

# SOBORNOST

## St. Thomas the Apostle Orthodox Church

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*American Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Diocese*

*ECUMENICAL PATRIARCHATE  
OF CONSTANTINOPLE*

## SERVICES

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

**Saturday: Vespers 5 PM**

**Sunday: Matins 8:45 AM**

**Sunday School 9:30 AM**

**Divine Liturgy 10 AM**



## May 12, 2024 – Sunday of St. Thomas (Antipascha)

By St. Luke the Surgeon, Bishop of Simferopol

It was very, very, extremely hard for the apostles to believe that the Lord Jesus Christ had risen. They considered the words of the Myrrhbearers who brought them this news to be lies. When they went to Galilee, to the mountain as Jesus had commanded them, and saw Him, some fell down and worshiped Him while others stood petrified and did not believe their own eyes. When Jesus appeared to all of them in the upper room in Jerusalem, they thought that they were seeing a spirit.

Strongest of all was the unbelief of the apostle Thomas, who had to place his fingers on the wounds from the nails on the Savior's hands and feet and his hand on His side before he would believe.

Why did the apostles believe even their own eyes with such difficulty? After all, they were witnesses to the Lord Jesus resurrecting the son of the widow of Nain, the daughter of Jairus, and even Lazarus, the four days dead. But after all, these were the acts of a very great Miracle Worker, and the dead did not resurrect of their own strength; but to believe in the possibility of a dead body coming back to life by itself, of its own power, was immeasurably more difficult.

Thus, it was extremely difficult for Christ's apostles to believe even what they saw with their own eyes. But for us who have seen neither the living nor the resurrected Jesus—is it harder or easier to believe what we read in the Gospels and in the writings of the holy apostles? Oh, of course it's easier, much easier—for the great multitude of historical facts and events convince us beyond a doubt of the truth of Christ's resurrection.

What is there to say about the fact that the preaching of unlearned Galilean fishermen and their successors over the course of just a few centuries won over the entire inhabited world of the time—not only cultured Greeks and Romans, but even half-wild Germans, Gauls, and Celts, and dealt a fatal blow to paganism? Could this have been possible if Christ had not risen? Wouldn't have any preaching about the Crucified One as the Son of God been met everywhere only with mockery?

Would it have been thinkable that tens of thousands of holy martyrs would have gone to horrifying tortures and terrible deaths if they did not believe in the Resurrection of Christ and were not on fire with love for the Conqueror of death?

Would the hard ascetic labors of fasting and prayer of numberless anchorites and monks for the sake of knowing the Lord Jesus Christ and for the acquisition of the mind of Christ have been possible?

Millions upon millions of people of all ages and sexes were true Christians, especially during the first fourteen centuries since the Birth of Christ. However, no matter how enormous was the power of preaching and the works of Christ, no matter how the Son of God's death on the Cross and His Resurrection from the dead shook the world, not all believed in Him. Already among the Lord Jesus's and His apostles' contemporaries even the majority of God's chosen Jewish race did not believe in Him.

Unbelief, which has crashed like a huge wave over our modern nations of Europe and America, all formerly Christian, is ever growing and spreading. It began of course not during the Renaissance era of science and arts, not from Voltaire and the other Encyclopedists, but incomparably earlier, already during the first century after the Birth of Christ.

What does this mean? It means that our Lord and God Jesus Christ does not forcibly draw people's hearts to Himself, something He of course could do with His divine power, but looks for voluntary love and faith.

Not every heart joyfully accepts His great commandments. Proud and domineering people laugh at the commandments of poverty of spirit, meekness, and mercy; they do not even think about God's higher and eternal truth, they only want to hear

about the rightness of social relationships, and they consider only proper relationships between nations to be the highest ideal. Do many want to be persecuted for righteousness sake, to be reviled and slandered for Christ's sake? Do many enter through the straight gates by the narrow path, so that at the end of their difficult road they might hear the blessed call: "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Matt. 24:34)?

