called again to Paradise?’

‘You have suddenly lost your senses, cunning serpent of old. All your wisdom has been swallowed up through the Cross, and you have been caught in your own snare. Lift up your eyes and see that you have fallen into the pit which you created. Behold that tree, which you call dry and barren, bears fruit, having tasted which a thief has become heir to the good things of Eden. For it has outdone the rod which led the people out of Egypt, for it is bringing Adam back again to Paradise.’

‘Wretched Hades, cease this cowardly talk, for these words of yours reveal your thoughts. Were you afraid of a cross and of the crucified One? Not one of your words has shaken me, for these deeds are part of my plan, for I would again both open a grave and entomb Christ. So you may enjoy your cowardice double, from his tomb as well as from his cross. But when I see you, I shall mock you. For when Christ is buried I shall come to you and say, “Who now is bringing Adam back again to Paradise?”’

Suddenly Hades began to call out to the devil—the eyeless to the sightless, the blind to the blind—‘Look, You are walking in darkness, feel around, lest you fall. Consider what I tell you, hard of heart, Because what you are doing has quenched the sun. For the tree which you boast of has shaken the universe, has convulsed the earth, hidden the sky, rent the rocks together with the veil, and raised up those in the graves. And the dead are shouting, “Hades, understand. For Adam is running back again to Paradise.”’

‘Has the Nazarene’s tree been strong enough to scare you?’ said the devil to Hades the destroyer, ‘Have you been slain by a cross, you who slay all? Truly if a tree has

scared you, the crucifixion of Haman should have frightened you, and that stake with which Jael did away with Sisera, and the five crosses to which Joshua son of Nun once fixed the tyrants. More than all let the plant in Eden scare you, because it led out Adam, yet does not lead him back again to Paradise.'

'Now is the moment for you to open your ears, Beliar. Now the hour will show you the power of the cross and the great authority of the crucified. For you the cross is folly, but for all creation it is seen as a throne, nailed on which Jesus, as though seated, hears the thief crying to him, "Lord, remember me in your kingdom", and answers as from a tribunal, "Today, poor beggar, you will reign with me. For with me you will go in again to Paradise.'"

When he heard this, the all-resourceful dragon, he began to wilt, and what he had heard he saw, a thief witnessing to Christ crucified. And so, astounded at this He strikes his breast and argues, 'He speaks to a thief, yet does not answer his accusers? To Pilate he never deigned so much as a word, now he addresses a murderer, saying, "Come, live in pleasure"? What is this? Who has seen on the cross words or deeds from the thief by means of which he is taking this man to Paradise?'

A second time the demon raised the same cry calling out, 'Hades, receive me. My recourse is to you, for I submit to your views, I who did not believe them. I saw the tree at which you shuddered crimsoned with blood and water. And I shuddered, not, I tell you, at the blood, but at the water. For the former shows the slaughter of Jesus, but the latter, his life, because life has gushed from his side. For it was not the first but the second Adam who made Eve, the mother of all living, bud again to Paradise.'

With words like these the wholly wicked one grudgingly admitted that he had fallen along with Hades. And so, of course, together they bewail their fall, 'What', he says, 'is this to which we have brought ourselves? How have we fallen by this tree? For our destruction its stock was rooted in the earth. We grafted to it bitter shoots. The sweetness in it we did not transform'. 'Alas, my comrade'. 'Alas, my companion'. 'As we have fallen together. So let us grieve, for Adam is going back again to Paradise.'

O how did we not remember the types of this tree! For of old they were shown forth in many and various ways in the saved and in the lost. By a tree Noah was saved, but the whole world, unbelieving, was destroyed. Moses was glorified through one when he took a staff as a sceptre, but Egypt, with the plagues that came from it, was drowned as though fallen into deep wells. What it has now done, the Cross showed forth of old in image. How then can we not weep? For Adam is going again to Paradise.'

‘Wait, wretched Hades’, said the demon with a groan, ‘Quiet, be patient, lay hand on mouth, for I hear a voice revealing joy. A sound has reached me bringing good tidings, a rustle of words like the leaves of the Cross. For Christ at the point of death cried out, “Father, forgive them”. But he grieved me when he then said that “the lawless know not what they do”. But we know that it is the Lord of glory who is suffering and that he wishes to bring Adam back again to Paradise.’

