

# SOBORNOST

**St. Thomas the Apostle Orthodox Church**

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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**



**August 11, 2024 – 7<sup>th</sup> Sunday After Pentecost | Holy Martyr  
& Archdeacon Euplos | Afterfeast of the Transfiguration**

*In his raiment, revered Euplos was a Levite, in his beheading, a firm soldier.*

*On the eleventh Euplos was struck with the sword.*

Euplos (Euplus, Euplius) was a deacon in Catania, Sicily. Emperor Diocletian (284-305) ordered the governor Calvisianus in Sicily to exterminate any Christians he found there. Calvisianus did not find a single Christian, for the few that were there, hid from the persecutor and did not reveal themselves. Then someone accused Euplos of taking a book to secret Christians and reading to them. This book was the Holy Gospel.

They soon brought Euplos to court, hung that book around his neck and led him to prison. When the governor asked the Saint to read from the book, he had him imprisoned for being a Christian. The Lord made a spring of water flow into the prison for the Martyr to quench his thirst, after seven days of thirst and hunger during which time Euplos spent in prayer. Then he was handed over for torture.

They first tied his hands, feet and knees and hung him on wooden pole, where they tore at his skin with iron claws. During this a divine voice came to him and strengthened him. Then with an iron hammer they struck him in the legs and threw him back into prison. While they were beating him with iron rods, Euplos,

mockingly said to the torturing judge: "O ignorant one, do you not see that because of God's help, these tortures are for me as a cobweb? If you can, find other harsher tortures, for all of these are as toys." The judge therefore commanded that the Saint's ears be torn off, and that he be beheaded.

Finally, they led the Martyr of Christ out to the scaffold with the Gospel hanging around his neck. Then Saint Euplos opened the Holy Gospel and read from it to the people for a long time. Many converted to the faith of Christ. Saint Euplos was beheaded in the year 304 and took up habitation in the Kingdom of Heaven.

His holy relics are in the village of Vico della Batonia, near Naples. A portion of his skull is in the Metropolis of Polyani and Kilkis. A portion of his right hand is in the Church of the Dormition of the Theotokos in Nea Mesimvria. Other portions of his relics are in the Athonite Monasteries of Docheiariou and Pantocratoros.

With Saint Agatha, he is a co-patron of Catania in Sicily. He is also the patron saint of Francavilla di Sicilia and Treviso. Ruins of the old Church of Saint Euplius are located in Catania near Piazza Stesicoro. This urban site coincides with the place of his martyrdom.

His name in Greek means "good sailing" which is played upon in the text of the Orthodox Christian Vespers service in his honor. At the port of Alexandroupolis in Greece, a small church was built to Saint Euplos in 1997 by Thracian emigrants, to commemorate a church in Ainos, Thrace dedicated to Saint Euplos, where he was patron, which was built before 1000 A.D. This was because Ainos had a significant naval presence, and even in the Greek Revolution of 1821 had 300 ships stationed at its port. The port presence of these churches to Saint Euplos therefore are shrines for the "good sailing" of ships that depart from there. (*from johnsanidopoulos.com*)

### **Today's Epistle Lesson – St. Paul's Letter to the Romans 15:1-7 EOB**

Brethren, we who are strong should bear the weaknesses of the weak, and not just please ourselves. Let each one of us please our neighbor for what is good, to be edifying to him. Even Christ did not please himself. But, as it is written, "The insults of those who insulted you fell on me." For whatever things were written before were written for our instruction, so that through patience and through the Scriptures' encouragement we might have hope. Now, may the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to be together of the same mind according to Christ Jesus, so that with one accord, you may with one mouth glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, accept one another, even as Christ also accepted you, to the glory of God.

### **Today's Gospel Lesson – Saint Matthew 9:27-35 EOB**

At that time, as Jesus passed by, two blind men followed him, calling out and saying, "Have mercy on us, son of David!" When he entered the house, the blind men came to him. Jesus asked them, "Do you believe that I am able to do this?" They replied, "Yes, Lord." He then touched their eyes, saying, "According to your faith, let it be done to you!" And their eyes were opened. Jesus strictly commanded them, saying, "See that no one knows about this." However, they went out and spread his fame throughout that entire land. As they were leaving, behold, a mute man who was demon-possessed was brought to him. When the demon was cast out, the mute began to speak. The multitudes marveled, saying, "Nothing like this has ever been seen in Israel!" But the Pharisees said, "It is by the prince of the demons that he casts out demons." Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and preaching the Good News of the Kingdom. He also healed every kind of disease and sickness among the people.

### **Homily for the Seventh Sunday of Matthew by St. Luke of Simferopol**

Before healing the two blind men who were praying to the Lord for healing, the Lord asked them, "Do you believe that I can do this?" They answered: "We believe." And the Lord then said: "Let it be done according to your faith," and healed them.

Whenever the Lord Jesus Christ wanted to heal someone, He asked if there was faith in them, and only those who believed, He healed. It is said in the Gospel that when the Lord Jesus Christ came to Nazareth, He could not perform a single miracle there, because the inhabitants of this city, in which He grew up, where they knew Him from childhood, did not believe that He was really a Great Wonder-worker. And the Lord was surprised at their unbelief.

You see that the necessary condition for receiving the grace of healing was the faith of those who longed for this healing. Why is this so? Because the miracles of the Lord are the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on people, and the grace of the Holy Spirit can be received only by those hearts that are open to receiving it through fervent faith. Just as an antenna is necessary for the reception of radio waves, so a pure and faithful heart is necessary for the reception of the grace of God, for in this case the great mystery of communion between the Spirit of God and the human spirit takes place.