What will the scientist say to you if you try to preach Christ to him? Of course he will reply with annoyance, "Don't bother me, I am busy with my science, because for me all truth is in it."

The apostle Paul speaks in his epistle to the Corinthians about the wise and prudent who have rejected faith in God for the sake of science: "For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God. For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men. For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God has chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, God has chosen, indeed, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are" (1 Cor. 18–28).

Even during His earthly life, our Lord Jesus Christ called those who believe in Him His "little flock". Do not be disturbed by this, but rejoice. And know that belonging to this flock throughout the ages and until the present day are very many quite important scientists, scholars, and philosophers, who were able to combine their belief in science with their higher faith in God and His Christ. And of those who reject religion based upon scientific data, the vast majority in fact have nothing to do with science and talk about it only on hearsay.

And for you, simple, unlearned people, let the words of Christ be a strong support: "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 18:3). (*from johnsanidopoulos.com*)

### **Today's Epistle Lesson – The Acts of the Apostles 5:12-20**

In those days, many signs and wonders were accomplished among the people by the hands of the apostles, and they were all gathered with one accord in Solomon's porch. No one else dared to join them, even though they were honored by the people. More believers were added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women. People even carried out the sick into the streets, placing them on cots and mattresses, so that as Peter came by, at the least his shadow might fall on some of them. Crowds also formed from the cities around Jerusalem; they brought sick people, as well as those tormented by unclean spirits, and all were healed. However, the high priest took action, along with all his associates (which is the sect of the Sadducees). Filled with jealousy, they had the apostles arrested and placed in the public jail. But an angel of the Lord opened the prison doors by night and brought them out, saying, "Go, stand in the temple, and speak to the people the whole message about this life."

### **Today's Gospel Lesson – Saint John 20:19-31**

In the evening on that day (the first day of the week), and as the doors [of the place] where the disciples were assembled were locked, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. At this, the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. Then again, Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I also send you." When he had said this, he breathed on them and told them, "Receive the Holy Spirit! If you forgive anyone's sins, they are forgiven; if you retain anyone's sins, they are retained." However, Thomas called 'the Twin,' one of the Twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord!" But Thomas replied, "Unless I see in his hands the print of the nails and put my hand into his side, I will not believe!" After eight days, his disciples were inside once again, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them, and he said, "Peace be with you." Then, he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here, and see my hands! Place your hand here and put it into my side. Do not be unbelieving, but believing!" Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!" Jesus said to him, "Because you have seen me, you have believed! Blessed are those who have not seen, and have believed." Now, Jesus accomplished many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. However, these ones are written, so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing, you may have life in his Name.

## A Word From the Holy Fathers

Prooimion I – With his meddling right hand, Thomas explored your life-giving Side, O Christ God; for the doors being shut when you entered, he cried out with the rest of the apostles, “You are our Lord and our God.”

Prooimion II – Thomas's doubt, O Savior, by your dispensation, truly became unhesitating faith by your wish, that none might ever doubt your resurrection. For you showed him not only yourself, but the marks of the nails and the gash of the lance. And so he too confessed you, “You are our Lord and our God.”

Prooimion III – While not believing your resurrection from the dead and exploring your divine side, Thomas the Twin said with faith, “Have compassion on me, Master, as I boldly handle, and accept me, Lover of mankind, no longer doubting, but with faith crying out, “You are our Lord and our God.”

Who then preserved the disciple's palm unmelted when it approached the fiery side of the Lord? Who gave it daring and gave it (the) strength to handle bone of flame? Only that which was handled; for, had not the side given the power, how could a hand of clay have handled wounds which had shaken things above and things below? This grace was given Thomas, to handle it and to cry out to Christ, “You are our Lord and our God.”

Truly, the bush bearing fire burned and was not burned up, for, from Thomas's hand, I believe in Moses' story; though it was perishable and thorny, it was not consumed as it handled the side like a burning flame. Of old the fire came upon the thorn, but now the bramble ran towards the fire, and God himself appeared, protecting both. Thus I believe, thus I glorify the same God, who is also man, as I say, “You are our Lord and our God.”

