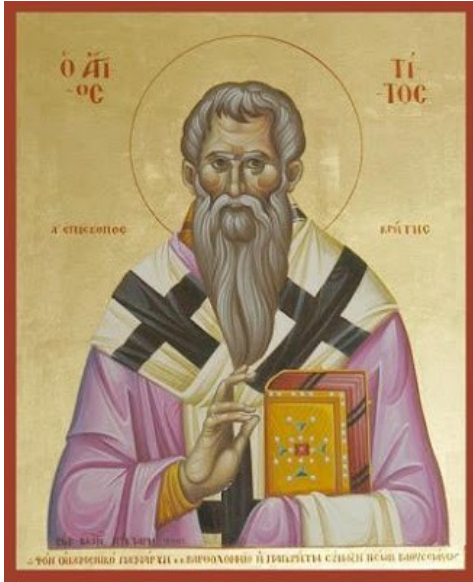


SOBORNOST

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American Carpatho-Russian
Orthodox Diocese

ECUMENICAL PATRIARCHATE
OF CONSTANTINOPLE

SERVICES

Wed: Reader Vespers 6:30 PM

Saturday: Confession 4:30 PM | Vespers 5 PM

Sunday: Matins 8:45 AM | Divine Liturgy 10 AM

August 25, 2024 – 9th Sunday After Pentecost

Return of the Relics of Apostle Bartholomew of the Twelve Apostle Titus of the Seventy

*That we the faithful may gather abundant grace, Bartholomew was found having been hidden. * On the twenty-fifth the body of Bartholomew was found.*

It is a suitable time for me to speak that Davidic phrase: "God is wondrous in His saints" (Ps. 67:38 LXX). For I wish to narrate an awesome and extraordinary miracle, that God worked through His Saint. The Holy Apostle Bartholomew, journeyed to various lands, proclaiming the name of Jesus Christ, finally arriving at Greater Armenia, where he was crucified. His holy relic was placed by the Christians there inside a sarcophagus, and they hid it in Albanopolis. However, because various healings took place at his sarcophagus, people flocked to it, and were released of their sufferings and diseases. When the Greeks, who were servants of the devil, saw these miracles and healings, they came against the holy sarcophagus, and the apostolic relic contained within. Therefore, when they found an opportunity, they cast the sarcophagus into the sea, along with four other sarcophagi, which contained the relics of four Martyrs: Papias, Lucian, Gregory and Akakios. God economized for this to take place, first, that through their journey covering much of the sea, the waters may be sanctified by them, and



second, that the places where these holy relics were distributed to may be blessed. The Holy Apostle Bartholomew passed through the great distance of the Black Sea, then through the narrow depths of the Hellespont, namely the Propontis, and arrived at the Aegean Sea. From there he went towards the Adriatic, and went towards the left to the famous and great island of Sicily, and he was followed by the four sarcophagi of the victorious Martyrs we mentioned previously.

Bartholomew landed on the island of Lipari, and the four victorious Martyrs (how wondrous are Your works O Lord! and what words can express in hymns Your wonders?) accompanied the Holy Apostle Bartholomew, floating beside him as if he was a king, until the Apostle arrived at that place, according to his will. Then they turned and went to their own place, as it pleased God's Providence. The Martyr Papias landed in the city of Amila in Sicily, the Martyr Lucian landed in Messina of Sicily, Gregory landed in the city of Kolimi in Italian Calabria, and Akakios landed in the city known as Ashkelon. Then the divine Apostle showed himself through a divine revelation, to the Bishop of Lipari whose name was Agathon, who immediately went down to the shore. Seeing the great and fearsome monster, namely the sarcophagus, which contained the apostolic relic, he was full of wonder and astonishment, and he cried out regarding the miracle: "How is it O island of Lipari? How is it that such great wealth and treasure has been guided to you? You have been extravagantly magnified! You have been greatly glorified! Therefore dance, therefore skip, and indicate with your hands the treasure, and cry out to him: Welcome, welcome O Apostle of the Lord." Such things and much more did the Bishop say, and he praised the Holy Apostle, as well as the island of Lipari, and he then ceased speaking.

Because he wanted to set the sacred sarcophagus of the Apostle in a glorious place, he considered building a Temple to the all-praised Apostle. For this reason many pulled that honorable and very large sarcophagus here and there, but it would not completely move from its place until blessed Agathon, by divine revelation, tied it to two young cows, and these pulled it to the place chosen by the Apostle. Among the other miracles performed by the Apostle, he also did one greater, which even seems unbelievable among the infinite miracles of God. On a small island, called Vulcano, next to the island of Lipari, there is a spring where thermal water boils night and day, and this was damaging Lipari due to its close proximation. This little island, therefore, at the time the sarcophagus of the Apostle was being pulled by the young cows, was also pushed away by divine Power from Lipari by seven stades, or approximately one mile, and it still appears pushed away till this day. Thus it no longer caused damage to Lipari, and the power and grace of the relic of the Apostle was proclaimed. O strange wonder! O supernatural miracle! Where else have such wonders been heard under the sun?