How can such communion take place? If a person does not have the ability and desire to receive the Holy Spirit, then nothing will happen. The Lord does not forcibly send His grace to anyone. The Lord seeks faith, love, and hope in the hearts of men, and only then does He pour out His grace upon them when they open themselves to Him with deep faith. A mystery, a great mystery, is performed at the same time. The mystery was performed during all the miracles of Christ.

You know that when the unfortunate bleeding woman followed the Lord Jesus Christ in a large crowd of people, she said in her heart: "If only I touch His garment, I will receive healing" (Matthew 9:21). And without asking for anything, silently, only opening her heart to God, she touched Christ's garment. The Lord stopped and asked: "Who is it that touched Me?" The Apostles were surprised: "How is it, O Lord, that You ask who touched You, since You are pressed by a crowd of people." And the Lord answered: "No, someone touched Me, for I felt the power that came out of Me" (Luke 8:45-46).

You see that with such miracles, power emanated from the Lord Jesus Christ, and He felt it. This power penetrated into the essence of the unfortunate sick and healed them. After healing this woman, the Lord said, "O woman, great is your faith!" (Luke 15:28). Again, as you see, the Lord speaks of faith, again He says that this woman was healed because her faith was great.

You have also heard the story of a Roman centurion, a pagan, who humbly asked the Lord Jesus Christ to heal his sick servant. And the Lord answered him, "I will come and heal him," and this humble man said, "Lord, I am not worthy that You should come into my house; but speak only the word, and my servant shall be healed" (Matthew 8:7-8). Then the Lord said to those around Him in amazement: "Assuredly, I say to you, I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel!" (Matthew 8:10). And according to the faith of the centurion, the Lord granted healing to His servant. That's how important faith is, how necessary it is.

It is necessary not only to perceive the miraculous healings of the Lord. The Lord Jesus Christ said to His disciples: "He who has faith and is baptized will be saved, but he who has not faith will be condemned" (Mark 16:16). You see how important these words are, you see that only those who have faith will be saved, and those who have no faith will be condemned.

The Holy Apostle Paul said that the whole essence of the Gospel teaching is reduced to faith, hope and love. Consequently, we must have a deep, strong faith in order to be Christians, in order to be recipients of God's grace.

And what is faith? The Holy Apostle Paul said, "Faith is the substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen," i.e., the certainty that things that are not seen exist. Faith is the fulfillment of what is expected, i.e., a deep confidence that what we are waiting for will come true.

About faith, Saint Isaac the Syrian said: "For spiritual mysteries, which are beyond knowledge and which are not felt by either the bodily senses or the rational power of the mind, God has given us faith."

There was a great example of faith, shown to us by the long-suffering Job, for in his unspeakable sufferings he preserved the deepest faith and obedience to the will of God. He said amazing words: "I know that my Redeemer lives, and He will raise up from the dust at the last day this decaying skin of mine; and I will see God in my flesh. I will see Him myself; my eyes, not the eyes of another, will see Him!" (Job 19:25-27). So strong, so effective was his faith, that he said that he not only believed, but knew that his Redeemer lived. This is the kind of faith we must have in order to receive God's grace.

In addition to what we see around us, in addition to what we can feel with our hands, in addition to the entire visible universe, there is also a boundless invisible world, much more extensive than the visible one. This is a world that is not comprehended by our five senses. Well, if it is inaccessible to our senses, can we say that it does not exist? Can we limit everything to our vision?

A frog lives in a swamp, it lives there all its life and knows nothing but its swamp. She does not know that on the globe, of which she has no idea, there are great mountains. It knows nothing about the vast oceans and seas, about the human world, about culture, science, art, great cities, the greatest events in human history. It does not know that there are infinite stellar worlds, planets that make their way around the Sun. Her knowledge of nature is poor, insignificant, and limited.

Let us imagine that a frog has a mind and is capable of philosophizing. She would say: "There is only what I see and hear, only my swamp, the world in which I live, those gnats, butterflies and worms that I swallow, and there is nothing else and cannot be. Foolish are those who speak of some invisible, otherworldly world." Now, if we dare to assert that there is nothing in the universe except what we perceive with our five senses, then we will be no more intelligent than this swamp frog. For, tell me, are our miserable five senses sufficient to perceive all that exists, both visible and invisible?

We know that even some animals have feelings that we don't. We know, for example, that pigeons have a special sense of direction. They fly unmistakably where they need to go. We do not have this feeling. We know that the bodily senses of many animals are immeasurably stronger than ours, for example, the sight of an eagle. A dog's sense of smell cannot be compared with our insignificant sense of smell. What prevents us from admitting that even for a complete knowledge of the visible world, special senses are necessary, which we do not possess? They are all the more necessary for the perception of the invisible world. What prevents us from recognizing that we need to have a pure heart, open to the mysteries of existence, a deeply humble heart in order to perceive spiritual mysteries?

We know that the great saints, who possessed such a heart, had a much deeper knowledge of the world than we do. They had clairvoyance, they were prophets, they knew the future and the present. And our spiritual outlook is immeasurably poorer than that of the saints. Do we really dare to think that we can know the Angels, that our human mind is equal to the Angelic mind? Of course not. Of course, we must recognize the unconditional existence of the invisible world, and first of all we must have deep faith in the fact that above the whole world is the Lord God, Who created it, Who cares for it and governs it....