For the definition of this faith was signed surely for me through Thomas's hand. By touching Christ it became like the pen of a swiftly writing scribe, writing for believers the place from where faith springs up. From there, the thief drank and came to his senses again. From there, disciples watered their hearts. From there, Thomas drew the knowledge of the things he sought. First he drinks, then gives to drink; having momentarily doubted, he persuaded many to say, “You are our Lord and our God.”

What took place? Why and how did the apostle doubt? Let us ask, if you agree, the offspring of Zebedee; for John has written the words of the Twin clearly in the book of the Gospel. The wise man says that after Christ's rising, the other disciples said to Thomas, “Friend, we have seen the Lord here.” But Thomas said to them, no doubt, “You have seen? Don't hide then, but shout, 'You are our Lord and our God.'”

“Announce to all the people what you have seen and heard. Disciples, do not hide the lamp under the measure (*see* Mat. 5:15). What you are saying in the dark proclaim in the light. Stand openly outside with confidence. You are still in the lair, yet you act boldly. You speak out loud – while the doors are shut! Cry out, 'We have seen the Creator in secret.' Let it be shown to all, let creation learn, let mortals be taught to cry to the Risen One, 'You are our Lord and our God.'”

“How shall I be able to believe you, for I hear unbelievable words? For had the Redeemer come, he would be seeking his servant. If the Day had dawned, he would not have appeared at the wrong hour. If the Shepherd had appeared, he would be calling the lamb. Once he asked, “Where have you laid Lazarus?” and now he has not said, “Where have you left Thomas?” But has he forgotten the one who wished to die with him? I remain unbelieving until I have seen. When I have seen and touched, I will believe and say, 'You are our Lord and our God.'”

While Thomas was still saying such things to his brethren, the Savior came, the Courage of those in fear, the blameless Boldness of those in flight and cowardice. In the midst of the disciples, he appeared when the doors were shut. But Thomas, when he saw him, bowed his face downwards, and in his soul he was saying, “What shall I do? How shall I now make my defense to those I formerly did not believe? What can I say to Peter? What to the others? Those whom I reproached before, how shall I now appease them and cry, 'You are our Lord and our God'?”

“Would that I too had exercised silence, like Jesus when being judged, but the sight of them rejoicing drove me to speak; I was piqued by the words of those who were crying in joy, 'We have clearly seen alive the One who was willingly dead.' Therefore, seeing Peter, the denier, all joyful, and, cheerful again, those who had fled with him, I was jealous because I wanted to dance with them. Through jealousy, then, I said what I said before. Let me not be blasted, my Jesus, but be accepted as I cry to you, 'You are our Lord and our God.'”

“The words of my fellow servants have become for me night and deep darkness, for they did not enlighten, did not light for my soul the lamp of the wonder which now I see beyond hope. For I look on Christ again, when the doors are shut. Had I managed to learn that it was thus he had come, I would not have doubted; for I had only to think of his entering and coming forth from Mary, for they said only that they had seen. How can one who had not seen him say, 'You are our Lord and our God'?”

Thus the Twin, speaking to himself, was speaking to God. He who searches the inmost being, seeing Thomas breaking his heart as once (did) the publican, took pity and cried, “Bring your hand here. Why did you doubt? Tell me, you of little faith. Or which of my deeds appeared to you unbelievable: the Crucifixion, the

death, or the Resurrection itself? For how long will you dispute with me? The One whom you longed to see, behold; and as you see me, cry, 'You are our Lord and our God.'"

"I slept for a short time in a tomb and after three days came back to life. For you and those like you I lay in a grave, and you, instead of thanksgiving, have brought me unbelief. For I heard what you said to your brothers." At this, Thomas trembled and cried out, "Do not blame me, Savior, for you I always believe. Peter and the rest I have difficulty believing, for I know that they lied to you and, in the hour of evils, they were afraid to say to you, 'You are our Lord and our God.'"