When Bishop Agathon built a most beautiful Temple in the name of the Apostle, he then treasured within it the revered and apostolic relic, along with the sarcophagus. As far as the miracles that take place there every day, who can narrate them all? After many years, during the reign of Emperor Theophilos the iconoclast, in the year 829, the castle was taken by the Hagarenes, where could be found the relic of the Apostle, due to the sins of the inhabitants, then the entire island of Lipari was deserted and uninhabited. Wherefore the leader of the city of Benevento, having heard of the miracles that take place through the apostolic relic, took action with the fervent faith he had in the Apostle of the Lord. He called on certain men from the city of Amalfi to go and bring the precious treasure of the apostolic relic, and so it happened. When it was still far out at sea, the leader of Benevento went out to welcome the Apostle of the Lord with the Bishop of the city, and many clergy and laity. Having brought the holy relic into the city with much honor and reverence, they placed it in a most revered place, where it could be found today, daily working various healings and miracles for those who flee to it with faith, to the glory of the most-good God.

The Basilica of Saint Bartholomew on the Island (Basilica di San Bartolomeo all'Isola) is located on Tiber Island, on the site of the former temple of Aesculapius. Emperor Otto built this church in 988, which was initially dedicated to his friend Adalbert of Prague. It was renovated by Pope Paschal II in 1113 and again in 1180, after its rededication upon the arrival of the relic of the Apostle Bartholomew. The relic was sent to Rome from Benevento, where they had arrived from Armenia in 829. The relic is now located within an ancient Roman porphyry bathtub with lions' heads, under the main altar. The marble wellhead bears the figures of the Savior, Adalbert and Bartholomew and Otto III. (*from johnsanidopoulos.com*)

Saint Titus the Apostle as a Model for Our Lives

By Protopresbyter Fr. George Papavarnavas

The Apostle Titus was a Greek, apparently from Antioch, who, it seems, had studied Greek philosophy and poetry in the early years of his life. He had been drawn to the true faith by the Apostle Paul, whom he accompanied to Jerusalem in 49 AD, to participate in the Apostolic Synod.

Afterwards, the Apostle Titus was charged with the responsible mission of going to Corinth to examine the situation of the Church there. Indeed, he went and gave solutions to the problems that arose, and he arranged them in the best way. After the success of this mission, he went to Macedonia, where he met the Apostle Paul, who, pleased with the successful outcome of the events, wrote his second letter to the Corinthians.

Later, the Apostle Titus returned again to Corinth with a larger escort, he also had two Corinthians with him. Then, the Apostle Paul sent him to organize the alms collections for the Christians of Jerusalem.

The Apostle Titus, as he very aptly wrote, was a tool for dealing with problems, a peacemaker, an administrator and a missionary. This is certainly how the Apostle Paul would have felt about him, mainly, however, as he himself confesses, as his "genuine child" and his "brother". Therefore, when he went to Troas to preach the Gospel and did not find him there, he left and went to Macedonia. He writes in his second epistle to the Corinthians: "When I came to Troas to preach Christ's gospel, and a door was opened to me by the Lord, I had no rest in my spirit, because I did not find Titus my brother; but taking my leave of them, I departed for Macedonia."

According to ecclesiastical tradition, the Apostle Paul, after his release from his first imprisonment in Rome, and possibly after his tour in Spain, stopped in Crete to preach. There he ordained his disciple Titus as Bishop of Crete, in order to complete the work he had started. And he sent him the well-known "Epistle to Titus" from which we learn, among other things, that the Apostle Titus had brilliant associates in Crete, such as Zenas the lawyer and the famous Apollos. His life came to an end peacefully in 105 AD.

His life and conduct give us the occasion to emphasize the following:

The Epistles of the Apostle Paul to his disciples and bishops, Timothy of Ephesus and Titus of Crete, are "monuments" of ecclesiastical discourse and a source of inspiration for the spiritual pastors and teachers of the Church, but also for all Christians. In them, it is clearly seen the way in which the Apostle Paul educates and directs, as a spiritual father, his spiritual children, but also how the faithful should live, socialize and behave in the Church, which is "the house of the living God, the pillar and ground of truth."