I will tell you that we also know God by His manifestations. We know Him by the manifestations of His power and might, by His actions on our hearts. By the actions of God, by the outpouring of God's power upon us, by the grace of God, which we feel in our hearts, we come to know Him. Faith is unprovable. There were many, many disputes, many attempts to prove that God exists and that God does not exist. But no one in the entire history of mankind could prove either one or the other. God can only be perceived with a pure heart.

Therefore, let not your heart be troubled by all the attacks on faith from reason and science. Let science go its own way, let it explore the mysteries of nature. We have a different path – the path of faith, by which we come to know the invisible world, the faith that fills our hearts when we partake of the Body and Blood of Christ in the form of bread and wine. We believe that this is not just bread and wine, but the true Body and Blood of Christ. Also, none of us has seen our Guardian Angel, and we all deeply believe that each of us has one.

Faith is our greatest treasure, the greatest of all human values. We must preserve it more than anything in the world. The Most Wise Solomon said: "Guard your heart more than anything you treasure, for from it are the fountains of life" (Proverbs 4:23). We must guard our heart, because it is an organ by which we believe, by which we receive the grace of God. Saint John Chrysostom said: "As a serpent does not guard anything, and when its very body is cut into pieces, it does not defend itself much in order to keep its head, so do you give everything: your possessions, your body, and your very soul, in order to preserve the faith. For faith is the head and the root. If you keep it, then even if you lose everything, you will gain everything again with greater glory." Therefore, let us preserve our faith above all else. (*trans. John Sanidopoulos*)

### **Homily on the Transfiguration of the Lord by St. Luke of Simferopol**

The great feast of the Transfiguration of the Lord gives us a reason to remember the words of our Lord Jesus Christ: "If I do not do the works of My Father, do not believe Me; but if I do, though you do not believe Me, believe the works, that you may know and believe that the Father is in Me, and I in Him" (John 10:37–39).

Great and countless are the miracles of our Lord Jesus Christ: with one word He raised the dead daughter of Jairus, the head of the synagogue, the son of the widow of Nain, and even Lazarus, who had been lying in the tomb for four days; with one word of He commanded the stormy wind and the high waves of Lake Gennesaret to subside, and a great silence ensued; He fed five thousand people with five loaves and two fishes, besides women and children, and four thousand with seven loaves. Every day He healed the sick of various diseases, and cast out evil spirits from the demoniac; He restored sight to the blind and hearing to the deaf with one touch.

"For we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty" (2 Pet. 1:16), says the witness of the Transfiguration the Holy Apostle Peter in the Epistle. The light of God shone upon the world from Mount Tabor, for He is the Radiance of the glory of the Father (see Heb. 1:3).

Does the light of Christ shine as brightly now as it shone on Mount Tabor? Alas, for many it does not shine at all. People lose faith and confess with sorrow that the light of Christ is fading in their souls. It fades in the same way that the light of the sun fades when clouds obscure the light of the sun. It fades to those who are blind or who, although not blind, close their eyes from the light, not wanting to see it. It fades in the souls of many who have fallen into despair, mired in sin. It fades because people themselves obscure it with the darkness of their sins.

The bloody darkness of cruelty, violence, murders, the darkness of wickedness, like black, terrible clouds, obscured the "gladsome light of the holy glory of the immortal Heavenly Father." The light of Christ is obscured by spiritual darkness - that black smoke of sins, hatred and enmity, which even now rises from the earth.

Even the prophet Isaiah spoke words that are effective in our time and apply to all of us: "Hearing you will hear and shall not understand, and seeing you will see and not perceive; for the hearts of this people have grown dull. Their ears are hard of hearing, and their eyes they have closed, lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, so that I should heal them" (Matt. 13:14-15; cf. Isaiah 6:9-10).

And in order to somehow get through to us, people who are stubborn, hard of hearing and hard of seeing, to all that we thought was not enough, the Lord Jesus Christ added the great miracle of His Transfiguration on Mount Tabor. The ancient prophets Moses and Elijah appeared to Him, who shone with a dazzling Divine light, and bowed before Him, the Creator of the Law. In fear and trembling, the chosen apostles Peter, James and John looked at this wonderful sight. And from the cloud that covered them came the voice of God: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, listen to Him" (Matt. 17:5). And the holy apostles preached to the whole world that our Lord Jesus Christ is truly the Radiance of the Father.

It would seem that upon hearing this, the whole world should have prostrated themselves before the Lord Jesus Christ and worshiped Him as the True Son of God. But people's hearts have become hardened, they can hardly hear with their ears, for they shut their ears, not wanting to heed the word of Christ. And even if someone wishes to listen, the terrible noise around - the roar of enmity and hatred - does not make it possible to make out the quiet and gracious words of Christ. They are not heard, they are not listened to, just as no one would enjoy the marvelous melody of Mozart's Requiem during an aerial bombardment.

It would seem that the standing before the transfigured Lord Jesus on Tabor by the two greatest Old Testament prophets Moses and Elijah would forever close the ungodly mouths of the scribes and Pharisees who hated Him, as if violating the law of Moses. But even to this day the Jews do not believe in Him as their Messiah. They have closed their eyes and do not want to see the light. They do not hear with their ears, they do not want to comprehend the truth of Christ in their hearts and turn to Christ to heal them.

