

SOBORNOST

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*American Carpatho-Russian Orthodox
Diocese*

*ECUMENICAL PATRIARCHATE
OF CONSTANTINOPLE*

SERVICES

Wed: Reader Vespers 6:30 PM

Saturday: Vespers 5 PM

Sunday: Matins 8:45 AM

Divine Liturgy 10 AM

**June 9, 2024 – Sixth Sunday of Pascha | Sunday of
the Blind Man**

By St. Luke the Surgeon, Bishop of Simferopol

You heard today the Gospel story about one of the greatest miracles of Christ - the healing of a man born blind. Much could be said about this, and I've been talking about it for years. Today I want to talk about what I did not speak about, about those words of Christ, full of great significance for us, which He spoke after the healing of the blind man. He said: "I am the light of the world" (John 8:12). "I came into this world for judgment, so that those who do not see may see, and those who see will become blind" (John 9:39).

How will you understand these words, amazing words, words that no one before Christ could have said? He came for judgment, He came so that those who do not see may become seers, and those who see may become blind. He came to judgment to judge those who proudly considered themselves to being able to see, to being enlightened, clearly understanding everything; to the judgment of them who with contempt for the common people who were called blind; to the judgment between those who considered themselves to see everything clearly, and those who called themselves blind, who were considered to see nothing and not understand.



What was this judgment? How did the Lord make those who do not see see, and make those who see blind? He said about Himself: "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows Me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life" (John 8:12).

He brought the spiritual light to the world, which was unknown before His coming, He brought that light, which was not thought of, which was not known to those who considered themselves to be seeing and enlightened, to clearly understand everything.

He showed the world that they are deeply, deeply mistaken, considering themselves to be seeing when they are in fact completely blind, spiritually blind. He came in order to bring to the world a teaching that would reveal spiritual light to all those who were considered blind, who did not understand anything.

He brought light into the world, and all the humble in heart, all the meek, who were previously considered blind, believed in Him with all their hearts, loved Him with all their hearts and followed the path indicated by Him.

They believed in what He said, they saw the light that He brought to the world, they felt and accepted the light brought by the Lord Jesus Christ in their hearts.

They believed, they loved, they followed Christ, they began to fulfill the commandments of Christ with all diligence, and for this they became close to the Lord, became friends of Christ and even brethren of Christ. A miracle happened in their hearts: because they loved Christ, because they believed in Him with all their hearts, God Himself indwelt in their hearts, cleansed by this faith and this love. According to the word of Christ - an unfaltering word - He came with His Father into their hearts.

Well, did they not know the truest, most obvious, most radiant light? Have they not become seers? And the unfortunate ones, full of pride, who considered themselves to know and understand everything, have they not become blind? They rejected Christ, rejected His commandments, rejected the path that He showed. They did not love Christ, and therefore they did not unite with Him in their hearts.

These are the seers who have become blind. These words of Christ were heard by some of the Pharisees who were present during the conversation of the Savior with the healed blind man. And they asked the Lord: "Are we blind too?" Jesus told them, "If you were blind, you would have no sin in you; but as you say you see, the sin remains."

The words are not easy to understand, words that I must explain to you. What does "If you were blind, you would have no sin" mean? If you were really ignorant, blind people, then the sin of not believing in Me would not be imputed to you.

You should have first received your sight, first believed in Me, and then there would be no sin in you, you would be in the light. "But as you say you see, then the sin remains." But since in pride and self-importance you consider yourself as having sight, and consider yourself leaders of the enlightened people of Israel, then the sin remains. The sin is that you did not believe Me, that you were indifferent, that your hearts were petrified when you saw countless miracles, when you listened to My words, My teachings.

It is precisely because everyone saw and heard this, and yet did not believe in Me, considering themselves to have sight, that your sin remains in you, and you, of course, will remain forever blind.

As you can see, after the Lord Jesus Christ healed the bodily eyes of the man born blind, He now speaks to the Pharisees about spiritual blindness, and this must be understood. And one must understand that they are spiritually blind, just as the Pharisees were blind, just as blind are all those into whose hearts the light of Christ did not penetrate, for He said of Himself: "I am the light of the world."

Have you ever heard of such a light that darkness could not embrace? No, you have not heard of such a thing, for any physical light can be enveloped in darkness, it can become invisible, but the light of Christ, which He brought to the world, cannot be embraced by darkness, it shines in the darkness, no matter how thick this darkness is.