Next, we will try to enter the spiritual flower garden, which is the "Epistle to Titus" of the Apostle Paul, to enjoy the intoxicating aroma of its spiritual flowers, that is, to be inspired in our struggle for the experience of life in Christ. In other words, a few passages will be selectively presented and an attempt will be made to interpret and analyze them based on the teaching of the Church, as expressed by Saint Nikodemos the Hagiorite:

"Titus, a genuine child" (1:4) – The Apostle Titus is called by the Apostle Paul his genuine child, because he is a genuine child of God, since he truly loves God and strives to live according to His will. This is very important, because, as Saint Nikodemos the Hagiorite says, someone can become a member of the Church through Baptism, and receive the gift of the Holy Spirit through Chrismation, but if he does not live according to the will of God and is a sinner without repenting, then

he is not a genuine child of God, because in his way of life he denies God and "makes the devil his father."

"Remind them ... to blaspheme no one, to be peaceable, lenient" (3:2) – The Apostle Paul urges the Bishop of Crete, Titus, to teach Christians not to blaspheme, that is, "not to accuse and slander any person, whatever he has done, because the mouth of Christians must be clean of all accusations and slander." The Saints, because they are strict with themselves, are therefore lenient with others, full of love and kindness. On the contrary, those who are lenient with themselves are cruel to others and constantly create problems, quarrels and conflicts in their families, in the Church and in society.

"Let us live with temperance, justice and piety in this age." (2:12) – Temperance "does not only indicate abstinence from fornication and carnal passions, but from all passions and vices." Because "even the one who loves money is not temperate, but he is even more lecherous than a fornicating and lecherous man, since avarice is not a natural passion, as fornication is." In general, whoever is overcome by any passion, he is not temperate. And the Apostle Paul says that in this age we must live with temperance, justice and piety, because "this age of this present life has struggle and war, the age to come has rewards and crowns."

"For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men" (2:11) – Because the Apostle Paul demanded from the Christians, even from the slaves, many and great virtues, he now shows here "that he rightly and properly demands these virtues," because, as he says, "the grace of God appeared to all men, even to the slaves, and grants them the forgiveness of many sins." That's why all believers, "even slaves, must be civil and live to the glory of God, who is such a great benefactor of them." Also, this word, "the grace of God ... has appeared," reveals the first coming of the Lord, which "gave men grace and forgiveness of their sins."

The "saving grace of God", through which God is known, defeats the passions and authentic love is acquired that embraces even enemies, "abiding richly" in the "genuine children of God", i.e. to those who repent and struggle to live according to His will. (*from johnsanidopoulos.com*)

Today's Epistle Lesson – St. Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians 3:9-17 EOB

Brethren, we are God's co-workers! You are God's field, God's building. According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder, I laid a foundation, and another builds on it. But let everyone be careful how he builds on it! As it is, no one can lay any other foundation than the one that has already been laid, which is Jesus Christ. But as one builds on that foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, or stubble; each person's work will be revealed. Certainly, the Day will make it manifest, because it is revealed in fire;

and the fire will test everyone's work. If what someone has built on the foundation remains, then a reward shall be received. On the other hand, if someone's work is burned, it will be lost, but that person shall be saved, as through fire. Do you not know that your bodies are a sanctuary of God, and that God's Spirit lives in you? If anyone destroys God's sanctuary, God will destroy him because God's sanctuary is holy, and this is what you are!

Today's Gospel Lesson – Saint Matthew 14:22-34 EOB

At that time, Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and told them to go ahead of him to the other side, while he would send the crowds away. After he had sent the people away, he went up into the mountain by himself in order to pray. When evening came, he was there alone. But the boat was now in the middle of the sea, distressed by the waves, because the wind was against it. In the fourth watch of the night, Jesus came to them, walking on the sea. When the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were troubled and said, "It is a ghost!" and they cried out in fear. But at once, Jesus spoke to them, saying "Take heart! It is I Do not be afraid." Peter answered him and said, "Lord, if it is you, tell me to come to you upon the waters." And Jesus said, "Come!" Peter stepped down from the boat and walked on the waters to come to Jesus. But when he saw that the wind was strong, he became afraid and beginning to sink, he cried out, saying, "Lord, save me!" Immediately, Jesus stretched out his hand, took hold of Peter, and said, "You of little faith, why did you doubt?" When they got up into the boat, the wind ceased. Those who were in the boat came forward and expressed adoration to him, saying, "You are truly the Son of God!" When they had crossed over the lake, they arrived in the land of Gennesaret.

Homily for the 9th Sunday of Matthew by Fr. Demos, Sts. Paraskevi, Barbara, and John the Merciful Greek Orthodox Church, Melbourne, Australia

Brothers and sisters, today's gospel reading is a continuation of the gospel which we read last week where Jesus multiplied the five loaves of bread and two fish, and with them was able to feed, or rather gave the food to the apostles so that they could feed the five thousand men, not including their women and children – so, in other words, so that they could feed more than ten thousand people. After this event, the gospel tells us that Christ orders his disciples to get onto a boat and go to the other side.

