

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

Sunday School 9:30 AM

Divine Liturgy 10 AM

September 29, 2024 – 14th Sunday After Pentecost

Venerable Cyriacus the Anchorite of Palestine

*The bitterness of the onions you warded off Kyriakos, giving them a sweet taste, or you would be condemned to die. * Onion-eating Kyriakos made his end on the 29th.*

Saint Kyriakos was from Corinth and born in 448 during the reign of Emperor Theodosius II. He was the son of a priest of Corinth named John with his pious wife Eudoxia. When he was eighteen he was ordained Reader by Peter, the Bishop of Corinth, who was his father's uncle. With an ardent longing for God he departed for Jerusalem without telling his family. When he arrived he heard of the ascetic feats of Saint Euthymios the Great (Jan. 20), and became one of his disciples. Saint Euthymios thus tonsured him a Monk, but due to the fact that he was young and lacked a beard, he was sent to Saint Gerasimos (Mar. 4), who dwelt near the Jordan River, since Saint Theoktistos (Sept. 3) had already reposed. Kyriakos diligently served the godly Gerasimos and was obedient to him in all things, to the point where Gerasimos praised him for his strict way of life, and took him with him to the desert of Rouba every year from Theophany to Palm Sunday to spend the time



in strict fasting and prayer. It was during their time in Rouba that Kyriakos and Gerasimos beheld the departed soul of Saint Euthymios ascending to heaven, prompting them to go and bury him.

When the divine Kyriakos was twenty-seven years old, Saint Gerasimos fell asleep in the Lord, after being together for nine years. Now he was ready to be accepted into the Lavra of Saint Euthymios, where he at first lived in solitude, then it became a coenobium. He did not stay long here, since the monks were in continual disputes with the Monastery of Saint Theoktistos, situated just below them. Fleeing scandal and trouble, Kyriakos went to the Lavra of Saint Chariton (Sept. 28) in Souka. He stayed there for many years, serving the community in various obediences. When he was forty, he was found worthy of the grace of the priesthood. Throughout his stay there, he never once gave way to anger, nor ate before sunset.

At the age of seventy, Kyriakos left for the desert of Natoupha, where he lived with a disciple and lived on nothing but wild onions, that miraculously lost their bitterness due to his prayers. They lived on these onions for four years, until a devout man would bring them bread to eat as well; at which time the onions regained their bitterness and they had to boil them to eat them. Monks and faithful, attracted to the grace of the holy Elder, sought him out in his retreat, some to be freed from evil spirits, others to be healed of illness, and others to be blessed and hear the word of salvation. To escape human glory he departed for the desert of Rouva, where for five years he lived on the roots of a plant called melagria and the tender shoots of rushes. But his presence there became known also, so at the age of ninety, Kyriakos departed for the more remote desert of Sousakim, fifty miles from Souka, where he lived for seven years.

When famine and a deadly epidemic ravaged the region, the fathers of the Lavra of Saint Chariton in Souka urged Saint Kyriakos to return to the Lavra where he could stay in the cave of Saint Chariton. He obediently gave in to their request and lived in quietude in the cave of Saint Chariton. While there, the Origenist heresy infected many Palestinian monks and clergy, prompting Kyriakos to fight it off with the sharp sword of his spiritual knowledge.

When he was ninety-nine years old, and weary of the troubles that human society brought upon him, he went back to the desert of Sousakim, where he lived in extreme asceticism for eight more years with his disciple John and a tame lion, that served him and protected his garden from goats, as well as drove away thieves and barbarians that came to threaten them. One day, due to a July drought, his garden became dry and he was very thirsty, when suddenly, after praying for rain, a cloud appeared in the sky and it rained abundantly.

When the venerable Kyriakos reached the deep age of one hundred and seven, the fathers of the Monastery of Souka were afraid that they would not know the hour of his repose and thus be deprived of his final blessing, so they entreated him to once again come and stay in the cave of Saint Chariton, which Kyriakos consented to.