And not only the Jews do not believe. For many Christians, the Divine Light of Tabor is growing dim. The small flock of Christ is becoming smaller and smaller, for whom this light shines with the same power with which it once shone for the apostles Peter, James and John on Mount Tabor. Who is guilty? Isn't it the people themselves? Whose fault is it? Are they not those who sow enmity and hatred among people? Distrust between peoples has multiplied to alarming proportions, and the light of Christ is obscured by the dark clouds of atheism. More and more often we remember the terrible word of Christ: "When the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on earth" (Luke 18:8)?

But let's not lose heart, for He said: "When this begins to happen, then rise up and lift up your heads, because your deliverance draws near" (Luke 21:28). Let us live in such a way that on the terrible day of Judgment we have the boldness to raise our heads, and not lower them low in deep despair. And let us remember these words of Christ: "Fear not, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you a kingdom" (Luke 12:32). The light of Christ shines now, as it did then. The sun always shines brightly, but the clouds obscure it. However the light of Christ never fades: it is only obscured by human sins.

The light of Christ does not fade in the hearts of those who have loved Christ, who follow Him, who live according to His commandments, who consider the Gospel of Christ to be the highest truth. It shines for all those of whom it is said: "Blessed are your eyes that see; and your ears that hear" (Matt. 13:16).

We see His miracles, we hear His holy preaching. Blessed are the eyes of those who relentlessly direct them to where the truth of Christ shines; eyes that are often



turned to Holy Scripture, the lives of saints, the writings of the Holy Fathers. From there the Divine light ceaselessly pours into them.

Be seers and do not obscure the light of Christ in any way. May your ears always be turned to the holy words of the Lord Jesus, His holy apostles, to the words of the Holy Fathers, to the words of divine hymns. Blessed are the eyes that always look with trepidation at the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ and cannot see the darkness and sins of the world without tears! Amen. (*trans. John Sanidopoulos*)

## A Word From the Holy Fathers

Proomion – Having forgotten the fearful waves and been changed by the remark of the maiden, Peter said, “Christ God, when I was drowning in the swell I was quire properly afraid, and now questioned with a word I have fallen by denial. But weeping I cry out to you, “Hasten, Holy One, save your flock.”

Proomion 2 – The maidservant was another deep on land; but later having found a leader I flee to you, the harbor. Lord, I shall rouse my tears as intercession to you, and so I shall cry to you, “Hasten, Holy One, save your flock.”

Proomion 3 – Good Shepherd, who laid down your life for the sheep, hasten, Holy One, save your flock.

Let us raise up our minds, let us set our hearts on fire, let us not quench the spirit, let us rise up in soul and let us hasten to share the Passion of the Dispassionate. Let us abandon every anxious thought and let us cling to the One on the Cross. Let us, if you will, all go with Peter to Caiaphas's courtyard with Christ. Let us cry out to him Peter's words of old, “Even should you ascend the Tree, and even if you descent into the tomb, with you we suffer and will die and cry out, “Hasten, Holy One, save your flock.”

Not in vain, lovers of Christ, have we remembered Peter, but that we may rival the love of the friend, not the denial and the flight of a real coward. For Peter, at first boiling over with intense love, was very soon quenched by fear. But Christ, having accepted his zeal, understood his wretchedness, knowing his weak and lowly nature, a reed shaken by every wind, always trembling at danger and crying, “Hasten, Holy One, save your flock.”

You then, lovers of Christ, having heard Peter, lend me your ears, listen to the sayings of the Gospel and pay attention to them. For Matthew tells, in the book that he wrote, how after supper Christ said, “My children, dear disciples, this night you will all deny me and flee from me.” And when they all shouted together in amazement, Peter cried out, “Even if all deny you, I will not deny you.” I shall be with you and I shall die and cry out to you, “Hasten, Holy One, save your flock.”

“What are you saying, Teacher?” Peter cried out. “Would I deny you? Would I leave you and flee and not remember your calling me and my honor? I will recall how you washed my feet, and you say, 'You will deny me,' Redeemer? I am still thinking, Savior, how you approached my steps carrying the basin, you who bear the dry land and carry the sky. By the hands by which I was fashioned I now have my feet washed, and you cry out that I shall deny you and not cry to you, 'Hasten, Holy One, save your flock.’”

“I will, Sinless One, I will, Eternal One, have the taste of your supper in my mouth, and how can I deny your gift? If I, your initiate, were to become, alas, a traitor, to die would be better for me than to live. If I utterly forget the mystery that I know and saw and see again, it would be preferable that I run living towards hell. Let my tongue be now stuck to my throat if I am lying or if I cease crying out to you, 'Hasten, Holy One, save your flock.’”

To these words the One who fashioned mankind answered Peter, “What are you saying to me, Peter, 'I shall not deny'? You won't flee from me? You won't reject me? That indeed is what I want, but your faith is unstable, and you do not surmount temptations. Do you remember how a little time ago you would have been drowned had I not given you my hand? For you would have walked on the sea as I did, but you were immediately shaken and quickly shattered. And then I reached out to you as you cried and said, 'Hasten, Holy One, save your flock.’”

“Look, I am now telling you that before the cock crows, you will three times disown me, and, as if the the waves of the sea were submerging and drowning your mind, you will three times deny me. The first time you cried out, but now as you weep, you will not find me giving you my hand as before, because, having taken in it a reed as a pen, I am starting to write a pardon for all Adam's descendants. My flesh, which you are, becomes for me like paper and my blood like ink, where I dip my pen and write, as I distribute an unending gift to those who cry, 'Hasten, Holy One, save your flock.’”