The unfortunate ones who remain in spiritual darkness are all those who do not want to know the true light, the only true Divine light, which the Lord Jesus Christ brought to people.

Not knowing this light, all evil people are in constant darkness, all those who hate their brothers and sisters, all blasphemers, liars, slanderers, unclean people, defiled by fornication and adultery, and above all, all proud people, completely devoid of humility, for they cannot be close to Christ, all those who follow their own path, and not the path indicated by Him, cannot believe in Him - all the workers of iniquity, all the unmerciful, and, of course, all the thieves, all the unfortunate bandits.

And for us, to whom the Lord Jesus Christ opened the way to salvation, shouldn't we remember, forever remember the words of Christ in response to the Pharisees who asked Him if they were blind too: "If you were blind, you would not have sin in yourselves; but as you say you see, the sin remains."

Do not think that if you were baptized in the name of the Holy Trinity, if you confess your sins, if you repeatedly partake of the Body and Blood of Christ, if you perform all the rites of the Church, if you pray often - do not think that you are no longer in darkness, do not be presumptuous.

Look, look closely every day in your heart, if there is any darkness there. And if you see even the slightest darkness there, immediately disperse this darkness with tears, bitter tears. Amen. *(from johnsanidopoulos.com)*

Today's Epistle Lesson – The Acts of the Apostles 16:16-34 EOB

As we were going to prayer, it happened that we encountered a certain girl who had a spirit of divination and who produced much profit to her masters by fortune telling. As she followed Paul and us, she cried out, “These men are servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to us a way of salvation!” And she did this for many days. But Paul, becoming greatly annoyed, turned back and said to the spirit, “In the Name of Jesus Christ, I order you to come out of her!” And the spirit came out that very moment. When her masters saw that the hope of their gain was gone, they seized Paul and Silas, and dragged them into the marketplace to face the authorities. Having brought them to the magistrates, they said, “These Jewish men are causing unrest in our city! They teach customs which it is not lawful for us Romans to accept or observe!” When the crowd also rose up against them, the magistrates had them stripped and flogged. After giving them a severe flogging, the magistrates had them thrown into prison, ordering the jailer to keep them securely. Having received such a command, he threw them in the inner cell and fastened their feet in the stocks. But when it was about midnight, Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them. Suddenly, there was a great earthquake, so violent that the foundations of the prison were shaken. At once, all the doors were opened, and everyone's bonds were loosened. The jailer, awoken from sleep and seeing the prison doors open, began to draw his sword and he was about to kill himself, supposing that the prisoners had escaped. But Paul cried with a loud voice, “Do not harm yourself, for we are all here!” Having asked for lights, the jailer rushed in and fell down trembling before Paul and Silas. He brought them out and asked, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” They answered, “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved, you and your household!” Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all those who were in his household. Late as it was, the jailer washed their wounds and was immediately baptized, he and his entire household. He took them into his house and set food before them. He was filled with joy for believing in God, along with his entire household.

Today's Gospel Lesson – Saint John 9:1-38 EOB

At that time, as Jesus was passing by, he saw a man blind from birth. His disciples asked him, “Rabbi, who has sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?” Jesus answered, “Neither did this man sin, nor his parents; but [it was] in order that the works of God might be revealed in him. I must do the works of the