His biographer, Cyril of Scythopolis, from the Lavra of Saint Euthymios, who knew Saint Kyriakos and met with him in Sousakim towards the end of his life, concludes his biography as follows:

"I, the wretched author of his life, frequently visited and comforted him. My soul received much profit from his discourse and was edified by his great struggles, for even though he was aged, he loved labor and was a great struggler. He stood at prayer with fervor and was never found idle, but was always either praying or working. He was accessible at all times, clairvoyant, a good teacher, and firm in the Orthodox faith. In spite of his great age, he was vigorous; his whole body was healthy, and he was full of the Holy Spirit and God's grace. After he had undergone numerous struggles, the Lord was pleased to translate him to the repose of heaven, and so the godly Kyriakos fell into an illness of the body in which he remained for a few days. He summoned the abbot of the monastery and the brethren and spoke to them concerning the salvation of their souls. After kissing each one, he blessed them. Then he looked up into heaven, stretched forth his hands, and prayed for all the brethren, surrendering his honorable and holy soul into the hands of the Lord on the twenty-ninth day of the month of September. In all, he lived one hundred and nine years. The brethren wept and buried his holy body with fitting psalms and hymns, glorifying God and bringing to remembrance the labors that His servant had performed for many years. May we sinners in the same manner glorify our God unto the ages. Amen." *(from johnsanidopoulos.com)*

Today's Epistle Lesson – St. Paul's Second Letter to the Corinthians 1:21-2:4

Brethren, the one who establishes us with you in Christ and who has anointed us is God. He has also sealed us and given us the pledge of the Spirit in our hearts. I call God as a witness to my soul that I did not come to Corinth to spare you. It is not that we have lordship over your faith: we are fellow-workers with you for your joy, as you stand firm in faith.

But I resolved this for myself: that I would not return to you in sorrow. If I cause you distress, who will bring me joy except for you, the very ones whom I grieve? Indeed, I wrote as I did, so that when I came, I would not have sorrow from the ones who should be me joy; but I trust in you all, that my joy would also be shared

by all. It was out of much affliction and anguish of heart that I wrote to you with many tears, not to cause you distress but to let you know what overflowing love I have for you.

Today's Gospel Lesson – Saint Luke 6:31-36

The Lord said, “As you would like others to do to you, do the same to them. If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners love those who love them! If you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same! If you lend to those from whom you hope to receive [back], what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, to receive back as much. But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing back. Then your reward will be great and you will be children of the Most High, for he is kind [even] to the ungrateful and evil. Therefore, be merciful, even as your Father is also merciful.”

Homily on the Gospel for the Second Sunday of Luke

By St. Luke, Metropolitan of Simferopol

Open your hearts, sharpen your hearing to the perception of the amazing, extraordinary, deepest words of Christ: “As you want people to do to you, so do you to them” (Luke 6:31).

When a person with a pure heart hears these words of Christ for the first time, he is embarrassed, he even becomes uncomfortable. Oh my God! How could I not think of what You are telling us! How did I not think that I should treat people the way I want to be treated. Simply, unusually simple is this word of Christ, and at the same time it is bottomlessly profound.

All the words of our Savior are simple, and all His teaching is simple, for it was addressed not to proud scholars who think of themselves that they know the truth, but to those who are humble, to those who know nothing, who are strangers to pride, who are easily imbued with any authentic truth shining with divine light. Who more deeply than the fishermen of Galilee accepted the words of Christ, who more deeply understood them, who proclaimed them to the whole world?

The Lord spoke words to the humble, meek, who are not self-centered, words that were easy for them to understand. Listen to these words in the simplicity of your hearts, listen with the deepest trust in the Lord Jesus Christ: “Love your enemies.” What an amazing claim He makes of us! The world had not heard such a demand before Christ. It never occurred to the world that we should treat people the way we want them to treat us. It never occurred to the world to do good to those who hate us and offend us. The world would never have heard, if Christ had not come, that we must love our enemies.