And while they were in the boat, Jesus stayed alone. He wanted to be alone - as we know, many times in scripture, where he just wanted to pray. And this is Christ showing that he was human as well. But this is not a human weakness to have the desire to be alone so that you can be with God; it is to gain strength. It's a strength and not a weakness. We see this even in the lives of the greatest saints. For

example, the saints of our times Saint Paisios and Saint Arsenios his spiritual father the Cappadocian had people who would flock to them every day. There were days where they would not open their doors to anyone. Saint Arsenios had a rule that on Wednesdays and Fridays he would not open his door to anyone and not see anyone, so that he could spend his time alone with God.

And so, brothers and sisters, Jesus as a human having this need – this natural need – sends his disciples on a boat to go to the other side, and it says at the fourth watch of the night, while there was this great storm, and the lives of the apostles were in great danger because the waves had overtaken them and was threatening their lives. At the fourth watch of the night, which means at about three [hours after] midnight, they see someone coming towards them walking not just on the water, but on the waves, and when they see him they're terrified, because they think that this is a vision of a ghost. When they're terrified our Lord reassures them by saying, "Do not be afraid! It is I." And then Peter, for some reason, says, "Lord even if it is you, command that I come out onto the waves to you." And so, Jesus says to him, "Come." Now personally I don't know why Peter says to him, "Command that I come out to you." If I was in Peter's situation, I would have said, "Lord, if it's really you, then command that the waves stop so that we're safe." But Peter, having this, we know, courage within him – and sometimes that courage has a bit of ego hidden within Peter; we see that later on – he says, "Order that I come out to you." Jesus says, "Come," and he begins – he steps out of the boat and begins to walk on the water.

The moment that the wind rises and and is stronger and and the waves become greater, he takes his eyes off Christ and he looks at the waves and immediately he is afraid, and he begins to sink. You see, the gospel tells us that he falls first into fear and then he begins to sink. And when he begins to sink, knowing that he does not have the strength to save himself, cries out to Christ, "Lord, save me!" Jesus bends over, takes him by the hand, lifts him up, and takes him safely and puts him into the boat. Once they go into the boat, he says to Peter, "You've little faith. Why did you despair? Why were you afraid?" And at that moment the gospel says that the disciples began to worship Jesus, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God!"

You see, they see these great signs and wonders from Christ, and it is surprising to hear that the apostles say that, "Truly you are the Son of God," when they see this sign. You would have thought that when Jesus multiplied five loaves and two fish and fed more than ten thousand people that that would have been a sign in itself of Christ's divinity, and yet he continues to show his strength, who he really is. You see, brothers and sisters, we know something very important, which I think many times we forget, that we are all made in God's image and likeness. In other words,

we have a part of God in us. God's image has been stamped on us, and so everything that we have, everything which is good, comes from God and it comes through him.

Our daily struggle is to cultivate that, to make that stronger by leaving aside and denying what? Denying sin. What is sin, brothers and sisters? Sin is something which is contrary to human nature, something which was never part of God's plan when he created humans, when he created his image. When mankind fell, then they began to sin, and that sin began to create that distance between God and us, and therefore we lost our communication with God. We lost our ability to have that image of him, that glory of him, within us. We call that we call that deity, to be deified, to become gods by grace, so everything that God is by nature, we become by grace.

Now, you see, there's this storm, and God allows this storm to happen. He allows the disciples to go through this danger, a danger of their life, because when Christ gave the food to the disciples, and the disciples began to distribute them to the people and feed the people, then it was very, very likely that the disciples thought that they are somehow superior to everyone else; they forgot that God gave them that, Christ gave them, the authority to make miracles, to cast out demons, to heal the sick, to restore those who were broken. He says that, "It is through my authority I give you the authority." Now for the disciples not to fall into the greatest sin that there is amongst all sins – the greatest which is ego, which is pride, okay? - thinking that what you're doing, you're doing of yourself and not from God, he allows them to go through this temptation, this temptation that nearly costs them their life. But we know that God is the Giver of life, he has authority over all kinds of life, and so he knew at which time and at which point to come out to help the disciples.

Peter asks to come out to him. And so, brothers and sisters, many times in our own life in our own spiritual struggle we begin to think, just because, somehow, we have something good within us, or we are progressing spiritually, or be able to do something different from someone else, then this is ours and it belongs to us. And Christ reminds us, "You cannot have any of that if I do not give it to you first. It is through my power, through my strength, and through my will that you have the virtues which you have. It is because you are made in my image." And so he tells us, "Be careful not to fall into pride, because without me you can very easily become lost," just like the disciples today in the gospels, and just like Peter the moment that he took his eyes off Christ. That was the moment that he began to sink, and it was only when he recognized this and called on the name of the Lord, "Lord, save me!", in other words, humbling himself, recognizing that that it is only through God's strength that he can be saved. Then Christ intervenes, because if

there's one thing that Christ never does, he never intervenes on our own free will; he never intervenes on our choice. He wants us to come to him so that he can come and help and restore us and give us his strength. He does not want to impose that on us, because that is not love. Love is freedom, and in order for God to show us that absolute love, he gives us that absolute freedom to make a choice: do we want to follow him, or do we want to pursue this life without him and try to do it with our own strengths (which are most of the times weaknesses).