one who sent me while it is day. The night is coming, when no one can work. While I am in the world, I am the light of the world.” When he had said this, he spat on the ground, made mud with the saliva and anointed the blind man’s eyes with the mud. He then said to him, “Go, wash in the pool of Siloam” (which means “Sent”). And so, the man went away, washed, and came back seeing. At this, the neighbors and those who saw that he had been blind before said, “Is this not the man who sat and begged?” Others were saying, “It is he!” Still others were saying, “He looks like him.” The man said, “I am he!” Therefore, the people asked him, “How were your eyes opened?” He answered, “A man called Jesus made mud, anointed my eyes, and said to me, ‘Go to the pool of Siloam, and wash.’ And so, I went away and washed, and I received sight.” Then they asked him, “Where is he?” The man replied, “I do not know.” They brought the man who had been blind to the Pharisees. It was a Sabbath when Jesus made the mud and opened his eyes. Again, the Pharisees also asked the man how he had received his sight. He said to them, “He put mud on my eyes, I washed, and I see!” At this, some of the Pharisees said, “This man is not from God because he does not keep the Sabbath.” Others said, “How can a man who is a sinner do such signs?” There was division among them. Therefore, they asked the blind man again, “What do you say about him, since he opened your eyes?” He said, “He is a prophet!” The Jews did not believe [the report] about this man, that he had been blind and had received his sight until they called the parents of this man who had received his sight. They asked the parents, “Is this your son, who you say was born blind? How then does he now see?” His parents answered, “We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind. But how he now sees, we do not know; or who opened his eyes, we do not know. He is of age. Ask him! He will speak for himself.” His parents said this because they feared the Jews; for the Jews had already agreed that if anyone would confess Jesus as Christ, this person would be expelled from the synagogue. Therefore, his parents said, “He is of age. Ask him!” And so, they called the man who had been blind a second time, and they told him, “Give glory to God! We know that this man is a sinner!” At this, the man answered, “I do not know if he is a sinner. One thing I do know: that though I was blind, now I see!” Again, they asked him, “What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?” He answered them, “I told you already, and you did not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? You do not also want to become his disciples, do you?” Then they insulted him and said, “You are his disciple, but we are disciples of Moses. We know that God has spoken to Moses; but as for this man, we do not know where he comes from.” The man answered them, “How amazing! You do not know where he comes from, yet he opened my eyes. We know that God does not listen to sinners; God will listen to anyone who is God-fearing and who does his will. Since the world began, it has never been heard of that anyone opened the eyes of

someone born blind. If this man were not from God, he could do nothing.” They answered him, “You were born completely in sins, and do you teach us?” And they threw him out. Jesus heard that they had thrown out the man born blind, he found him and said, “Do you believe in the Son of God?” The man answered, “Who is he, Sir, that I may believe in him?” Jesus said to him, “You have seen him, and it is he who is speaking with you.” Then the man said, “Sir, I believe!” and he expressed adoration to Jesus.

A Word From the Holy Fathers

Prooimion – Death was swallowed up in victory at Your resurrection from the dead, O Christ. Hence, glorying in Your passion, and always celebrating it, we rejoice. With jubilation let us cry out, “The Lord is Risen.”

Once the host of lawless people handed over Life to the tomb, God to death, and the One who despoiled Hades to Hades, with the result that a mortal made mortals immortal, and One who was dead, at a word, raised up the dead. They placed guards at the tomb of the One who rules all at His nod. O the folly of you lawless ones! If He is dead, have no fear. If He is alive, pray to Him and cry with us, “The Lord is Risen.”

When, after the crucifixion, the God of Joseph, who once saved Joseph from the well, was laid in the tomb by Joseph, as far as one could see, He was being guarded as one dead; but what one could not see was the way He filled the guards with deadly fear. There was a stone against the tomb; and the interior of the tomb was of rock. The guards became stones when they beheld the angel seated on the stone, saying to the women, “The Lord is Risen.”

The judges were affected by the evil counsels of the lawless. They said, “Lo, He who shook the earth lies in the ground; He who was discussed by everyone and hailed by everyone, He at whose deeds the whole earth wondered, is dead. Let us then be wary, for the final outcome may become worse than the first. Let us watch lest His disciples hide His body, and then with falsehood cry out to all, 'The Lord is Risen.'”

“We shall, then, ask Pilate for a guard, and he will have men to watch over Him; for this Jesus is to be feared, living and dead. In His life He broke the law of the Sabbath; but if now He is risen from the dead, every law is broken. He lies there as one dead, yet there is hope. He is bound, yet He is expected to live; for all His disciples say, 'After three days we shall look upon the Master and say, “The Lord is Risen.”’”

“We, and foreigners too, O Pilate, are clearly guided by you. Therefore we who are yours flee to you for refuge. Through you let the justice of the nations be

established. We ask that He who is dead may not break the law of God.” Why do you act foolishly, lawless ones? Pilate is put in charge of the law; but how much greater is Christ than Pilate! He both establishes law and dispenses grace to those who cry out, “The Lord is Risen.”

“This is the word He spoke to His disciples: 'After three days I shall rise again, for even if I am dead, I shall trample on death.' We are not afraid that this will happen, but we think that He will be stolen away by some of the disciples. The breath of life, once gone, does not turn back again unless God speaks. If He is God, then let us say, 'The Lord is Risen.'”