Christ's words are simple, but they place the highest, most difficult demands on us. Tell me, is it easy to do what He requires of us? Is it easy to love our enemies? Is it easy to do good to those who offend us? Is it easy to give without looking away to anyone who asks? Is it easy to lend to people without any thought of getting it back?

Oh, how difficult it is, how impossible, how it does not fit into the consciousness of the people of this world! But the fact is that the Lord does not say this to the people of this world, but to us, Christians, about whom the holy apostle Peter said the words that all of you must remember, for they apply directly to each of you: "You are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people taken as an inheritance, to proclaim the perfections of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light" (1 Pet. 2:9).

He speaks to those who should be the people chosen by Christ, he makes these heavy demands on those who should be a holy people, taken as an inheritance, so that by their lives, deeds and words "proclaim the perfections of Him who called us out of darkness into His wonderful light." The perfections of Christ, the perfections of God, we must proclaim to people with our whole life: with our deeds, with all our actions, with our words.

If so, if we are a holy people, a royal priesthood, shouldn't the highest demands be placed on us, which the Lord Jesus Christ sets? Isn't it necessary to demand that we understand the full depth and truth of these words of Christ: "As you want people to do to you, so do you to them." Long, long ago these Divine words were spoken.

What do we still see around us, what do we see even in ourselves? Do we treat people the way we want to be treated? After all, we do not want people to humiliate and vilify us, and who does not vilify others, his neighbors, who does not humiliate them?

We want people to help us and take care of us in difficult circumstances of our life and our loved ones. And when we ourselves prosper, and we do not need anything, how often do we remember those who have nothing, who are waiting for our help? Oh no, not often. And the Lord requires that we always remember.

It is not difficult, not at all difficult, to love people who love us; it is not difficult, not at all difficult, to love a father, or a mother, or a wife, or one's children. But what is the price of this love? Oh no, it has almost no price, because we love our loved ones, our children, according to the instinct of love, which is embedded in us by nature. What mother does not give all the affection, all the warmth of her heart to her child? Will she not even give her life if her child is threatened with death?

This, of course, is good; but does it have the highest moral value? Oh no, it doesn't. We know that if we decide to destroy a bird's nest, then the mother of the chicks will fly in, hover over us, beat us in the face with her wings and squeak desperately. It is the same love, love by instinct, invested in every living being. Won't a she-bear, a she-wolf protect her cubs, go against a man who comes with a weapon? This is love by instinct, invested by nature in the heart of every living being, and it has no high moral value.

That is why our Lord Jesus Christ says: "If you love those who love you, what credit do you have for that? For even sinners love those who love them. And if you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same" (Luke 6:32-33).

In the Russian translation, it sounds like this, but in the Slavonic it is better: "If you love those who love you, what grace is there for you; for even sinners who love them love them. And if you do good to those who do good to you, what grace is there for you, for even sinners do the same." We do not deserve the grace of God with such love, such deeds. Even those who do good to us and receive good from us in return have no special reason to thank us, for we repay them good for good; what grace do we have for this from the Lord? There is no moral merit in this.

"And if you lend to those from whom you hope to receive back, what credit do you have for that? For even sinners lend to sinners in order to get back the same amount" (Luke 6:34). The Lord requires of us that we lend without expecting to receive back, without requiring at all that we give. This is right, profoundly right: this is how we should act.

When an unfortunate person who has fallen into difficult circumstances comes and asks for material help, and although he knows that he will not be able to return, in embarrassment, in shame, he asks for a loan, only a loan, then if you know that this is so, do not reject his assurances, as if he was not hurt, and give what is asked with a pure heart, not expecting to receive it back. Then there will be great grace to you from God, for what you have done is a great good deed.

The Lord further demands that the one who slapped him on the cheek turn the other one, and the one who took away his outer garment should not be prevented from taking his shirt. Who does this, how many? Oh no, they extremely, extremely rarely do what Saint Tikhon of Zadonsk did. When he meekly and quietly tried to exhort the proud young landowner to improve his life and received a blow on the cheek in response, what did he do?