“Now therefore, O Eternal One,” Peter answered, “now that you have indicated how many times I shall deny you, Savior, I shall also make clear to you my opinion. For even if you know before I speak, Lover of mankind, I shall nevertheless reveal to you what I am thinking. Before angels and mortals and you the Creator of things on high and things below I now confess: even if I must die, I will not deny you, Redeemer. With you I want to live, without you I do not want to live. Why should I look on the sun, if I do not cry, 'Hasten, Holy One, save your flock.’”

Peter was ardent as an outstanding friend. The Fashioner was ready to help Peter again, for he knew his liability to slip and his unsoundness. And so when the Lord

had spoken and heard such things he was willingly led away to suffer, arrested, as he had willed, by lawless men, and sold, as he knew, by Judas; and he was then brought into Caiaphas's courtyard, while Peter followed to the end. And when he saw he shuddered, he was dismayed, he cried, "Hasten, Holy One, save your flock."

With much adroitness, the apostle attached himself to the crowd and swiftly entered. Once within the courtyard he sees there the fire bound and the grass seated, [in other words,] Christ standing before the priest. Unable to bear this wickedness, he weeps already and beats his breast and says silently, "You have been bound, O Christ, and you endure and support it. And you are spat at in the face, before which the seraphim hide their eyes, shuddering and trembling and crying, 'Hasten, Holy One, save your flock.'"

"You are struck, and do I still live and I look at you? You are maltreated, Lover of mankind, and does earth see and hold firm, and is not split open to swallow down those who are against you? You are mocked, and does heaven watch and is not rolled up? Are those there not angry? Is Michael not enraged when you are struck, and does he not burn up and consume those on earth? Does Gabriel bear it and not consume those who are against you? Even if all the powers on high are silent, I shudder and lament and cry to you, 'Hasten, Holy One, save your flock.'"

When he had said this, Peter kept quiet and, seized with amazement, added nothing more. But suddenly, having done well by keeping silent, he spoke and did ill, that Christ, the Truth, might be proved true, and every child of earth might be proved a liar. What then shall we say, brethren? That Cephas denied him so that the Creator might be proved true? God forbid that I should speak thus of Christ, but rather this is what I think; that he foresees all things and reveals them and safeguards beforehand those who cry, "Hasten, Holy One, save your flock."

For a moment, as I said before, Peter kept quiet. For a while he ceased from his anxiety and sat inside the courtyard, thoughtful and gloomy. But a serving girl looked him all over and walked all around the disciple. Up and down she examined him closely, and having understood, she cried to him, "Clearly you too were once with the Galilean." Peter answered, "I do not know what you are saying. I do not know this man, whom they proclaim, those who cry, 'Hasten, Holy One, save your flock.'"

You quickly let go your hold, Apostle, and a maiden threw you. But arise, jump up and like an athlete revive your first strength. You did not have to wrestle with one stronger than you, and how were you defeated by a mere word? A young girl approached you, who doubtless said what she said to you in a faltering voice. And terrified by her faltering, as if by the gnashing of teeth, you exclaimed to her, "I do

not know what you are saying.” Why did a girl petrify you, and why did you not cry, “Hasten, Holy One, save your flock.”

The just man, thinking that the girl has been put up to it by those inside, leaves the courtyard and stumbling against the gateway falls there also. For another maidservant, as it is written, approaching those who were warming themselves, says, “This man too was with the Nazarene every day. That's clear.” to this Peter answered in turmoil, “I do not know the fellow; I have no knowledge of him. I am ignorant of the man whom they address, those who cry, 'Hasten, Holy One, save your flock.’”

You don't know the man, Peter, as you claim? You don't know the man? Don't you really want to say that you don't know a mere man, but God? Doubtless you were keen to teach the lawless that the Crucified One is God? For if he who bears flesh suffered in the flesh, he who is without flesh came from Mary. But he is God then, and does not die when dying in the flesh. As he is seen, he is material; but as he is not visible, he is accessible to none but those who cry, “Hasten, Holy One, save your flock.”

We hymn you, Master, for it is good to chant. We praise you, Lord, because you endured all. And your Peter, who endured nothing, disowned you. You were being scourged and Peter was denying you, though he had undergone nothing, the disciple. For already thrown twice by females, the third time he was defeated by other men. For a short time later, certain others approached and accosted Peter. And he denied with oaths, and at once a bird reproved him and cried, “Hasten, Holy One, save your flock.”

When Peter heard the bird crow, he immediately let out a howl and wept, “Alas, alas! Where can I go, where stay, where show myself? What shall I say, what shall I declare? What shall I leave, what take? What should I do, what suffer? What undergo? Which of my wounds did I lament? The first, the second? For a threefold pain assailed me. Three times the deceiver threw me, naive fool that I am. Invisibly I was shot with his arrow, visibly I was thrown down. How could so I puff up this mind and not cry out, 'Hasten, Holy One, save your flock.’”

“You are my strength and my song, O Lover of mankind. Do not abandon me.” Peter said this with tears when he came to the Redeemer's disciples. He put his hands over his head, he cried out, “Alas, servant of Christ, I have already fulfilled Christ's prophecy of my triple denial. Weep with me then, and as you lament say to me, 'Where are your love and your zeal? Where your faith and vigilance? Where this mind which strayed, Peter, and did not cry out, “Hasten, Holy One, save your flock.’”?”