In the Old Testament there is a beautiful image that relates, that is related to God and to us, his children, and let's take us his child, in a very personal sense his child, me and you. It is the image of an eagle who wants to teach its little chick that is ready to fly, wants to teach it to fly. An eagle when it wants to teach its little young chick now which is ready to fly how to fly, it pushes it off a cliff and it allows it to fall off the cliff to see what the young bird will do. Now that young bird has to stretch out, learn to stretch out its wings and support itself with its wings. Now when the eagle sees the young bird falling, not knowing how to support itself with its own wings, then the moment that it's about to fall on the ground it comes swooping down and takes the young bird and lifts it back up again – and then it repeats the process. It does it again and again, not allowing the young bird to be harmed, but allowing it to fall so that it can recognize its strength; but the strength it gains from the eagle its mother.

This is how God is with us many times. A lot of the times he allows us to fall. He allows us to fall again and again, over and over, so that we can realize that beneath us, we have God as our solid foundation. And when there is repentance with our fall, he sweeps down, he takes us, he lifts us back up and takes us to safety. This is the power of repentance. Many of us think that, because we fall continually, then God will not forgive us. But God tells us exactly the opposite. He says, when they asked, “How many times should I forgive my brother?”, He says, “You must forgive your brother seventy times seven a day.” Seventy times seven a day! Now if he commands that to us, who are also weak and sinful with passions, how much more can God forgive us over and over again? So then the question remains, why do we continue to fall, brothers and sisters? Because we still haven't learned our lesson. We continue to fall because we still haven't learned to fix our gaze on Christ, to continue to look towards him and not to look left and right at other distractions and things which will cause us to sink. When we fix our gaze on Christ, we are humbling ourselves, acknowledging that he is our strength, he is our support, and he is our Savior, when we learn to pray from the very depths of our heart.

You see, we need wings also, just like the eagle, and we need to learn to use those two wings. Those two wings, the fathers of the church tell us, are two things: one

wing is prayer and the other wing is fasting. When we have those two wings, we learn to fly with God. And why prayer and fasting? Fasting means total abstinence, okay, and renouncing the things of this world, and looking towards things which are divine and eternal. That's what fasting is. It's not just limited to food, okay? Fasting is very broad and unlimited and extends to much more than just food. Fasting is looking towards the eternal, which is God. And prayer? What is prayer? Prayer is communion with God. That's what we need. We need to have a communication with God, that we work with him and he works with us, because without him, then we know that we have paved our way not to salvation, but to destruction.

So, brothers and sisters, regardless of the waves that are around us that make us many times think that we are going to drown in the sorrows of this life and this world, Christ tells us that the answer is very simple. And it's not complicated at all. Just cry out to him, "Lord, save me! Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me! Most holy Mother of God, save us! Lord, give me the patience and the faith of the saints." Amen.

A Word From the Holy Fathers

In what manner shall we train children? If we are zealous critics of those that are growing. The boy is very easily guided. He does not fight for wealth or glory — he is still a small boy — nor on behalf of wife or children or home. What reason for insolence or evil-speaking should he have? He contends only with companions of his own age.

Make a law straightway that he not act spitefully, that he speak ill of no man, that he swear not, that he be not contentious. If you should see him transgressing this law, punish him, now with a stern look, now with incisive, now with reproachful, words; at other times win him with gentleness and promises. Do not have constant recourse to blows and do not accustom him to be trained by the rod; for if he feel it constantly as he is being trained, he will learn to despise it. And when he has learned to despise it, he has reduced your system to nothing. Let him rather at all times fear blows but not receive them. Threaten him with the rod, but do not lay it on and do not let your threats proceed to action. Do not let it appear that your words do not pass the stage of threats; for a threat is only of use when attended by the belief that it will be put into effect. If the offender learns your intention, he will despise it. So let him expect chastisement but not receive it, so that his fear may not be quenched but may endure, like a raging fire drawing thorny brushwood from every side or like a sharp and searching pick digging to the very depths. Yet when you see that he has profited by fear, forbear, seeing that our human nature has need of some forbearance.

Teach him to be fair and courteous. If you see a servant ill-used by him, do not overlook it, but punish him who is free; for if he knows that he may not ill use even a slave, he will abstain all the more from insulting or slandering one who is free and of his class. Stop his mouth from speaking evil. If you see him speaking ill of another, curb him and direct his tongue toward his own faults.