He fell at the feet of this insolent man, asking for forgiveness for having led him into anger, into irritation. And what was the result? The result was amazing: the impudent young man was so amazed and shocked that he himself fell at the feet of

the Saint and then completely changed his bad life and became an exemplary Christian.

When we meet thieves who begin to beat and rob us, how many act as the Lord Jesus Christ commanded? I confessed an old man who was dying, who told the secret of his life, the secret of a great sin. He said that one night he was attacked on the street by two bandits who wanted to undress him. He, possessing great physical strength, grabbed one of them by the throat and strangled him, while the other fled in fear.

Because of his coat, because of his suit, he destroyed his soul, for we hear from the apostle that murderers have no place in the Kingdom of God. Wouldn't it be better to do this: calmly, without any irritation, give what the villains demanded. Wouldn't he buy himself another coat, another suit, but how will he redeem this grave sin, what will he give for his soul?

You see that this is not a fantastic demand at all, that it can be fulfilled if the heart is such that it is capable of fulfilling it. But here many stop in confusion before the last demand of Christ: "To you who hear, I say: love your enemies; do good to those who hate you; bless those who curse you, and pray for those who mistreat you" (Luke 6:27-28).

Loving enemies - is it easy? Oh no, it's difficult, it's the highest requirement of Christ. And if He requires, it means that He knows what can be done, for He does not require anything impossible. It is difficult, I know it is difficult, but I will try to answer this difficult question. Let's see who our enemies are. We have different enemies: these are all those who do dirty tricks to us, all who hate and offend us. Neighbors do a lot of dirty tricks to us: you hear a lot of insulting words from them, a lot of curses, a lot of curses.

But after all, you have heard in the current apostolic reading that the Apostle Paul himself had a dirty trick of the flesh, who constantly did dirty tricks on him. What was this dirty trick of the flesh? This is an evil man, the tinkerer Alexander, who pursued the Apostle Paul everywhere, doing dirty tricks, insults, annoyances everywhere. It was hard for the holy apostle, and he prayed three times to God to deliver him from this cruel man. And what answer did he get? "My grace is sufficient for you, for my strength is made perfect in weakness" (2 Corinthians 12:9). The Lord said: no need, let him continue to do dirty tricks, because His divine power is accomplished in weakness: when we are reviled, when we are persecuted, when we suffer, then we are strong by the power of God, the grace of God's help.

If the hour comes for us to endure from evil people, from the dirty tricks of the flesh, all sorts of dirty tricks, bullying, insults, how should we act then? As the

ancient sage Solomon taught. His words were repeated by Saint Paul in Romans, great words, full of strength and truth: "If your enemy is hungry, feed him with bread; and if he is thirsty, give him water to drink; for by doing this you are heaping burning coals on his head, and the Lord will reward you" (Prov. 25:21-22). These burning coals will burn, even his black heart will burn, it will be shocked by the fact that you respond to its dirty tricks with meekness.

Who else are our enemies? These are those evil people who envy our successes in life, successes in scientific work, successes in our worldly well-being; these are slanderers, false scammers - these are our true enemies. But think about this: are such enemies scary for everyone? Oh no, not everyone.

There were many people who did not set themselves the goal of arranging earthly well-being. There were people who renounced everything, preferring poverty and, living in obscurity, did not arouse envy in others. Such were all the monks, all the hermits, ascetics: they had no enemies, for having rejected all the blessings of the earth, they disarmed the envious.

There are still enemies, terrible enemies who kill and rob us. How can they be treated with love, how is it possible to love robbers, murderers? And there were saints for whom this was possible, who answered the villains with love; such was our God-bearing father Seraphim of Sarov. Several robbers attacked him when he lived in a remote wilderness, beat him half to death, broke his ribs, fractured his skull. He suffered for a long time and fell ill and suffered heavily, until the Most Holy Theotokos put an end to his suffering.

The robbers were caught - they turned out to be peasants of a nearby village; they had to stand trial, they faced hard labor. What does the Venerable Seraphim do? With all the strength, with all the ardor of his heart, he demanded that these villains not be punished, he even threatened that he would leave the monastery. At the request of Saint Seraphim, they left them alone, but the Lord punished them, for the fire burned their huts.