He who sees all things, seeing that Thomas was wanting to cast off the offense of unbelief, answered him, "You were with them also at the moment to which you referred. For all of you left me to suffer alone. It was a hard moment, Twin – do not reproach (yourself). The scripture says of it, 'I shall strike the shepherd and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.' Understand what I say; do what you said. You want to handle me? Then handle me, saying, 'You are our Lord and our God.'"

Oh, the wonder, the patience, the infinite gentleness! The intangible is handled, is grasped by a slave; and, to the servant, the Master shows the wounds (made) at the moment at which all creation was shaken. Found worthy of such gifts, Thomas offers up a prayer to him who found him worthy. "Be patient, Master," he says, "with my rashness. Spare the grass; deliver me from my burden; let me be lightened of my unbelief, that I may chant and say, 'You are our Lord and our God.'"

"Stay gentle, that I may take my delight in you, Lord. Satisfy me, who am yours. You were patient with strangers; be patient too with your own and show me your wounds, that, like springs, I may draw from them and drink. Do not burn me up, O Savior, for you are fire by nature, but, by your will, you are the body which you became. Hide yourself, then, just a little, I beg. Accept me, my Savior, like the woman with the issue of blood. It is not the hem of your garment that I grasp, but you I touch, saying, 'You are our Lord and our God.'"

"You have heard it once, good disciple; become faithful and not faithless. Do not be afraid, for I do not burn you up. I guard those who are in me. The furnace in Babylon I taught to do this, but, even more, I myself both do this and teach it. Are you more rotten than the sinful harlot who anointed my head with sweet myrrh and with her hair dried my holy feet? Come then, friend; do not perfume me. Make yourself sweet-scented by crying out to me, 'You are our Lord and our God.'"

"Yes, Lover of mankind, I too will perfume you, but not as the harlot did before. I do not approach the myrrh-seller crying, 'Give me myrrh.' I bring my faith to you

who possess grace far above myrrh – the side which I as I grasp, I enjoy! O Christ, I glorify your faithful condescension; how you became incarnate so that you might deliver, from the vain folly of idols, humanity which you fashioned, and how you accepted, Savior, being struck so that you might free me from passions, to cry to you, 'You are our Lord and our God.'”

“Nevertheless, listen and learn well, for you have become a partner of the Wise. I, the Wisdom of the Father, became known to mankind. Blessed are you by faith, but even more I call blessed those who come to me from hearing alone. You, by handling me, have now come to know my glory; while they, by reason of a sound of words, worship me. Great the understanding of those who thus believe. I am seen by you as my disciple and by them as holy servants who cry out, 'You are our Lord and our God.'”

Most High, by grace strengthen me in soul and flesh, and save me so that I may touch your side. Receiving your grace, your Blood and your Body, I am delivered from my evils, so that I may find forgiveness of transgressions. Thomas, by handling, has now come to know your glory, but I am frightened, for I know your counsels, I know my works. Conscience troubles me. Spare me, my Savior; spare me, (O) Compassionate (one), that by works and words I may unceasingly cry to you, “You are our Lord and our God.”

– St. Romanos the Melodist, *Kontakion 30 “On the Apostle Thomas”*

## **St. Epiphanius of Salamis as a Model for Our Lives**

By Protopresbyter Fr. George Papavarnavas

Saint Epiphanius came from Eleutheroupolis in Palestine and lived in the fourth century. His parents were poor farmers who were Jews and raised him in the teachings of Judaism. After their death he was baptized and became a member of the Church of Christ, after being catechized by two scholar ascetics, Lucian and Hilarion. He then went to the desert of Palestine and was taught near famous ascetics. The reputation of Saint Epiphanius reached Cyprus, where he was elected Bishop of Constantia (Salamis).

As a Bishop, he struggled with all his strength to protect the Orthodox faith, which was threatened by the taint of heresy, as well as for the progress and prosperity of his reasonable flock, entrusted to him by Christ, through the Church.