‘Did not the Master by the tree he showed to Moses, which once sweetened the water at Mara, teach what it was and what its root? Then he did not say, for it was not his will. But now he has made it clear to all. For see, all things have been made pleasant, but we have been embittered. A cross which was thrust into the earth has sprouted from our root, which became sweet. That which formerly bred thorns now like a vine of Sorek has put out branches which are transplanted again to Paradise.’

‘Now therefore, Hades, groan and I will harmonize with your wails. Let us lament as we see the tree which we planted transformed into a holy trunk, beneath which have sheltered and will nest in its branches thieves, murderers, and publicans and harlots, that they may reap sweet fruit from the supposedly arid. For as to a plant of life they cling to the Cross. Pressed against it and swimming, through it they escape and are brought for anchorage as to a fair haven again to Paradise.’

‘Swear then, tyrant, finally to crucify no one.’ ‘And you, Tartarus, make a firm decision to slay no one.’ ‘We have had our experience, let us draw in our hand. May what we have undergone become for us knowledge for the future. Let neither of us henceforth tyrannise against the race of Adam, for it has been sealed by the Cross, like a treasure containing an unravished pearl in a corruptible vessel, which a thief, well-suited to his trade, ravished on the cross. For stealing he was nailed up, and for thieving he was called again to Paradise.’

Most high and glorious, God of fathers and of youths, Your willing outrage has become our honor. For in your Cross we all boast. To it let us nail our hearts, that on it we may hang our instruments And sing to you, the Lord of all, from the songs of Zion. The ship from Tarshish once upon a time brought gold to Solomon, as it is written. To us your Tree gives back every day and moment wealth beyond price, for it brings us all again to Paradise.

– St. Romanos the Melodist, *Kontakion 22 “On the Cross”*

*[This kontakion was traditionally recited on the third Sunday of Great Lent; the first prooimion is what is still sung as the kontakion of the day, and the first stanza is chanted as the oikos which follows the kontakion during Matins. - Ed.]*

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

By Dr. George D. Panagopoulos

(continued from last week) **4. The Negative and Positive Dimension of the Ascetic Struggle**

We now continue with the Orthodox position, as it is expressed through the Philokalic experience. Good works or, to express ourselves in the philological idiom, "acts" (praxis) as "work of the commandments" are not meritorious; however, they are certainly not useless or unprofitable. However, the "act" or good works are understood divinely and Christ-centeredly within a charismatic context as manifestations of "faith by grace" (Gregory of Sinai). In fact, Saint Mark appears to recognize a primarily negative function for them, in the sense that every virtue (even the death of the Martyrs!) is understood as a "prison of the purity given to us (meaning in Baptism)" and therefore as a free "abstinence from sin" and certainly not as "an exchange for the Kingdom".

A similar version will be put forward by Saint John of Damascus with the claim that "asceticism and its pains were not designed as a means for our attaining virtue which was foreign to our nature, but to enable us to cast aside the evil that was foreign and contrary to our nature" (*Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith* 58; cf. Saint Niketas Stethatos, *Philokalia* III, 289-290; Saint Gregory of Nyssa, *Gregorii Nysseni Opera*, IV 198).

This is a powerful theological insight: God is not a merchant or a moneylender, but our Lord Almighty and Savior through His Son in the Holy Spirit. God's saving economy for the redemption of the world from its enemy, the devil and sin, does not obey the rules of natural human logic and ethics. This truth is also summed up in the Apostle Paul's teaching about our justification "by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not of yourselves, it is the gift of God, nor of works, lest anyone boast" (Eph. 2:8-9).

In the life of grace, which the Lord gives to those baptized in faith through the Cross and His Resurrection and which He always initiates in the Eucharistic Supper, the believer is called to remain by activating his restored freedom. The believer died in Baptism according to the old man and increases in grace in the life of the Mysteries. The struggle to remain in the freedom of grace and to bear fruit in sanctification cannot but be a secret continuation of Baptism, a fruition of baptismal grace, which requires "work of the commandments". This struggle, even if it is described in a negative way by Saint Mark, nevertheless contains something extremely positive and dynamic, since it, like faith, is the fruit of grace and divine power ("Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of



God." Rom. 12:2). However, this does not mean that asceticism and virtues acquire a meritorious character: they are "a work of nature, not an exchange for the Kingdom" and therefore "one cannot be sanctified apart from grace" (*Philokalia I*, 110).

This teaching acquires an unmistakably biblical and Pauline character: "For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another" (Gal. 5:1).