There were others who themselves helped the robbers to tie their property into bundles, they themselves put these bundles on their shoulders. Here is an example of how you can fulfill the commandment of Christ even in relation to thieves, to villains, and not only to those little dirty tricks of the flesh who poison your life.

The Lord does not make such demands that exceed human strength. He makes the highest demands on those whom He has made His holy people, whom He has taken as an inheritance. He demands of them complete perfection, such perfection as is characteristic of God Himself, for you hear that of those who fulfill these difficult requirements of His, He says that they will be called the sons of the Most High, He says to them: "Be merciful, as your Father is merciful."

And the Evangelist Matthew conveys it in other words: "Be perfect, even as your Heavenly Father is perfect." Do you hear, the Lord requires of us Christians that we be perfect, as He Himself is perfect; demands such immeasurably great mercy, which would be similar to the mercy of the Heavenly Father, Who "commands His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous" (Matthew 5:45).

It demands great immeasurable love, similar to the love of the Lord Jesus Christ, who became incarnate and gave Himself "over for the sake of salvation" for the sins of the whole world, in order to open the way to God-manhood for us Christians. God-manhood is the goal of everyone's life. The goal of life is perfection in love, in righteousness, and for this you need to work tirelessly to purify your heart.

When a person cares about this for a long, long time, when he cleanses his heart from everything sinful, from everything impure, then his heart will become the abode of the Holy Spirit, it will become the temple of God. Then he will attain love, that love which will make it possible to fulfill all these lofty and perfect demands of Christ.

Set as your task the purification of your heart and the acquisition of love, set the task of your life to become the abode of the Holy Spirit within you. And may Christ help you in this with His Divine grace. Amen. (*trans. John Sanidopoulos*)

Homilies on the Lord's Prayer, also Known as the "Our Father"

by Metropolitan Hierotheos of Nafpaktos and Agiou Vlasiou

In this year's sermons, my beloved brethren, for these two summer months, we will briefly analyze the "Lord's Prayer", which is the well known "Our Father". It's called "Lord's Prayer" because it was taught by Christ and for this reason the Church included it in the daily services, even in that of the supernatural Mystery of the Divine Eucharist.

It is known that this prayer is part of Christ's Sermon on the Mount, which is the Charter of Christianity. The Fathers of the Church loved this prayer very much, precisely because it was taught by Christ and we have a command from Christ Himself to pray with the words of this prayer, which have great power. In these sermons we will rely on the interpretive tradition of the Church, as recorded by the Fathers of the Church and other interpreters.

First of all, the interpreters explain that there is a difference between *euché* (εὐχή - prayer, vow) and *proseuché* (προσευχή - prayer, request). An *euché* is a promise - a vow to God, while *proseuché* is a request, which is what is taking place in the "Our Father". In modern terminology, an *euché* is a wish or blessing given to

others, such as, for example, for them to be well, healthy etc., while a *proseuché* is a prayer to God.

The first phrase of this prayer is an invocation of God: "Our Father, Who is in the heavens". We will focus our attention on two points:

The first is the invocation "Our Father". With this noun God is called "Father", thus manifesting the certainty and faith that we have a father and are not orphans. And God our Father will satisfy all the requests of our prayers, as long, of course, as we have firm faith in Him, because no father deprives his children of good things when asked. By calling God "Father" we confess sonship by the Grace of God, and besides all the other goods we will receive we will also have a brotherly relationship with the Only Begotten Son of God, and will receive the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. We therefore have communion with the Triune God.

Of course, when we call God "Father" it means that we must have a certain disposition and life, so as not to be unworthy of such a great kindness, and this is why we must struggle, in order to respond to the origin of this kindness towards us.

Because this prayer is in the plural, which is why we say "*Our* Father", it signifies that we have other brethren, that we are not alone on the earth, and that God is not only *my* Father, which would indicate me being a single child. Hence, especially within the Church, there is a spiritual affinity between all people, regardless of the various divisions and offices and material goods we have. And because there is this spiritual affinity, a person cannot be hurt by their earthly affinity and the divisions that exist among people. Therefore, the first phrase of this prayer is based on the equality and brotherhood among people.