Pilate heard and answered them, “Your words are really funny; for who would steal a dead body? What is the gain in a corpse? The one who loves a friend loves him to the tomb; after the tomb, his affection is spent in vain. This dead body lies there motionless. What difference does the one lying there make to you? Once buried, leave the corpse, for it will not be stolen, nor will He rise up for those who cry out, 'The Lord is Risen.'”

“Scourged by me, crucified by you, placed in the tomb by Joseph, He is clearly dead, undeniably a mortal. Just as He died with all beholding Him, just so let Him rise from the tomb with all beholding Him. You say that they will steal Him away and claim that He is risen. Are they not, then, blind? If we do behold these things and believe them, then let us say, 'The Lord is Risen.'”

“Everyone who talks like that seems to me to rave, saying that He will be stolen away, or that He will rise again. The one is false, and the other is inconceivable. However, if it will serve any purpose, take guards to guard the tomb. But see to it that the guards are not again led astray so that they say, 'In truth, this One was the son of God.' Just as once at the cross, so now at the tomb they will cry out, 'The Lord is Risen.'”

So spoke Pilate to them: “You have the guard, go on your way, and do whatever you have agreed upon.” Pilate, wash your soul, as you once washed your hands, and say, “I am innocent.” Or did the dream of your wife perhaps disturb you? What then will you do if you hear angels in Heaven and men on earth after the resurrection crying out, “The Lord is Risen.”?

The lawless ones then say to the soldiers, “Do not give in to drowsiness, but wait patiently, staying awake; be sure to keep awake for a little while, and work until weary, so that finally Jesus will be judged truly dead. If you do that, you will carry out the will of Pilate; and your labor will have a reward. There will be renown for us, for no one after the corruption of the body can say clearly, 'The Lord is Risen.'”

“Do not think that this command is without profit to you, for after your labor we shall strive hard to provide for you. Thirty pieces of silver were given to Judas. Take, now, double those thirty pieces. This is what we contend: alive or dead He is the cause of trouble. Then do not let us go to this trouble for nothing, so that we no longer have our money and still we have against us Christ and those who cry, 'The Lord is Risen.'”

Encouraged by the senseless plan of the lawless, the soldiers occupied the tomb, and an army guarded the King. Outside of the tomb were soldiers; within was war between Christ and Death. As the former gained strength, the latter lost strength; the one overpowered those below; the latter cried out to those below.... Let us cry, “The Lord is Risen.”

So while Death was being overpowered, and while Hades was stirring up a hubbub the guards said, “Now what is the trouble? The first watch of the night: those within were quiet; the second watch: they were at rest; but on the third watch, they were shaken. They mourn and rejoice at the same time; they weep and they cry to one another, “Woe, alas!” then, rejoicing, they say to one another, “It is right, the Lord is Risen.”

The earth was shaken by great fear, and the stone was rolled away from the tomb. “Is not this man who now raises up Adam and is resurrected, is not He the same one whom formerly we guarded on the cross when all were frightened? Then He burst rocks apart; now He has moved this stone. Furthermore, He is the same One who has rent the veil and opened the tomb while we were sleeping. The Lord is Risen.

“Let us arise now, friends, and search the tomb and see; for it is possible that the stone was moved by an earthquake. If the body lies within, we shall keep still; but if the dead has vanished, we shall weep with those below; for Death was just now lamenting, and Hades was weeping, all the time we were disputing – some saying, 'Woe is me,' and some crying 'It is well,' and some voices exclaiming, 'The Lord is Risen.'”

“Lo, no one is within; but who is on the stone? Whom do I see, or seem to see, or imagine that I see? Perhaps night misleads me?” “Friend, the night does mislead you; lie down with us and sleep. It is a spirit which deceives you; be quiet and go to sleep. Rather now we shall be on our guard, and we shall pay attention to this, that no one catch us asleep and coming here steal Him away; for then who will be able to put out of countenance those who cry, 'The Lord is Risen'?”

“The night passed at last – if truly it did pass – and what you said first, my friend, was true; He who was once dead now became visible. He rolled the rock from within the tomb. He frightened us with His words, for He is to be feared. He brings light, He sends light, He is light. Truly He is the son of Light, and He is the

servant of light; these are the shining words which He cried to the women when He said, 'The Lord is Risen.'"