– St. John Chrysostom, *Address On Vainglory And How To Bring Up Children*

Lord of Spirits – On Setting Apart Time As Holy

Jessie: I was calling because you guys have talked a lot in past episodes about understanding how things are made holy by being set apart, or things that are set apart and are used for holy purposes. And that makes a lot of sense, especially when looking at places and objects, but I’m wondering about especially how, practically, do you do that with time, especially looking at keeping the sabbath holy, being able to honor especially on a feast day, being able to keep feast days holy. I mean, without getting super legalistic, of like: “Okay, we *have* to go to church and there’s no video games, and you can’t do this and you can’t do that.” Like, what’s the actual manner in which we can approach keeping our time holy and set apart in a certain way, especially in big families, because I have six kids, so keeping time holy is a challenge *any* time.

Fr. Andrew: Let me pass on a little bit of wisdom from my wife. She has a lot of it, actually. Especially since her husband is a priest, when it’s time to be in church in particular, that means she’s managing the kids largely on her own. Thank God sometimes the older ones help with the younger—although *not always*, as I’m sure you know as a mother of six....

I hate to speak for her here, but I think this is such a beautiful thing that I’ve heard her say, especially to younger mothers. She refers to dealing with that as “praying with your feet,” and apparently there was for a while—I don’t know if it still exists, but there was an Orthodox mother’s blog out there—I think she was also a priest’s wife—titled “Praying With My Feet” or something like that, and it just refers to the simple fact of having to go in and out of church over and over and over and over again....

A lot of times when people want to— Okay, you arrive to church on Sunday mornings, this is holy time. It’s set apart; it’s holy. How do you do that? You go in, you focus, you be in church, you listen to the prayers, you sing along, you make the sign of the cross, you receive the sacraments—and then a kid starts *screeching*. Maybe it’s your child, maybe it’s someone else’s child, but it’s an opportunity for repentance. But it *feels* like distraction.

The task of parents and of helpful godparents and aunts and uncles and older brothers and sisters is to help train those younger ones to learn how to keep the time holy themselves. That *is* an ascetical act. You have to sacrifice your own sense of momentary peace in church in order to train someone else how to be there and be ready to receive what we all showed up to receive. It's not easy by any means. In a lot of ways, the clergy—we do have our challenges, but in that regard it's pretty easy for us, generally speaking: we're surrounded by people who are trying to be pretty focused and are doing it fairly well—although, you know, clergy can get distracted, too, for sure. If you don't catch everything that's sung, or you only hear 10% of the sermon...you are still doing something that is *extremely holy*.

To me, the moment that we stand before God, if we can speak about it in this way, there's two recommendations I would like to receive at the throne of God. One is from my wife; I hope that she can say, "Yeah, you can let him be here." And the other will be from my children. If they can do that, then by God's grace I will have been saved. Those of us who live in families, this is our biggest task, is to assist and to participate in the salvation of the people that we live with, because—not only because it helps them, although that would be enough, but also because it helps us.

I remember there was one time I was in confession with my father confessor, and I was describing him my struggles, trying to live a good life, and I said something to the effect of, "But the people around me make it really hard." Like, "I could be a better Christian if it weren't for them." That's basically what I said to him. I don't remember the exact words, but that was the message. And he said, "You know, all the things that you've described to me, all the struggles that you have, the way that your family acts, the struggles that they have, the failings that they have, the strengths they have—" He says, "You have asked God for salvation, right?" I said, "Yes!" He said, "*This* is what he's given you, because he knows that this is what *you* need for *your* salvation. And if you wish that it were some other way, then what you're trying to do is walk another path than the one he actually gave you, because this is what you need to be saved, this life that you have." He said, "They're not *in* the way; they *are* the way. They *are* the way."

Yeah, I know full well that when you're feeling exasperated at children or at anybody, it feels like it's impossible to pray, but we have multiple saints who have said things to the effect of one person who offers a single prayer in the midst of the world actually is doing a greater work than monks who live in monasteries and get to pray in peace all day long—which is an amazing thing to say, and most of these sayings come from monks, so they recognize that the struggle, the challenge, and the salvific value of the difficulties that we have, just trying to do the basic acts of prayer and piety and trying to keep some order, that that is a very, very powerful,

powerful thing. I do have some experience with this, and I mostly have experience watching my wife, who really has worked very, very hard at this. And seeing it pay off... I mean, my children range from ages 6 to 16, and I'm not going to say that any of them are always 100% totally ready to be in prayer or whatever, but as I've watched them begin to love it and connect and so forth, I can see that this is the work my wife has done and that I've tried to contribute to, but especially that she's done.