Saint Epiphanius once went to Constantinople without the permission and blessing of the Archbishop of Constantinople, who was Saint John Chrysostom at the time, and he performed an ordination or ordinations. The sacred Chrysostom was informed of this and sent the following message to him:



*You do many things contrary to the canons, Epiphanius. In the first place you have made an ordination in the churches under my jurisdiction: then without my appointment, you have on your own authority officiated in them. Moreover, when heretofore I invited you hither, you refused to come, and now you take that liberty yourself. Beware therefore, lest a tumult being excited among the people, you yourself should also incur danger therefrom.*

Saint Epiphanius then "reverently departed". That is, he acknowledged his error, and humbly sought forgiveness and departed. He pastored his reasonable flock entrusted to him by the Church for 36 consecutive years and was "perfected in peace". His life and deeds give us the opportunity to highlight the following:

The Theology of the Saints is inspired by God, since the Saints reached the vision of God, they saw God in all His glory, and they narrated all that they saw and heard. "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched — this we proclaim concerning the Word of life" (1 Jn. 1:1). They infallibly interpreted Holy Scripture and added prestige to the Ecumenical Synods. "In the Synodikon of Orthodoxy the phrase repeatedly used is 'according to the theology of the God-inspired saints and the pious mindset of the Church'. We believe that all the great Fathers who reached illumination and deification gave prestige to the Ecumenical Synods and not the Ecumenical Synods to the Fathers ... and their theology is a narration" (Metr. Hierotheos of Nafpaktos).

In their personal lives, however, the saints, "who were clothed with flesh and lived in the world", had falls and made mistakes. What is important, however, is the way they faced them. When it was indicated to them, they recognized it and rushed with great humility to correct it, just as it happened with Saint Epiphanius. This shows the greatness of their soul, because it is not easy for one to acknowledge their mistakes, and humbly ask forgiveness and proceed to, if possible, rectify it. A courageous soul and spiritual maturity are needed for this. What usually takes place with most of us, unfortunately, is that we pass on our responsibilities. That is, we consider everyone else being at fault except ourselves. We even consider these people our enemies and persecutors, who tell us our mistakes.

Most of the problems that disrupt everyday human relations and create tensions and brawling, are mainly due to this fact. That is, the non-recognition errors, the non-assumption of responsibilities and the non-willingness to correct them. Even if we secretly admit our mistakes, we find it difficult to admit them, because we think this reduces us in the eyes of others, and especially because it destroys the fake and false picture we have made of ourselves and we have presented to others.

Families and society in general suffer daily from arrogant behaviors that result in conflicts between their members for minimal, most often, causes, but with sad and tragic results. To quickly dissolve the various misunderstandings and for peace to prevail among the people, there needs to be honesty, humility and spiritual maturity. The way of life taught by the Orthodox Church and truly lived by her members, helps efficiently and effectively in the elimination of the hideous mask, which are worn by people dominated by their passions, especially pride, and it helps them find their true face, the features of which are humility, love and freedom.

Therefore, what matters is not the committing of errors, despite the efforts made daily in human societies, but how we face them, which is related to our personality and spiritual state. When they are properly faced, then people are prevented from reaching extremes. Saint John of Sinai, in his "Ladder", reports the following incident: "I once saw three brothers punished. One was angry, one did not feel any grief, but the third profited greatly from the fact that he rejoiced in his punishment." In other words, there are three people involved in the same incident, but they deal with it in three different ways, depending on the spiritual condition of each. The first became outraged, as unfortunately most of us do. We become not only outraged with others, but also against God, with the result that we poison our lives and we cannot truly be happy. And though the second was not saddened, the third, in fact, was very happy, because internally he was fulfilled.

What is important is to try, by living in the Church, to make spiritual progress, so that we can face the sad events that happen in our lives by divine concession because of our passions and mistakes, in a proper way so that we are not outraged or saddened, but are truly happy in our lives. (*from johnsanidopoulos.com*)

### **Saint Kallitropos, Sister of Saint Epiphanius**

Like Saint Epiphanius of Salamis, her brother, Saint Kallitropos was a Jew from Eleutheropolis in Palestine in the fourth century. When at a young age they were left orphans, Epiphanius at sixteen years old decided to convert to Christianity and to become a monk. When he approached his younger sister about his decision, he said to her: "I wish for you to become a Christian, and to take up the monastic life." His sister replied: "As you wish so I wish, as you do so I do."