This concept is at the heart of Orthodox soteriology and anthropology: Human freedom, which cooperates with grace, is not the fallen possibility of choice (the one trapped in the law of sin and death), but the restored freedom that naturally leads to the good (cf. G. D. Panagopoulos, *Orthodox Dogma and Theological Modernization*, Athens 2017).

The key here is given by the 4th and 6th Ecumenical Synods: Our nature together with our autonomous natural will is not healed through a created supernatural "quality", truly discerned by God, which is injected into our existence to accomplish meritorious wages. In Christ, our autonomous nature was deified "from the end of conception" hypostatically; in us it is healed and deified by an uncreated gift (the mystery of the Cross). In Christ, the communication of the attributes of His two natures is "by hypostasis"; in our own union with God it is per se a "relational exchange" (Maximus the Confessor, Epistle II, To John Koubikoularion).

Especially for the Mosaic Law now, Paul nowhere claims that it is bad, harmful or useless. On the contrary, he explicitly teaches that the Law is good and spiritual (Rom. 7:8: "the law is spiritual"), although it cannot justify, i.e. liberate and enliven the man "under the influence of sin" (Rom. 7:8). In fact, Paul clearly equates "righteousness" with enlivening, when he assures the Galatians that, if the Law had the power to enliven, then indeed righteousness would be of the Law (Gal. 3:21; cf. J. S. Romanides, *The Ancestral Sin*, Athens 1989). This became possible only through the whole life in the flesh, but mainly through the Cross and the Resurrection of the Lord Jesus, Who thus "redeemed" us from the curse of the Law, not by setting aside or being indifferent to the Law, but by "fulfilling all justice" (cf. Matthew 3:15).

Thus Paul can claim that "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit" (Rom. 8:2-4).

This means that through the Lord's death on the cross, the just demand of the Law ("the right of the law") is fulfilled for those who, through the mystery of Pentecost, in every place and time, reach the participation in the purifying, life-giving and theurgic energy of God in Christ. From this point of view, the Law was abrogated as to the curse under which people lived to the extent that they were unable to fully implement its commands (cf. Deut. 27:28). However, according to its spiritual nature, the Law was fulfilled in Christ and is fulfilled through the mystery of Pentecost in the Church of the incarnate Word to those who "by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body" (Rom. 8:13).

The Law, according to the Lord Himself, is condensed to the perfect love for God and neighbor (Mt 22:9-41, cf. Deut. 6:5; Lev. 19:18). In the body of Christ, in the new Israel of grace, they are thus fulfilled in a new and absolutely real way, i.e. in the life of the Spirit, who bestows on us the vivification flowing from the Cross of the Lord and works on our increase in the fullness of selfless love. St. de Young (The Religion of the Apostles, in toto) inspiredly describes the Spirit fulfilling the Old Testament in the charismatic life of the Orthodox Church! Justification by faith and through grace, namely enlivening, Paul calls "the law of the life of the spirit."

This truth is expressed as the belief of the Orthodox Catholic Church by Patriarch Jeremiah II Tranos, in his Second Answer to the Lutheran theologians of Tübingen in 1579: "We do not merely say that those who obey the law shall be justified, but those who obey the spiritual law, which is understood spiritually and according to the inner man. Indeed, by fulfilling the law of the spirit as much as we are able, we will be justified and we will not fall from grace because the Cleansing Word has passed into the depths of the soul."

This is a Philokalic interpretation of the Pauline passage that we quoted above. Justification does not magically fall from the sky; it is a transfer by faith of those who are cleansed or purified according to the heart (the inner man!) to the grace of the Word through the Holy Spirit who "dwells in us". Therefore, faith cannot be "idle", nor works "without faith". Here the Patriarch, using a classic patristic formulation, aligns Paul with his brother James (cf. James 2:14). (*from johnsanidopoulos.com*) (*to be continued next week*)

## **New Hieromartyr Tikhon, Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia**

Born in 1865, he was tonsured a monk in 1891, and consecrated a Bishop in 1891. From 1900, he was Bishop of Alaska, with oversight of the Church throughout North America. In America, he consecrated the first Orthodox monastery on the continent and worked tirelessly to unite all ethnic groups as one flock. In 1907 he was made Bishop of Yaroslavl and returned to Russia.