The Compassionate One is conquered by Peter's tears and grants him forgiveness. For as he spoke with the thief there on the Cross, he hints at Peter, "Dear thief of mine, be with me today, since Peter has abandoned me. Nevertheless to him as to you and to those who seek I open my compassion, for I love mankind. With tears, thief, you say to me, 'Remember me,' while Peter, weeping, also cries, 'Do not abandon me.' Therefore to you and to him I speak, and to those who cry, 'Hasten, Holy One, save your flock.'"

"None is sinless, none is everlasting. Do not be discouraged. I alone am without blemish. Therefore for all of you I unfold the free gift." But perhaps someone will say, "How comes it, friend, that fallen Peter was called back again?" I shall now show you precisely, and through whom, the gift was once sent to Peter. There came the voice of an angel speaking with the women, "When you tell them all, tell Peter as well, 'Do not be afraid,' said the Teacher. 'Cry out, "Hasten, Holy One, save your flock.'"

"Go forward, holy one, meet and receive the Lord who comes towards you from burial as from a bridal chamber. For through me his angel he says to you, 'Now say to Peter, "Do not despair of forgiveness, but pray not to fall into temptation'." Let no one then suggest to us that Peter's fault was never pardoned. Wishing to grant pardon, Christ came to earth. Wishing to pardon, he was nailed to the Cross. In pardoning, he made death submit to those who cry, "Hasten, Holy One, save your flock."

– St. Romanos the Melodist, *Kontakion 18 "On Peter's Denial"*

### **Translation of the Relics of St. Ia (Eudokia) of Persia**

Matushka Manetha, whose name in the world was Maria Vladimirovna Skopicheva, was born on April 1st, 1918, in the village of Sevryuki, Belarus. The baby was diagnosed with cerebral palsy, and the doctors forewarned the parents that she would never be able to walk.

Despite her serious condition, Maria grew up to be a cheerful, active and earnest girl. Her parents or one of the neighbors would often take her on their shoulders to the local church.

From early childhood, Mary saw her mother Glykeria praying daily in front of the holy icons, and the sensitive soul of the child grasped the meaning of our existence on earth: everything rests on prayer, love and goodness. As a child, in a night vision, Maria saw two roads and was faced with a choice of which to go. There was a voice: "If you will walk on the left, you will live your life calmly; on the right, you will grieve." Without hesitation, Maria chose the right - the sorrowful path.

Once an old man, who was begging in the village and went into the Skopicheva's house, was served a piece of bacon by Maria. Her mother, Glykeria, who met him on the doorstep of the house, was told by the elder: "Your nun gave me lard." With these words, he predicted the fate of Maria.

Soon Maria became one of the sisters of the Chenkovo Convent in honor of the Tikhvin Icon of the Mother of God. On the day of the feast of the Transfiguration of the Lord, she took monastic vows. From that moment on, she subdued all the fervor of her heart to the will of God. Later, she was tonsured into the Great Schema by Abbot Macarius, one of the last Optina elders, who became a spiritual father for Schema Nun Manetha.

Schema Nun Manetha learned to do sewing and dressmaking at a young age. She had good taste in clothes, and the neighbours would come to her asking for advice on what style to choose or for help in sewing a nice dress. All through her life, Mother Manetha had been embroidering towels for churches of the Gomel region.

Archimandrite Savva (Mazuko) notes that Schema Nun Manetha was a deeply compassionate person. Any visitor to her cell was always given a warm welcome, treated to a meal and comforted by her. Mother Manetha did not reproach anyone for their sins. Only sincere sympathy, love, benevolence and cheerfulness exuded her heart. She was thus endowed with a gift of clairvoyance, and miracles were wrought through her holy prayers. But most importantly Mother Manetha was known as a very kind, loving and humble person. Her condition caused her chronic pain, but you could always see a heartfelt smile on her face.

With a pain in her heart, Mother looked at the suffering of people during the Second World War. At this time, she settled in the village of Vishnevka of the Ternichensky village council with the elderly spouses Kizyovs. In the village of Vishnevka during the war years, there was an unusual rite: every year on September 24, a "candle" and an icon were transferred from one house to another. People believed that this action would help husbands and sons who went to the front, thus, they prayerfully protected them from death. A wooden candle was dressed up in a linen outfit and was solemnly carried in a procession along the village street. The nun Manetha always held the candle in front of the icon and was carried on her shoulders. Mother Manetha was often asked about the fate of husbands and fathers. The old woman, as best she could, consoled the unfortunates who had lost their relatives and friends, and inspired hope in women whose husbands and sons fought with the enemy at the front. Most of all she pitied and loved the widow Stepanida and Anna Mironenko. Stepanida had a large family, and Mother, feeling sorry for her, did not tell the truth about her husband's death, and Anna often repeated: "Pray, pray for him (for your husband)." Anna's husband was in captivity in Belgium, after the end of the war he returned alive.

After the war, Mother Manetha, due to her low mobility, grew fat, and Anna's husband, Philip Mironenko, began to carry Mother to church in a cart. Once Philip Mironenko was taking Mother from Vishnevka to Gomel. Suddenly Mother said: "Philip, soon we will meet bad people, so you treat them quietly, do not be rude, and do not contradict them." In this turbulent post-war time and difficult in all respects, it was scary to appear far from the settlement at a late hour. Philip, possessing remarkable strength, was not afraid of anyone. Approaching the village of Zalipye, they were stopped by seven bandits. The bandits surrounded the cart, on which sat Mother Manetha, silently praying for salvation.