This brings us to the second part of the phrase: "Who is in the heavens". With this phrase we are saying that our Father dwells in the heavens.

By confessing that our Father dwells in the heavens it does not mean that we must enclose God in the heavens, but that at the time of prayer we must distance our mind (or nous) from the earth and focus it towards heaven. Prayer should be done with a concentrated mind, in order for us to have communion with God. And in this way Christ indicated to us our actual homeland which is in the heavens, where our paternal house exists. Here on earth we are strangers, foreigners and pilgrims, therefore we must feel our citizenship to be in heaven. Who of us would not want to return to their homeland from the place of their exile? And when we say "heaven" we do not mean the sky and space beyond the earth, but a deified and sanctified life, free from sin, the passions and death.

This first phrase of the Lord's Prayer elevates our mind to our Father and raises it towards our authentic homeland. But most of us pray mechanically when saying

this prayer, and we live as if we are orphans, wanting to remain immortal on this earth with its temporary attractions, or we even pray as if we are God's only children. So the beginning of this prayer raises our mind and directs it towards our homeland and makes us desire both our Father and our heavenly homeland, as well as to have a deep sense of our brotherhood in Christ and the spiritual kinship we have with the saints and the other members of the Church. (*to be continued next week*) (Translated by John Sanidopoulos)

A Word From the Holy Fathers

“Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men” (Matthew 4:19), said the Lord, calling His first apostles. In my early childhood I did not think that the same call would be addressed to me, although from the first days that I began to realize myself, I wanted to serve justice and truth. My parents kindled in me a desire to stand steadfastly for the truth, and my soul was captivated by the examples of those who gave their lives for it, fighting against kings when they were persecutors of the saving faith, and for kings when they were bearers and defenders of piety.

At the beginning, I had a poor idea of the path I needed to take. Growing up, I thought of devoting myself to military or civil service to the Fatherland, which was then the stronghold and guardian of true piety.

I entered an educational institution dedicated to one of the glorious pages of Russian history (Petrovsky Poltava Cadet Corps), but there I felt that I needed to choose a different path. This was especially facilitated by communication with our teacher of the law (Archpriest Sergius Chetverikov) and with the rector of the seminary (now Archbishop Varlaam).

The day I graduated from a secondary educational institution coincided with the day a new hierarch (now Metropolitan Anthony of Kiev, then Archbishop of Kharkov) assumed the department of the city where I was to undergo higher education, who became forever the leader of my spiritual life. While studying secular sciences, I delved deeper into the study of the science of sciences, into the study of spiritual life. The monastery where the archpastor lived and the church attracted me more than the place where I studied the highest secular sciences. The complete collapse of the state power of our Fatherland finally convinced me of the fragility of everything earthly and the weakness of human strength and abilities, and I decided to renounce the vanities of the earthly world, devoting myself solely to the service of God.

But serving God, authoritatively calling on my soul to “deny myself, take up my cross and follow Christ” (Matthew 16:24; Mark 9:24), at the same time imposed an internal necessity to become a fisher of men. Even before my external connection

with the secular world was completely severed, a thirst for theological knowledge attracted me to the school, which had the great Saint Sava as its patron, and then to the path shown by him.

Now, through the mouth of the Archpastors of the Church, I am called upon to accept the archpastoral ministry. I do not dare to think of myself as worthy of this dignity, realizing my sinfulness, but I am afraid to renounce it, hearing the words of the Lord addressed to the sinful yet repentant Peter: "If you love Me, ... feed My lambs, ... feed My sheep" (John 21:15-17). Saint John Chrysostom, explaining the present place of the Gospel, draws attention to the fact that as proof of love the Lord demanded no other feat, namely the feat of shepherding. Why is pastoral ministry so great in the eyes of the Lord? Because shepherds, in the words of the Apostle Paul, are "God's fellow workers" (1 Cor. 3:9). Christ came to earth to restore the defiled image of God in man, to call people, to unite them into one person, glorifying their Creator with one mouth and one heart.