In 1917, he was elected to be the first Patriarch of Moscow since the abolition of the Patriarchate by Tsar Peter the Great more than 200 years before. Almost immediately, the Russian Church was plunged into new and terrible persecution as an atheist and totalitarian government seized control. Patriarch Tikhon always sought not to quarrel with the Communist government, but his refusal to deny his faith or his Church marked him in their eyes as an enemy. In 1925 he died under mysterious circumstances, and is generally thought to have been murdered by the Soviets. He is commemorated as a Confessor, and by many as a Martyr also. *(from holytrinityorthodox.com)*

### **Venerable George, Bishop of Mytilene**

*Although dead, Mytilene has you as a living great protector George.*

Saint George was born around 776 opposite Mytilene on the coast of Asia Minor to wealthy parents, and was perhaps their only child. When his parents died, George, who was distinguished for his humility and philanthropy, distributed all his inheritance to the poor, and at the age of eighteen he went to a monastery, where he remained for two years. Desiring a greater and more rigorous ascetic life, he left Asia Minor and came to Mytilene, a stranger among strangers, and lived as an ascetic in a cave in complete temperance, fasting and prayer. But it was not long before word of his holiness spread through the island, so that when the Bishop of Mytilene died, all the people asked for George to be their Bishop. Thus at the age of twenty-eight he was ordained Bishop of Mytilene in the year 804.

After nine years of service he was forced to settle cases in Constantinople, at the time of the reign of Emperor Michael (811-813) and Patriarch Nikephoros (806-815). When he arrived, the Ecumenical Patriarch advised George to remain for some time in Constantinople, where he considered his presence and help necessary. Thus George remained in Constantinople for two years (813-815).

Meanwhile, Emperor Leo V the Armenian (813-820) came to the throne, who was an iconoclast and ordered a persecution against iconophiles. The Patriarch together with Bishop George of Mytilene and other revered fathers presented themselves before the Emperor and asked him to cease the persecution against the Church. The Emperor not only was adamant, but he condemned to exile the Patriarch and Bishop George, and Bishop George for his "outspokenness" to the Emperor, was even ordered to be flogged with a hundred lashes.

George was exiled to a barren island of the Propontis. There he continued his ascetic life and endured unimaginable hardships, privations and pains, living only on wild greens. Soon after Christians began to visit him there to hear his teachings, confess and be healed of their sicknesses. Recorded miracles of the Saint at this time are the healing of a demon possessed person, a deaf person, a

blind person and more. Because of his many miracles, he became known as a "bearer of signs" (*σημειοφόρο*), namely a wonderworker.

Not too long after, however, due to his hardships, he lost his health, and after six years where he spent his exile, Saint George died at the age of forty-five, on 7 April 821. When Methodios became Patriarch (842-846), the Christians of Mytilene went to the place of the exile of their Bishop, where they took his relics and brought them back to Mytilene. Very early his relics were seen to be a "source of healing", and he was viewed as a Saint.

As for what became of the relics of Saint George over the passage of time, no one knows, but originally it is believed they were brought to "Tria Kyparissia" (Sari Baba), near the Chapel of Saint John the Forerunner. Since the eighteenth century his right hand is preserved in Mytilene, and praised in his Divine Service as follows: "Your sacred hand is a source of inexhaustible healing to your flock." "The Church celebrates today your revered dormition, hierarch of Christ, sign-bearer George, we venerate your all-revered hand." There is reason to believe that his hand is currently in the Church of Saint George the Trophy-Bearer in Skalochori, enclosed in a silver casing which says "Agios Giorgis". Saint George is also celebrated on February 1st, with his brothers Symeon the New Stylite and David the Monk. (*from johnsanidopoulos.com*)

## **Saint Kalliopios as a Model for our Lives**

By Protopresbyter Fr. George Papavarnavas

Saint Kalliopios came from Perge of Pamphylia and lived during the reign of Emperor Maximian. His pious mother Theokleia raised him "in the education and instruction of the Lord". When the persecution against the Christians broke out, Kalliopios, who was distinguished for his spiritual courage and fighting spirit, presented himself alone before the ruler Maximus, who was then in Pompeiopolis.