Soon after, Mother Manetha had to return to her parents' house, where her nephew Vasili, who had not yet gotten to his feet and needed help, was left unattended after the death her sister. Mother now had someone to take care of, talk to and share her life alone.

In the first post-war years, it was difficult with food. Once it happened that for three days Mother did not take food, except for boiling water. She was already thinking that her end was coming, but at that time, from distant Vishnevka, Anna Mironenko having dried biscuits with her hurried through the deep snowdrifts to Mother Manetha. Mother was touched by such attention and kindness. Taking the biscuits, she said: "From now on, the bread will not leave the table of your children and grandchildren."

Mother's main advice was consistent: prayer, repentance, mercy. Mother advised everyone to read the Akathist of the Mother of God, and to pray for the living and the dead in monasteries, giving alms for them. Mother Manetha had many predictions. Once a resident of the neighboring village, Zinaida, came to her to ask about her sick husband, who was diagnosed by doctors with bone sarcoma and offered to put him in a hospital. Mother did not bless the patient to be admitted to the hospital, but ordered him to be treated at home. But Zinaida admitted her husband without a blessing in the hospital, and although she soon took him home, nevertheless, the patient did not live long, and died within a year.

Mother Manetha was ashamed to take donations at this difficult time. But, having the blessing of the Elder Macarius, she accepted with gratitude so that she could feed those who came from afar. No one left Mother hungry. Ordinary people came to her, priests went for spiritual communication. People, far from spiritual, drew near to God and learned the power of Mother's prayers.

The Lord did not leave Mother Manetha without help and support. For a long time, a former nurse lived with her, and later nun Anna, as well as nun Photini, who later took the schema with the name Eustathia.

Compensating for the helplessness of Schema Nun Manetha, the Lord sent her like-minded people, people who were close in spirit, who took care of and protected her. With their help, a vegetable garden was cultivated, and simple farming was carried out. Each had their own obedience: nun Anna read prayers, the Akathists, the Psalter, helped to receive visitors, and went to the river to wash. Nun Photini cooked and cleaned. Father Artemy (Pototsky), a hieroschemamonk who served in the city of Dovsk, suffered for the faith of Christ in exile in Siberia, was in a great spiritual friendship with Mother. Father Artemy directed people in need of spiritual help to Mother Manetha.

To strengthen her spiritual strength, the Lord sent to Mother Manetha a deeply pious person. He was a former officer of the Red Army, a front-line soldier, who arrived in the city of Gomel and temporarily decided to stay with Schema Nun Seraphim, Nikolai Mamichev. Having heard from her and from other people about Schema Nun Manetha, Nikolai went to Mother to receive relief from serious illnesses. Looking intently from head to foot at Nikolai, a thin, handsome young man, Schema Nun Manetha briefly and firmly said: "You will be a priest." In the depths of his heart he himself had such a thought before, but now, having listened to Mother's saying, he believed in his calling to be a priest. Out of his kindness, Nikolai often visited the helpless woman. In the household of Mother Manetha, his skillful male hands were needed: to repair the fence, the roof, and prepare firewood for the winter. Soon Nikolai Mamichev, leaving his job at a woodworking plant, moved to Mother Manetha for permanent residence. While living with Mother, Nikolai took secret monasticism from Elder Macarius during his lifetime and was ordained a priest. Then a small monastery was formed by itself, in which there were: the Hieromonk Nikolai, the Schema Nun Manetha and three nuns: Anna, Eustathia and Photini. The monastery lived according to its own established rules. Everyone in the house tried to do it in agreement, and with the appearance of their own priest, much in the small monastery was even more transformed. Father Nikolai built a wooden extension of two rooms for visitors, a summer kitchen, and built a stroller for mother to move.

Between the reception of pilgrims, spiritual children, prayer and service, Mother Manetha sewed and embroidered linen. Pillowcases, bed linen, socks, bedspreads - everything was clean and tidy. While sewing, nun Anna read aloud Mother's favorite Psalms: the 26th, 50th, 90th, the 17th kathisma, and the entire Psalter. In the summer, Mother sat in the courtyard, sewing and embroidering, at the same time receiving visitors. Mother gave almost all of her money to the monastery. Mother often advised to read the 90th Psalm.

Several times in a dream, Mother saw the Mother of God. This vision was clear, accompanied by reverence and an all-encompassing love for the person. The



Mother of God appeared first in the form of a strict, tobacco-colored clothing, nun, then in the form of a young, unusually attractive girl. "Pray to me," she said, and although it was not immediately given to Mother to know that the Mother of God was visiting her, her heart trembled with every visit, and was ready to flutter out of her chest with happiness.

Father Artemy, a strong spirit, instructed Father Nikolai, both during his life and after death, appearing in a dream to Schema Nun Manetha, as he himself explained, to strengthen the faith of Father Nikolai. So, once Father Nikolai said a daring word to some person. Not knowing about this incident, Mother Manetha saw Father Artemy in a dream, who said: "Tell Father Nikolai not to dare to be rude to people, but to be gentle and patient, otherwise what example does he set for them? He will be guilty if he turns a person away from the Church, and even hurts his soul." In the future, Father Nikolai admitted that there really was such a case and repented of his insolence.