For others a share, for us gain; for the lawless shame, for us glory; for them a scourge, for us life. Because, in truth, the Lord is risen. Even if those who guard the tomb took money so that they would willingly keep silent, the stones themselves will cry out that without the aid of human hands this stone cut from the mountain has risen – just as once from the womb of the Virgin, so now from the tomb – the The Lord is Risen.

You, O Savior, came forth unbegotten from the Virgin's womb, leaving her virginity unsullied; just so now You have abolished Death in death. You have left in the tomb the fine linen of Joseph, but You have raised from the tomb the ancestor Joseph; for Adam came following You; Eve came after You. Eve serves Mary, but all the earth is prostrate before You as it sings the song of victory: "The Lord is Risen."

– St. Romanos the Melodist, *Kontakion 24 "On the Resurrection I"*

A Profile of St. Cyril, Archbishop of Constantinople

By Rev. Dr. George Dion Dragas

His Life

Born and raised in Alexandria, St. Cyril succeeded his uncle Theophilus as bishop of the city in 412. His early career (412-428) was dedicated to the exposition of the Scriptures and the refutation of heretics and unbelievers. The second period of his episcopate (428-433), more intense and fruitful than any other, was marked by his opposition to Nestorius. Cyril's stand, strengthened by his alliance with the Church of Rome, led to the summoning of the Council of Ephesus (431) which ended with Nestorius' condemnation. The last period of Cyril's life (433-444) was reasonably peaceful, though he had to explain his teaching to critics from both the Alexandrian and the Antiochian sides.

[Theophilus, the Patriarch of Alexandria, and uncle of Cyril of Alexandria, was an antagonist of John Chrysostom, and presided in a synod in judgment of him. Cyril thus found himself in a circle antagonistic to John Chrysostom, and involuntarily acquired a prejudice against him. Isidore of Pelusium (whom Cyril very much respected) repeatedly wrote to Cyril and urged him to include the name of this great Father of the Church into the diptychs, but Cyril would not agree.

Once in a dream Cyril saw a wondrous temple, in which the Mother of God was surrounded by a host of angels and saints, in whose number was John Chrysostom. When Cyril wanted to approach the All-Holy Lady and venerate her, John Chrysostom would not let him. The Theotokos asked John

to forgive Cyril for having sinned against him through ignorance. Seeing that John hesitated, the Mother of God said, "Forgive him for my sake, since he has labored much for my honor, and has glorified me among the people calling me Theotokos." John answered, "By your intercession, Lady, I do forgive him," and then he embraced Cyril with love.

Cyril repented that he had maintained anger against the great Saint of God. Having convened all the Egyptian bishops, he celebrated a solemn feast in honor of John Chrysostom. - *added material from elsewhere – Ed.*]

His Theology

Cyril is one of the most distinguished theologians of the early Church, recognized by his contemporaries and his successors in the East (Chalcedonian Orthodox and anti-Chalcedonian Monophysites) and in the West (Roman Catholics and Protestants). He is the first father to establish firmly the patristic argument, which appeals to the earlier fathers of the Church for the right understanding of the apostolic preaching and the gospel of Christ.

Following Athanasius and the Cappadocians, Cyril accepted the Nicene *homoousios*, the three *hypostaseis* of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit and the unity of the divine *ousia* seen in the three *hypostaseis* and expressed in their common will and activity. He is not as original in the content of his triadology as in the presentation of it, and he is not so much interested in the "essential Trinity" as in the "economic", because of his soteriological interest which he inherited from Athanasius. As far as the essential Trinity is concerned, Cyril emphasizes both the co-inheritance of the three *hypostaseis* or persons and the primacy of the Father from Whom the Son is born and the Spirit proceeds. Yet Cyril does speak of the procession of the Spirit from both the Father and the Son, but with reference to the common essence of the Spirit with the Father and the Son.