Saint Kalliopios, therefore, boldly confessed his faith before the ruler and he subjected him to horrible tortures. He tied his hands behind his back, stretched his body on a wheel and lit a fire underneath. An Angel of the Lord, however, put out the fire and stopped the wheel. Then, full of wounds, he was taken to prison. His mother asked to visit him and she remained in prison with him. At midnight, while they were praying and chanting, the prison was filled with heavenly light and a voice was heard encouraging the martyr. Finally, because Kalliopios remained steadfast and unshakable in his faith, he was crucified, and thus he became a communicant of Christ's crucifixion. In fact, the day on which he was crucified was Holy and Great Thursday and the dawn of Holy and Great Friday. He was crucified with his head down, which is why the Holy Hymnographer, praising the martyr, exclaims:

*Kalliopios inverted is nailed to the wood,  
Glorifying the Word who was nailed upright.  
On the seventh Kalliopios found life without end.*

His mother, when she heard that he would be crucified, praised God for the great honor she owed to her son and hurried to meet the executioners to give them money, so that they would not change their minds and kill him in any other way. When the martyr surrendered his holy soul into the hands of God, the moment his body was taken down from the cross, his mother hugged him, and as she was holding him in her arms, she gave up her spirit, and thus they were buried together.

The life and conduct of the martyr, together with his mother, give us the opportunity to highlight the following:

First, death by crucifixion was considered the most dishonorable way of killing and the wood of the cross was a wood of shame and condemnation. Dangerous criminals, such as murderers, robbers, etc., were usually sentenced to crucifixion in order to suffer as much as possible, because for the crucified, death came slowly and torturously. It was a real martyrdom. In fact, in the end they broke their limbs and thus died in horrible pain. From the time, however, when Christ was crucified, the wood of the cross was sanctified. It became a very powerful weapon against the demons, a staff and a support to believers, but also their boast, since after lifting their cross and following Christ they become partakers of His crucifixion, but also of His Resurrection. That is why the martyrs considered it their highest honor and blessing to die by crucifixion. Saint John Chrysostom says that the cross before the crucifixion of Christ was considered a word that meant condemnation, but now it has become an object of honor and a condition of salvation. And then he emphasizes that the power of Christ "appeared more on the cross, than when He raised the dead, when He calmed the sea and the winds, when He banished the demons," because then, "when they crucified Him, when they drove the nails into Him, when they derided Him, when they maligned Him, he managed to change the wicked thoughts of the thief, to see His power from both sides." On the cross "the whole creation was shaken and the stones cracked, and the soul of the thief which was more insensitive than the stone, was moved and honored." And "in order to learn how revered the cross is, that is why he called it a glory."

Therefore, the lifting of the personal cross of each one of us, which is mainly the struggle for the conquest of our passions, as well as patience in sorrows, diseases and the various daily temptations, is a participation in the Passion of Christ, as well as in His glory.

Also, the Cross, as Saint Gregory Palamas emphasizes, is a mystery, which, long before the wood of the Cross of Christ on Golgotha was erected, acted and saved

our Forefathers in the Old Testament. He characteristically says that "even before the nailing to the cross, the cross saved."

Secondly, Christ said to those who announced the coming of His mother and His brothers, that is, to the children of Joseph, who are also called brothers, that "My mother and brothers are those who do the will of my Father." This means that those who truly love Christ, sacrificially, and strive to live according to His commandments, become mothers, brothers, and sisters of Christ, by "living in Him," and "Him in them", that is, He "lives and walks" in them. And because they truly love Christ, that is why they also love the images of Christ, namely people, all without exception, and even their enemies. As far as their children are concerned, they love them with a pure love, radiant, free from the passions of selfishness and self-interest. They treat them not as their personal possessions, but as gifts from God, and they truly rejoice when they are given completely to Christ and are ready to sacrifice themselves for His love. These parents, of course, care for the education, the progress, and the advancement of their children, but at the same time they take care of their eternal future, that is, for the care and salvation of their immortal soul.

Therefore, real parents are not those who simply give birth, because so do the irrational animals, but those who regenerate, in the sense that they care for the spiritual rebirth and salvation of their children. (*from johnsanidopoulos.com*)

### **New Martyr Eudocia of Moscow**

Martyr Evdokia (or Eudocia) - Evdokia Pavlovna Pavlova - was born on August 1, 1876 in the city of Moscow. When she was eleven years old, her parents sent her and her sister Pelagia, who was two years younger, to be raised in the Moscow Passion Monastery; Subsequently, the sisters were accepted into the monastery as novices and labored there until it was closed. After the destruction of the monastery, some nuns and novices rented a semi-basement room on Tikhvinskaya Street, put it in order and settled in it, earning their living by needlework - sewing blankets. Living with Evdokia were her sister Pelagia, novices Vera Morozova, Maria Nosova and Sofia Seliverstova; All of them, as in the monastery, followed prayer rules, and sometimes invited priests to serve prayer services.