Then both Epiphanius and Kallitropos, with the local Bishop's blessing, were catechized by a monk named Lucian, who had inspired Epiphanius to convert to Christianity in the first place when Epiphanius had once seen him display extreme compassion by giving away his clothing to a poor person. Lucian catechized them in their house, and when the time came they begged him on their knees to "Make us Christians." Lucian then brought them to church to be baptized by the Bishop,

and upon meeting him outside the brother and sister fell on their knees before him and begged him to illuminate them through Holy Baptism.

The Bishop took Epiphanius and Kallitropos inside the church. Before entering the church, Epiphanius took off his shoes, and from that day forward he never wore shoes for the rest of his life. He then with his sister stood before the Bishop as he sat on his throne, and he read to them from the Holy Scriptures. During this reading, the Bishop saw the face of Epiphanius brighten and a crown was seen over his head. When the Bishop had finished reading, they all went to the area of the church where baptisms took place. The Bishop officiated, while Lucian served as the godparent for both Epiphanius and Kallitropos.

When the Baptism was completed, the Bishop instructed them in living a life of virtue and excellence, and he brought them into his home for a period of seven days to receive this instruction. When the seven days were completed, Epiphanius handed his sister over to a holy virgin woman named Berenice. Epiphanius settled his sister in their house where Berenice was to be a mother to her, and he gave Berenice a thousand gold coins to take care of his younger sister and establish a convent for themselves, while everything else he inherited he sold to pay off any debts he had. Then he and Lucian went off to live in a monastery. (*from johnsanidopoulos.com*)

### **Hieromartyr Peter Popov, Priest**

Peter was born in 1895 in the village of Nikolskoye, Danilovsky district, Yaroslavl province, into the family of priest Alexei Mikhailovich Popov. Peter received his initial education at the Yaroslavl Theological School; in 1918, he graduated from the Yaroslavl Theological Seminary and taught at school for three years until he finally realized that the Soviet school had been irrevocably captured by the atheists and that only atheism would be spread within its walls, infecting and poisoning the souls of children with it. Perfect and ideal teaching is only possible in pastoral teaching, provided that Christian ideals and the life of the pastor form one whole. And in 1921, he was ordained a priest at the Church of the Kazan Icon of the Mother of God in the village of Pomogalovo, Romanovo-Borisoglebsk district, Yaroslavl province, in place of his father.

Having chosen the pastoral career quite consciously, he no longer adapted to the persecutors, did not try to please those in power, was not afraid of the threats of the sons of this world, and during the persecution of the Russian Orthodox Church in 1931, he was arrested on charges of anti-Soviet agitation and sentenced to three years of exile in Kazakhstan. In May 1934, Father Peter returned from exile and entered the church as a priest in the village of Voznesenye, Romanovo-Borisoglebsk district, which by that time had been renamed Tutaevsky district.

Returning to service at the throne of God, Father Peter remained the same zealous preacher and servant of Christ as he had been, choosing the path of confession during the times of persecution beginning against the Church. Several sermons he delivered shortly before his arrest have been preserved, some of which were presented to him as incriminating material - the persecutors in this case did not want to hide the fact that they were persecuting him for his faith in Christ.

On major holidays, it was customary before the revolution for priests to walk around the parish, visit parishioners and serve prayer services in their homes, invoking God's blessing on them. Father Peter preserved this custom even during the times of persecution.

The atheists, who considered this a violation of the law on the separation of Church and state, were irritated by Father Peter's position, and on July 31, 1936, NKVD officers arrested him and placed him in a pre-trial detention cell in Tutaev.

"Why did you go around the villages on Christmas, Easter, Ascension and so on without permission from the village council?" the investigator asked the priest.