Christology is the key to Cyril's theology and the topic to which his contribution became decisive for the early Church and subsequent generations. His terminology initially presented certain problems, because it was flexible and equivocal, but his thought was clear and helped to clarify and eventually settle problems related to linguistic formulations. He followed Athanasius' principle that theological disputations were not about terms but about the meaning embedded in them. This is why Cyril could use the term *physis* (nature) as equivalent to both *hypostaseis* or person and *ousia* (substance, essence) and so speak of "one nature of God the Logos incarnate" and "one person of God the Logos in (from) two natures". Thus, it is unfair to argue that he changed his mind in Christology from a monophysite to a dyophysite standpoint. Cyril has been unfairly accused of Apollinarianism both by his Nestorian opponents and by modern patristic scholars who wish to stress the humanity (or, specifically, the psychology) of Christ almost independently of the

Logos/Son of God. Equally unfair is the modernist charge that Cyril's Christology is only a Christology "from above". The doctrine of the two births of Christ does not imply the either/or schema "from below" and "from above", but brings the two together in the mystery of Emmanuel, His kenosis, His economy, His hypostatic union of the two natures, His communication of idioms (properties) and, above all, in His Virgin Mother, who is true Theotokos (God-bearer).

Cyril understands salvation in terms of both "participation" in and "imitation" of the human nature in relation to the divine nature, objectively in Christ and subjectively appropriated by human beings through the Holy Spirit who acts in and through the Sacraments. The objective aspect of salvation in Christ is particularly stressed in his doctrine of justification by grace developed in a masterly way in his evangelical interpretation of the law in *On Worship in Spirit and in Truth*. Cyril's theological legacy has been influential in all Christian contexts in the East and in the West. A contemporary positive reassessment of his legacy would prove especially beneficial for the current ecumenical dialogue, since it affirms the basic dogmatic perceptions of classical Christianity.

Cyril was a prolific writer who wrote in Attic Greek and had an extensive knowledge of the Classics, the Scriptures and the Fathers, especially Athanasius and the Cappadocians. his many Commentaries demonstrate his biblical orientation. He employed the typological and historical methods of interpretation which are most clearly set out in his writings *On Worship in Spirit and in Truth* and the *Glaphyra on the Pentateuch*. Cyril's anti-heretical dogmatic works are numerous, the most substantial being: *Thesaurus on the Holy and Consubstantial Trinity*, *Dialogues on the Holy and Consubstantial Trinity* and *Five Books of Negation Against Nestorius' Blasphemies*. in the last-named he argues for a true and personal (*kath hypostasein*) union of the divine Logos/Son with the flesh born from Mary, against Nestorius' Christology based on a conjunction (*synapheta*) between the divine Logos and the man born from Mary. Cyril also argues for two births of one and the same (divine) Son, one (divine) in eternity and one (human) in time, whereas Nestorius' argument implies two Sons, one divine and one human, who are conjoined in Christ. (*from johnsanidopoulos.com*)

Holy Virgin Martyrs Thekla, Mariamna, Martha, Maria & Ennatha

By Protopresbyter Fr. George Papavarnavas

The Holy Virgin Martyrs Thekla, Mariamna, Martha, Maria and Ennatha came from Persia and lived in the 4th century AD, during the years of King Shapur. They lived near a village called Aza and were dedicated to God. There they lived in asceticism and prayer and were guided by a priest named Paul, who, unfortunately, was greedy and kept for himself the money given by the faithful for

the needs of the hungry. And this passion of his, because he did not strive to defeat it, led him, unfortunately, to eternal loss.

In the area where the nuns and their spiritual father Paul lived, there lived also a magician, who understood that Paul had money and he wanted in every way to get it. That is why he presented himself before the king and told him that these women and Paul were Christians. The king called for them and ordered them to deny Christ. Then the nuns openly confessed their faith in Christ, but Paul did not do the same. Instead, he asked the king not to take his money away from him, and when he told him that you could keep your money if you deny Christ, then he said that he would deny Him. Later, however, the king set a condition for him to keep his money, which was for he himself to behead the nuns, who in the meantime had been severely tortured. At first he hesitated to carry out this heinous act, but then, defeated by the passion of greed, he took the sword from the hands of the executioner and beheaded them. Before beheading them, they tried with warm words of faith and love for Christ to awaken his conscience and lead him to repentance, but, unfortunately, he remained unrepentant. The money, however, which he loved so much, he did not enjoy, since at the end the magician took it, and then in his despair he committed suicide, like Judas, that is, he put a noose around his neck and hung himself.

Their lives and their conduct give us the opportunity to highlight the following.