The task of every shepherd is to attract people to that unity, to regenerate and sanctify them. What could be greater than recreating God's creation! What greater benefit can you bring to your neighbor than by preparing him for eternal life! It is not easy to accomplish this task - you have to fight against human nature, corrupted by sin. There is often misunderstanding, and sometimes conscious resistance, hatred on the part of those you love and care about. Great should be the self-sacrifice of the shepherd and great love for his flock. He must be ready to endure everything for his benefit, and each sheep must find a place in his heart, he must apply appropriate healing to each, in accordance with the characteristics of the character and circumstances of each. If the duties of an ordinary shepherd are so difficult and complex and his responsibility for the salvation of his flock is great, what can be said about the archpastor? Truly, the words of the Lord, once spoken to the prophet Ezekiel, are addressed to him: "Son of man, I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel" (Ezek. 3:17).

The archpastor is responsible not only for all the lambs given to him by God, but also for the shepherds. He will be exacted from Him for every sinner whom he did not bring to his senses in time, for everyone who walked the path of righteousness, but turned away from it. It is his duty to suffer from the illnesses of his sheep and thereby heal them, like the Chief Shepherd Christ, "by whose stripes we were healed" (Isa. 53:5). He has no personal life; he must devote himself entirely to the cause of saving human souls and leading them into the Kingdom of Heaven. He must be ready to endure all bitterness, persecution and death itself for the sake of the truth, drink the cup of Christ and be baptized with His baptism (Matthew 20:23; Mark 10:39). He must take care not only of those who come to him, but also look for and return lost sheep to the flock, carrying them on his shoulder. It is his

duty to proclaim Christ's teaching to those who do not know him, remembering the commandment of the Lord: "Go into the whole world, preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15). Being imbued with the consciousness of the universality of the Church, he should not limit himself to caring only for those who are directly entrusted to him, but must look with a spiritual eye at the entire universal Church of Christ, desire the enlightenment of all peoples and their success in the true faith, for in the Church "there is neither Greek nor Jew, ... barbarian, Scythian" (Col. 3:11), but all are equally dear children of the Heavenly Father.

Concern for the salvation of people must be applied to their concepts; in order to attract everyone, imitating the Apostle Paul, and like him, you need to be able to say: "To the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win Jews; to those who are under the law, as under the law, that I might win those who are under the law; ... to the weak I became as weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some" (1 Cor. 9:20-22).

When caring about the salvation of human souls, we must remember that people also have bodily needs that loudly declare themselves. You cannot preach the gospel without showing love in your actions. But at the same time, we must be careful that concerns about the bodily needs of our neighbors do not absorb all the attention of the shepherd and do not come to the detriment of caring for spiritual needs, remembering the words of the apostles: "We are not pleased to have left the word of God to serve meals" (Acts 6:2) . Everything must be directed towards gaining the Kingdom of God and the fulfillment of the gospel of Christ. True Christianity does not consist in abstract reasoning and teachings, but is embodied in life. Christ came to earth not to teach people new knowledge, but to call people to new life. We prepare for eternal life in earthly life. Circumstances and events of temporary life also influence human spiritual life. The strong in character overcome the influence of the environment, while the weak succumb to it. The strong in spirit are strengthened by persecution, but the weak fall. Therefore, it is necessary, as far as possible, to create conditions in which as many people as possible can be spiritually created.

A pastor cannot shy away from participating in public life, but he must participate in it as a bearer of Christ's law and a representative of the Church. A clergyman does not dare turn into an ordinary political or public figure, forgetting the main essence of his ministry and its purpose. Christ's Kingdom is "not of this world" (John 18:36), and Christ did not establish an earthly kingdom. Without becoming a political leader and without getting into party feuds, a shepherd can give spiritual sanctification to the phenomena of life, so that his flock know the path to follow and become Christians both in their personal life and in public life. An archpastor must be able to give spiritual advice to everyone: to a hermit monk who cleanses

his soul from thoughts, to a king who builds a state, to a military commander going to battle, and to an ordinary citizen....