That's what I would say about that, especially about trying to participate in Church life with six children. It's a glorious thing that you're doing. It really is. It's a holy, holy thing that you're doing. And you don't know how many lives you're going to benefit by not just the six small people that you're dealing with, but also the people who watch you dealing with them, the people who watch you even get frustrated and then come back and keep doing it, because that's really important, but then also the many lives that those children will affect as well, that they will pass on. So it's a grand, grand work, and so it's going to feel like a great quest, because it is. That's what I would have to say to that. Fr. Stephen, I'm going to hand the ball over to you.

Fr. Stephen: I think part of the problem we have with this concept is that we've been taught to see the world in a way very differently than ancient people and the Scriptures do in that we have in our mind a distinction between the sacred and the secular: the sacred and then the things of *the world*. In the worst-case scenario, that turns into Gnosticism, where the world is actually evil. But there are much softer versions, of course, that we normally live in, where the world is just kind of neutral at best, but that neutrality mainly gets threatened by Platonism, because it's like: Well, right now you're having fun but you *could* be praying. So is having fun *really* okay?

And that's fundamentally different— That distinction between sacred and secular is fundamentally different [from] the distinction between sacred and profane. Profane was not necessarily a moral category. Using the restroom is a profane act, for clear reasons: you make yourself unclean; you need to wash. And the reason why that is distinguished from the sacred is to prevent mixing: the *mixing* of the sacred and the profane is the problem. When we take things that are profane and bring them in and mix them with sacred things, that's when it becomes a problem.

So why does this skew our idea of holiness? Well, because most of the world falls into the secular category, if that's the categories we're using, of sacred and secular, but most of the world does not fall into the category of the profane *per se*. Spending time with your kids playing a board game falls into the secular category but not the profane category. And so part of making, say, a day holy or a time

period holy is that we do that ritually, and those rituals don't have to be sacred as opposed to secular; they need to be sacred as opposed to profane. So, for example, when I was a kid, I wore different clothes on Sunday than I wore on every other day of the week. On Sundays when I was really little and my grandfather was still alive, we went over to Grandma and Grandpa's house for Sunday dinner every week. We didn't do that any other day. Later on, when I got older and my grandfather passed away, it was Grandma [who] would come over to our house. But when she came over to our house for Sunday dinner, we all sat at the *dining room* table, not the kitchen table where we usually ate. It was different.

None of those things are particularly sacred or holy or "religious" in the modern sense of sacred-secular distinction, but all of those things were actions by which Sunday became a different day for me than the other days of the week.

A few years ago, I tried to have a conversation with somebody who was an atheist I knew, and I don't think I was able to communicate my question, because my question to him was: he's an atheist, never been religious in his whole life, never been religious at all. And I asked him, "What is Sunday like for you?" And he's like: "What are you talking about?" I was like: "Well, is Sunday just like another Saturday? Do you just have two Saturdays?" And he's like: "*What are you talking about?*" Because for him, there *was* nothing... Saturday, Sunday, there was no difference for him. And that's just been ingrained in me since I was a child, so it has this different character. Even periods of my life when I didn't go to church, sometimes for extended periods of time, Sunday was still different for me, because that had been built into me *by ritual* when I was young.

So there are real practical ways to do that, but we can't get too up in our heads about "Is this really a sacred thing or is this a *worldly* thing?" "We're having fun: we could be praying, we could be reading the Scriptures together." Sharing fellowship together, hanging around after church and sharing fellowship and having conversations and getting to know the other people in your community is incredibly sacred and in no way profane—unless you're telling dirty jokes, which most people don't do at church. Those things, those times can be sacred, too, as long as we have this idea that they're set apart and *different* from other times. (*abridged from Lord of Spirits episode "Pantheon and Pandemonium VIII: Live Q&A September 2023"*)

Venerable Mother Constantia of Paphos

You are glorified as a servant of Hilarion, and perceived as equal to him in honor, Constantia. * Hilarion entered his dwelling above,* and indeed with him Constantia departed. * On the twenty-fifth she found shelter in paternal salvation.*

Our Holy Mother Constantia was from Paphos, and as Saint Jerome writes in his book "The Life of Saint Hilarion" she was a disciple of Saint Hilarion the Great who lived as an ascetic in the village of Episkopi in Paphos. Saint Jerome writes of Hilarion:

"In his eightieth year, during the absence of Hesychius, he wrote by way of a will a short letter with his own hand, and left him all his riches (that is to say, a copy of the gospels, and his sack-cloth tunic, cowl and cloak), for his servant had died a few days before. Many devout men therefore came to the invalid from Paphos, and specially because they had heard of his saying that he must soon migrate to the Lord and must be liberated from the bonds of the body. There came also Constantia, a holy woman whose son-in-law and daughter he had anointed with oil and saved from death. He earnestly entreated them all not to let him be kept even a moment of time after death, but to bury him immediately in the same garden, just as he was, clad in his goat-hair tunic, cowl, and his peasant's cloak."