"Once I instructed church warden Fyodor Galaktionovich Pokichev to take permission from the village council for the right to walk around the villages, but the village council told him that permission was not required to walk with a cross, after which we did not ask for any permission."

"Are you aware of the instructions of the Central Election Commission on Religious Affairs, which obliges you to take permission from the village council every time you go to villages?"

"I haven't read such instructions, but I know that permission must be taken."

"Knowing that you need to take permission, why did you break the law?"

"Pokichev told me that... permission to walk with the cross and the Gospel is not required."

Pokichev is disabled, an illiterate person, he could not understand what he was told in the village council, and your responsibility to carry out such a walk around the villages is only greater when you do not have permission in your hands. Why didn't you do this?"

"Out of my simplicity, I trusted him and did not take permission, but went around the villages."

"The investigation explains the violation of Soviet laws as your non-recognition of Soviet power. Do you admit it?"

“I do not have a newsletter from the Commission for Religious Affairs under the Central Executive Committee of the USSR; I don’t even know if such a Commission exists, since I don’t read Soviet newspapers at all...”

“When did you develop such a conviction that 'a cultured, prosperous life without religion is a matter of darkness, depraved'?”

“I developed such convictions a long time ago, that is, since I learned Christian teaching, since I graduated from theological school and seminary. And before Soviet... life I was against this, and now, after collectivization... since it is irreligious.”

“You are showing a lie. Before the Soviet period, there was neither a cultural nor a prosperous life in the village, except for exploitation. So, you are against the cultural and prosperous life that came only in the Soviet period, in the period after collectivization?”

“I do not recognize collectivization, which is not built on Christian principles, which is what I preached among the population.”

“In what form did you call on collective farmers not to recognize “such a cultural and prosperous life that departs from religion”?”

“In the form of sermons from the church pulpit. I did not have personal conversations with collective farmers.”

“How did the collective farmers perceive this sermon of yours?”

“Judging by the fact that church attendance did not increase, it is obvious that my preaching was poorly received, and it was my duty to fulfill my duty as a preacher even more zealously.”

On December 9, 1936, a Special Meeting of the NKVD sentenced Father Peter to three years in a forced labor camp, and he was sent to the Mariinsky camps in the Kemerovo region. Priest Pyotr Popov died on May 25, 1937 in the Orlovo-Rozovsky camp in the Kemerovo region and was buried in an unknown grave.  
*(from newmartyros-ru)*

### **Sermon by Hieromartyr Peter Popov**

Delivered shortly before his final arrest. - Ed.

Our Lord Jesus Christ, walking along the shore of the Sea of Galilee, saw the fishermen Peter and Andrew, James and John, and called them to follow Him. They immediately left everything and followed Him. Why did they go so quickly and willingly?

There are moments when God visits the human heart, and thought, like an eagle's flight, rushes into the boundless sky. In these blissful moments, a person immediately understands all the vanity of everyday everyday life and immediately with his whole being knows and feels God within himself.

This effect is usually exerted by the word of God, "living and active" (Heb. 4:12). This same word illuminated the souls of Christ's first disciples. Their hearts were kindled, and they themselves were transformed and followed the Lord. And we know that from then on they spent their entire lives serving the Lord and His holy cause of establishing the Kingdom of God in the hearts of people. A joyful gospel song sounded in their mouths. Simple, modest Galilean fishermen were transformed into rulers of souls and brought joy to the whole world. The actions of the Spirit of God, the Spirit of grace, are elusive to ordinary human observation; they touch the very depths of the soul, its innermost foundations. The Kingdom of God does not come in a noticeable way - these are mysterious actions and consist in the re-creation and revitalization of man's inner life. From the day the Lord called the apostles, spring began in their lives. The breath of the spring of the Holy Spirit blew upon them, reviving and blessing their inner life. The past was night for them, and now the day has come, the great day of eternal life. What had previously called and beckoned them to themselves - family, material security, well-fed happiness - all this now seemed to them an empty dream and was replaced by close and sincere communication with Christ the Son of God. All the previous purposes of life that they served disappeared for them. This state of the apostles is excellently expressed by the holy Apostle Paul, who says: "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but dung" (Phil. 3:8). And the holy apostles, using the material blessings of the world, were as if they were not using them and looked at them as a material supplement given from the Lord, who feeds, warms and clothes the entire visible kingdom of this world - especially for them, who seek the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, according to the Savior's false promise, everything necessary to support their bodily life will be provided. Then this faith, hope and love for God grew and strengthened in them so much that they, endowed with power from above, the grace of the Holy Spirit, began to clearly and tangibly feel the invisible actions of the Holy Spirit and began to think and speak, feel and act as the Spirit of God gave preach to them. And since then, led by the Holy Spirit, the apostles carried the gospel message throughout the entire universe, and from the peoples who accepted it, the Kingdom of God was formed on earth, or the Holy Church of Christ... And we, Christians, are partakers of this Kingdom of God, introduced into the Church of Christ through the Sacrament of Baptism and those who have received the seal of the gift of the Holy