First, the true spiritual father is the one who guides his spiritual children according to the will of God, and connects them with Christ and the Church. They owe obedience to him, when he also respects the ecclesiastical institutions and obeys the Church. Otherwise, when, defeated by his passions, he moves away from the path "that led him to life", and leads them along other paths, then they will have to separate from him. They should turn away from him, if they cannot persuade him to repent, and God will not forsake them, since He is the Savior of mankind.

Secondly, the unrest, the conflicts and the wars in human societies, nations and states are due to human passions, and especially to the terrible passion of avarice, which led the Disciple of Christ, Judas, to die. Saint Chrysostom, referring to Judas, who betrayed Christ for thirty pieces of silver, says that "the pieces of silver made the world upside down". And, indeed, avarice is the cause of upheavals, conflicts and wars. And when man is possessed by this passion, as well as by the other passions, that of lust, of vanity, of envy, of vengeance, etc., then he becomes a slave of the devil, who operates through human passions to fight us and enslave us, and eventually destroy us. And just as physical illnesses, when they are chronic, make treatment difficult and sometimes impossible, so the passions, when they are long-lasting, gain power and dominance over man, and then it is difficult to

overcome and defeat them. That is why we need a constant, persistent and painful struggle, but also fervent prayer for help from above, since "what is impossible with man is possible with God". In other words, one must strive, but at the same time seek the mercy and help of God. After all, in the Church everything is divine-human. God is the one who acts in the salvation of man, and man cooperates in the work of his salvation.

Passions are the unnatural function of the powers of the soul, which after the fall of man into sin have been perverted and diverted from their natural function. That is, the passions are not something external that enters into man and where he must eliminate them. That is why the struggle of man is not to uproot his passions, but to overcome them and to transform them, that is, to lead the powers of the soul, where rationality (logic and mind) is, and desire is, and passion is, from the unnatural to the natural to the supernatural. This struggle bears fruit when it is done with humility, prayer, asceticism and the sacramental life, because then the Grace of God overshadows man and strengthens him. Otherwise, the devil acquires power over him and leads him to eternal loss.

In the "Hymns of Ascent" of the third tone, which are chanted on Sundays during Matins, and specifically in the first troparion, it is written: "Thou didst move the captivity of Sion away from Babylon, O Word. Draw me also forth from the passions unto life." Here the sacred hymnographer has in mind the Babylonian captivity of the Israelites and their liberation, as described in the Old Testament. And he begs God to free him from his passions, as He freed the Israelites from their Babylonian captivity, and to lead him to life. It is clearly seen that the passions are connected with the loss of life, of the eternal divine life, and the transformation of the passions is connected with life, that is, with Christ, who, as He declared Himself, "the Way, the Truth and the Life". Eventually, whoever is enslaved to his passions, he is under the dominion of the devil, who leads him to eternal loss.

Let us love Christ, who is "Life", and let us daily call upon Him fervently, saying: "Draw me also forth from the passions unto life." (*from johnsanidopoulos.com*)

Also Commemorated Today

Venerable [Cyril](#), abbot of White Lake (Byelozersk) (1427).

St. Alexius Mechev, priest of Moscow (1923).

Venerable [Alexander](#), abbot of Kushta (Vologda) (1439).

Five Virgin Martyrs [Thecla](#), Mariamne, [Martha](#), [Mary](#), & Enmatha of Persia (346).

Righteous Cyril of Velsk or Vazhe (Vologda) (15th c.).

[St. Columba](#) (Colum Cille) of [Iona](#) (597) (*Celtic & British*).

St. [Baithene](#) of Tiree (600) (*Celtic & British*).

Hieromartyr [Alexander](#), bishop of Prusa (*Greek*).
Venerable Cyril, monk (*Greek*).
Abba [Cyrus](#) of Alexandria
[Three](#) Virgin-martyrs of Chios (*Greek*).
[St. John](#) of Shavtel-Gaenati, Georgia (13th c.) (*Georgia*).
Martyr [Ananias](#)
Martyrs [Primus](#) and Felician of Rome
St. [David](#) of Gareji and his spiritual son Lucian
St. [Cummian](#) of Bobbio, former Irish bishop (661 or 682)
St. [Maximian](#), bishop of Syracuse (594)
Hieromartyr [Vincent](#), deacon of Agen (c. 292)

Social Team for June 16

Team 2 – Carrie Lamere and 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, and those in need of our prayers. (Please advise Fr. Joseph of changes.)