Mother attended the Saint Nicholas Church in the city of Gomel, and regularly began to receive the Holy Mysteries of Christ. The rector of the parish at that time was Father Vasili Kopychko. Once the Mother Manetha saw how an untidy man approached Father Vasili, and the thought slipped through her that she would not want to receive Holy Communion after this person. And at the same moment, Father Vasili called Mother to the Holy Chalice, saying: "And now Schema Nun Manetha will receive Holy Communion for the healing of her soul and body."

Often at night, Matushka Manetha was visited by evil spirits in the form of various people, threatening her or demanding from Mother not to help Father Nikolai or other spiritual children. Mother chased away the enemy messengers with her woolen prayer rope, who immediately disappeared. Mother suffered many attacks from people. She met those who hated the Orthodox faith to her face, although some of them later repented of their actions.

Once Mother Manetha woke up very alarmed. She saw Father Artemy on a cloud, and in his hands was a blue kerchief, to which the demons were drawn. Father Artemy fought them off, saying that repentance was brought for the sin of theft, but the enemies did not retreat. Then Mother Manetha remembered that she did not confess the forgotten sin of childhood, when she took the neighbor's kerchief as a girl and sewed a dress for the doll out of it.

To successfully find a spouse for marriage, Matushka advised to turn to the Mother of God and Saint Nicholas, to read twelve times "Theotokos, Virgin, rejoice" and "The Symbol of Faith" in the morning and evening. A girl took this advice, and God immediately gave her a good husband. Everyone who listened to the advice of Mother Manetha was happy in marriage, then they came to thank her.

There were cases when Mother Manetha testified to people about a secret. So, going to visit Mother Manetha, people bought eggs for themselves on the way, laid something aside for Mother, and put the rest under a bush so as not to demonstrate the presence of these products. Having received their instruction, they got ready to leave, and Mother said to them: "Do not forget to take your eggs under the bush."

Mother did not like proud people; her heart was disposed towards the humble. So, one day Tatiana (later Mother Evanthia) was going to visit her. As she walked, she hesitated. Two girls, who were also going to see Mother, began to assure Tatiana that she would not get to Mother, because she does not accept just anyone. Tatiana was upset, but she really wanted to see Mother. She began to pray to herself, and decided not to return back. "God willing, maybe she will," she thought, letting in front of her those two girls who confidently walked to Mother by the right of their acquaintance with her. Mother greeted them with a chill, and sent them to peel potatoes. And Tatiana was asked to pray with her, then, after listening carefully, she gave saving advice.

Somehow an accident happened at that time. A daughter had disappeared from her parents. They couldn't find her for three months. For help, they came to Mother Manetha. She listened to them and advised to order an Akathist to the Most Holy Theotokos, during which they would be kneeling down, praying earnestly to reveal what happened to her daughter. People from everywhere gathered in the church for the prayer service, they prayed tearfully. The next day, a man came to the distraught parents and told them how he had killed the girl and revealed where he had buried her.

One day in January 1984, the already very sick Mother Manetha asked to be taken outside to get some fresh air. Suddenly, from somewhere, birds flew in and began to sing so wonderfully. "Birds pray to the Heavenly God," said Mother with joy. And at night in a dream, Father Artemy appeared to her and said that at the very moment when the birds were singing, she should have died. Then Mother began to ask Father Artemy about the time of her death, but he did not answer, because God did not want to reveal it, otherwise everyone who knew Mother would want to say goodbye, but she could not afford it. But everyone who had been close to Mother lately was on duty in turn at her bedside. She gave each of them an order on the occasion of her death.

Mother Manetha fell asleep in the Lord on February 25th, 1984. Twenty-three years later, on August 11th, 2007, she was glorified as a saint, and her holy relics now rest in Saints Peter and Paul Cathedral in Gomel, Belarus. Her annual feast is celebrated on August 11th. *(from johnsanidopoulos.com)*

## Also Commemorated Today

Martyrs [Basil](#) and [Theodore](#) of the Kiev Caves (1098).

Hieroconfessor Anatolius of Optina (1922)

Venerable [Theodore](#) (in monasticism [Theodosius](#)) of the Kiev Caves, prince of Ostrog (1483).

Virgin-martyr [Susanna](#) and those with her: Martyrs [Gaius](#), pope of Rome; presbyter [Gabinus](#), his brother and father of [Susanna](#); [Maximus](#), [Claudius](#) and his wife, [Praepedigna](#), and their sons [Alexander](#) and [Cutias](#) (295).

[St. Nephon](#), patriarch of [Constantinople](#) (Mt. Athos) (1515).

Venerable [Passarion](#) of Palestine.

New Martyrs [Anastasius](#) of Asomaton in Asia Minor and Demetrius of Lesbos (1816) (*Greek*).

St. Taurinus, first bishop of Evreux, Gaul (2nd c.).

St. John, recluse of Svyatogorsk Monastery (1867).

Martyrs [Neophytus](#), Zeno, Gaius, Mark, Macarius, and Gaianus (*Greek*).

St. Attracta, Abbess of Drum (of Achonry) (5th c) (Adhracht, Araght, Athracht)

St. Lelia of Limerick, virgin

St. Digna, woman-solitary in Northumbria (4th c)

The [Fourth](#) Image of Christ Not Made By Hands

## Social Team for August 18

Team 2 - Carrie LaMere, John Nelson, Michael Black. 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.)