Spirit and are most closely united with Christ in the most holy Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ and, following the example of the holy apostles, called to follow Christ, must fulfill the teaching of Christ in word and deed and not waste the gifts of the Holy Spirit on the works of the darkness of this age. And who knows the works of darkness? They are now at every step. I will name the most important of them: distance from God and His Holy Church, debauchery, pride of the people of this world, and hence everything else - theft, drunkenness, hatred, murder, etc. So, beloved in the Lord, "Be careful how you walk dangerously, not as fools, but as wisdom, for the days are evil" [Eph. 5, 15–16]. May the Lord be with you. To him is honor and worship forever and ever. Amen".

### **Also Commemorated Today**

St. [Germanus](#), patriarch of Constantinople (740).  
Glorification (1913) of Hieromartyr [Hermogenes](#) (1612) the Patriarch of Moscow  
New Martyr Abbess Athanasia of the Smolensk Hodigitria Convent (1931).  
Venerable [Dionysius](#), archimandrite of St. Sergius' Lavra (1633).  
2nd Uncovering of the relics (1992) of Righteous Simeon of Verkhoturye (1642).  
St. [Sabinus](#), archbishop of Cyprus (5th c.).  
St. Dracontius, bishop of Nicaea (1st-3<sup>rd</sup> c.)  
St. [Polybius](#) of Cyprus, bishop of Rinokyr in Egypt (5th c.).  
Martyr [John](#) of Wallachia, at Constantinople (1662).  
New Martyr [John](#) of Serres (c. 1480)  
Martyr [Pancratius](#) (Pancras) of Rome, with his uncle [Dionysius](#) (304).  
St. [Philip](#) of Agirone, [apostle](#) to Sicily (103)  
St. Philip [Argyrius](#) (Silversmith) (395-408).  
Venerable [Theodore](#) of [Cythera](#), monk (Greek).  
St. [Anthony](#) (Medvedev), archimandrite of St. Sergius' Lavra (1877).  
Venerable [Leo](#) of Methoni (unk)  
St. [Æthelheard](#) ([Ethelhard](#)), [Archbishop](#) of Canterbury (805)  
St. [Diomma](#) of Kildimo (Ireland)(5<sup>th</sup> c.)  
Martyrs [Flavia](#) Domitilla, Euphrosyna and Theodora of Terracina (c. 100)  
St. [Modoald](#), [bishop](#) of Trier (640)  
Martyrs [Nereus](#) and Achilleus of Terracina (c. 100)  
St. [Rictrudis](#) ([Rictrude](#)), Abbess of Marchiennes (France)(688)  
Synaxis of the Holy Fathers of Molchansk: Archimandrite St Theodosy (Maslov);  
Hieromonk St Serapion; Staretz St Sofronius (Batovrin); Monk St Serhij Tikhonov  
(Ukraine)

### **Social Team for May 19**

Team 6 – Gabriela Howl, Shannon Johnson, Jameson Barker. 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 & la, 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.)