Novice Evdokia was arrested on October 25, 1937 and, having been imprisoned in Butyrka prison, was interrogated on the same day. The investigator asked the novice whether any of her relatives had been arrested by the Soviet authorities and to whom she provided assistance among those in custody. The novice replied that she had sent a parcel to the camp to her nephew, as well as to the priest who was in prison.

“The investigation has information,” the investigator told her, “that you conducted anti-Soviet conversations among those around you, give truthful testimony on this issue.” “I have never had anti-Soviet conversations,” answered the novice.

At this point, the interrogations were completed, and witnesses began to be called. The novices' housemate was called; he testified that he did not hear any anti-Soviet conversations from the nuns - only once, while passing by, he heard them saying among themselves that they, the old women, now had nowhere to pray; I also saw that the priest came to them several times.

During his story, the investigator wrote something in the interrogation protocol - as the witness suggested, he wrote down what he said, and then asked him to sign it. The witness signed without reading the interrogation protocol, in which the investigator wrote that the novices were engaged in anti-Soviet and counter-revolutionary activities.

Then a neighbor of the novices, who worked as a guard in the Butyrka prison, was called as a witness; she showed that the novices living in their house were conducting counter-revolutionary agitation; their apartment was often visited by socially alien people: priests, sextons and other clergy, with corresponding conversations on political topics.

On November 16, 1937, one of the investigators, the head of the Sverdlovsk district department of the NKVD Directorate for the Moscow Region, Belyshev, who was in charge of the case of nuns and novices, when drawing up an indictment, wrote: “After the liquidation of the Passion Monastery... a group of nuns settled in the same apartment, in which they organized illegal prayers. Being hostile to the Soviet regime, they carried out systematic counter-revolutionary agitation among those around them, during which they spread slanderous fabrications about the lives of workers, and in every possible way discredited individual activities of the party and government.”

On November 19, 1937, the NKVD troika sentenced novice Evdokia to ten years in a forced labor camp. On December 27, 1937, she and the convoy arrived at the Mariinsky distribution center of Sibirlag. Novice Evdokia Pavlova died on April 20 (April 7, Old Calendar), 1939 in the NKVD forced labor camp in the Novosibirsk region and was buried in an unknown grave.

In 1940, one of the arrested novices demanded a review of the case, and then witnesses were again interrogated. Instead of the warden of the Butyrka prison, her sister, who lived in the same house, came and testified that her sister “could not appear for interrogation herself, since she was sentenced for libel... to two years in prison...” “I... knew the residents of our house, former nuns...” she said. “I don’t know anything bad about them, I’ve never heard anti-Soviet talk from them. They

were very hardworking...” Despite the exculpatory testimony, the verdict was not overturned, on the grounds that those arrested had been in the monastery for a long time and therefore belonged to socially dangerous elements. (*from newmartyros-ru*)

## Also Commemorated Today

New Hieromartyr [Arcadius](#) Dobronravov, Archpriest of Tsivilsk, Chuvashia (1933).(OC)

Venerable [Daniel](#), abbot, of Pereyaslavl-Zalesski (1540) (*also Dec 30 and July 28*).

Martyrs [Rufinus](#) deacon, Aquilina, and 200 soldiers at Sinope (310).

Venerable [Serapion](#) of Egypt, monk (5th c.).

Venerable [Nilus](#), abbot of [Sora](#) (1508) (*see also May 7*).

St. [George](#), patriarch of Jerusalem (807).

St. [Gerasimus](#) of Byzantium (1739).

Venerable [Leucius](#), abbot of Volokolamsk (1492).

St. [Goran](#) of Cornwall (6<sup>th</sup> c.)

St. [Finan](#) (Finian) Cam, Abbot of Kinnitty (Cean-e-thich) (6<sup>th</sup> c.)

St. [Brynach](#), hermit of [Pembroke](#) (5<sup>th</sup> c.)

Sts. [Llewellyn](#) and Gwrnerth, monks of Bardsey (6<sup>th</sup> c.)

Righteous Father [Savvas](#) the New of Kalymnos (1948)(*also 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Great Lent*)

Hieromartyr [Epiphanius](#), bishop in North Africa, with Donatus, Rufinus & 10 companions (unk)

Hieromartyr [Gibardus](#), Abbot of Sts. Peter and Paul in Luxeuil and companions (c. 888)

St. [Hegesippus](#) of Jerusalem, the father of ecclesiastical history (c. 180)

St. [Saturninus](#), Bishop of Verona (4<sup>th</sup> c.)

## Social Team for April 14

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

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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.)