Then Saint Jerome concludes his account of Hilarion by speaking of the grief of Constantia when she discovered the body of Hilarion had been stolen by his disciple Hesychius and brought back to Palestine:

"In bringing my book to an end I think I ought not to omit to mention the devotion of the holy woman Constantia who, when a message was brought her that Hilarion's body was in Palestine, immediately died, proving even by death the sincerity of her love for the servant of God. For she was accustomed to spend whole nights in vigil at his tomb, and to converse with him as if he were present in order to stimulate her prayers.

Even at the present day one may see a strange dispute between the people of Palestine and the Cypriotes, the one contending that they have the body, the other the spirit of Hilarion. And yet in both places great miracles are wrought daily, but to a greater extent in the garden of Cyprus, perhaps because that spot was dearest to him."

Stefano Lusignan (1537-1590), also known as Étienne de Lusignan, was a priest and scholar and a descendant of King James I of Cyprus. He states that Saint Constantia was considered the patron of the city of Paphos. He writes the following:

"Constantia, a very noble lady of the city of Paphos, was a disciple of the most Holy Father Hilarion, and she died from unbearable grief, when she heard about the death of her teacher and that his body was stolen by one of his disciples. Her true love is worthy of praise: not only did she love her teacher while he was alive but she also gave him complete love after his death."

The memory of Saint Constantia used to be celebrated on the 25th of August. Then for centuries she was forgotten and became unknown, even in the city of Paphos which stopped honoring her. But on August 25, 2011 she was after centuries celebrated again, and a vigil was held in her honor at the Holy Monastery of Panagia Salamiotissa, where there is also an icon of her, and in a church in Anavargos of Paphos. *(from johnsanidopoulos.com)*

Also Commemorated Today

Hieromartyr Moses (1931).

New Hieromartyr priest Vladimir Moschansky (1938).

Sts. [Barses](#) and [Eulogius](#) (386), bishops of Edessa, and [St. Protogenes](#), bishop of Carrhae (4th c.), confessors.

[St. Menas](#), patriarch of Constantinople (552).

[St. John](#) the Cappadocian (520) and [St. Epiphanius](#) (535), patriarchs of Constantinople.

St. [Gennadios](#) II Scholarios, patriarch of Constantinople (1456)

Synaxis of Hierarchs of Crete: Andrew the Wonderworker; Cyril, bishop of Gortyna; and Eumenius, bishop of Rome. (Greek).

St. [John](#) of [Karpathos](#) (c. 700)

St. [Aredius](#) of Limousin (591) (Gaul).

St. [Jejunio](#) of Gerase (c. 1000) (Italy)

St. Gregory of Utrecht (775) (Neth.).

Translation of the relics of St. [Hilda](#) of Whitby (1067) (Celtic & British).

Translation of the relics of St. [Luke](#) the New Martyr of Adrianople (1802)

St. [Ebba](#), Abbess of Coldingham, Northumbria, sister of King Oswy (683) [service](#)

St. [Michan](#) of Dublin

St. [Aredius](#) (Yrieix, Yriez) of Limoges, monastic founder (591)

Martyrs [Eusebius](#), Pontian, Vincent and Peregrinus of Rome (c. 192)

Martyr [Genesisius](#) (Genès) of Arles (c. 305)

Martyr [Genesisius](#) the Actor of Rome (c. 300)

Martyr [Gerinus](#) (Guarinus, Wannus) near Arras (France) (676)

Hieromartyr [Geruntius](#) of Italica, bishop of Talco (Spain) (1st c.)

St. [Gregory](#), bishop of Utrecht (781)

St. [Hunegund](#), nun of Homblieres (France)(690)

Martyr [Maginus](#) (Maximus), hermit of Tarragonia (Spain)(c. 304)

St. [Marcian](#), founding abbot of St. Eusebius in Saignon (France)(485)

Martyrs [Nemesius](#) and Lucilla of Rome (c. 255)

St. [Patricia](#), nun of Naples (c. 665)

August 29 – Commemoration of the Beheading of John the Baptist

This Thursday, August 29th, is the commemoration of the Beheading of St. John the Prophet, Baptist, and Forerunner of the Lord (Matthew 14:1-9). This is a fasting day, when we abstain from meat, fish, dairy and eggs. It is also pious custom to avoid using knives and plates in preparing or serving food (because John was beheaded using a blade, and his head was displayed on a platter).

No Social Team for September 1 - Light fare only

Feel free to bring something to share. Thank you!

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You Tube: <https://youtube.com/acroddiocese>

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.)