From the first centuries, Christians endured persecution for Christ, but never rejoiced at them, but raised their voices against them. A whole series of apologists and martyrs exposed the persecutors in the first centuries, and they were followed by a great host of saints and confessors. In times of peace, hierarchs and ascetics taught, and in times of evil, they denounced those who bore authority.... Their legacy is our holiness, which we must preserve until the time when it pleases God to manifest His power and lift up the horn of Orthodox Christians. Until then, we must remain in spiritual unity with the persecuted, strengthening them through prayer.

We kiss their bonds in absentia, we mourn for those who wavered. We know that the ancient confessors of the truth sometimes hesitated. But we have examples of steadfastness: the example of Theodore the Studite, who exposed any deviation from ecclesiastical truth, the example of Maximus the Confessor, the example of Patriarch Hermogenes [of Moscow].

We are afraid to deviate from the paths they followed, for if those under the yoke use human weakness as an excuse, what will we say if we are afraid of mere threats? ...I am aware of my weak strength; out of obedience to the Church authorities and my spiritual leader, I submit to this election not for the sake of honor and power, but devoting myself entirely to the service of the Church.

I pray to the Lord God that He will help me and strengthen me to strive for the truth until death. At this great hour for me, I pray for those who raised me and edified me with their instructions and example, I pray for those among whom my Church service has taken place until now, for the youth whom I raised, for my future flock, for the universal Church, for the suffering Russian land! I trust in the prayers and intercession of the great host of heavenly champions of the Christian race. I ask you, Saints of God, and in absentia also my Archpastor, His Grace Bishop Victor, to pray for me and grant God's blessing. (*trans. J. Sanidopoulos*)

– St. John Maximovich, *Address at his ordination to the episcopate*

Venerable Mother Mary of Palestine

From the Life of St. Kyriakos of Scythopolis

It would be profitable to relate the following, which Father John, the disciple of the blessed Kyriakos, told me as we walked through the desert. At one point, he stopped and said, "There is the abode of the blessed Mary."

I asked him to tell me of her, and he began by saying, "Some time ago, as I was going with my friend, Brother Paramon, to Father Kyriakos, we saw a man standing in the distance. Thinking that he was a hermit, we hastened toward him,

that we might revere him. As we drew near, he hid himself from us. We were seized with fear and held fast in terror, for we thought we had seen an evil spirit, and we began to pray. After we had prayed, we looked about and noticed a cave in the earth, and we understood that he was no evil spirit but a servant of God who concealed himself from us. We approached the cave and besought him to reveal himself to us for God's sake, that we be not deprived of his prayers and edifying discourse. And we heard from the cave the following reply, 'What profit do you think to receive of me? I am a sinful and simple woman.' Then she asked us, 'Where are you going?'

We replied, 'We are going to Father Kyriakos the hermit, but tell us, for God's sake, what is your name and what manner of life do you lead? Where are you from and why have you come here?' She replied, 'Go to where you are going, and when you return, I shall tell you.'

But we refused, and vowed, saying, 'We shall not depart until we learn your name and you tell us of your life.'

When she saw we were not going to leave without her first appearing to us from her cave, she began to tell us about herself. 'My name is Mary,' she said, 'and I was a psalm reader at the holy temple of Christ's Resurrection. The devil wounded many through me. I became afraid that I had become the cause of temptation and vile thoughts in others and that I might add to my own sins, so I prayed to God earnestly to deliver me from sin and temptation. One night, my heart full of compunction and the fear of God, I went to Siloam and filled a vessel with water. I also took a basket with soaked wheat and left the Holy City. Entrusting myself to God's help, I departed into the wilderness. God was pleased to lead me here where I have lived for eighteen years. By the grace of God, neither the water nor the wheat in the basket have failed me. But I beg you, go now to Father Kyriakos and do what you must do. When you return, visit me, the wretched one.'

We went to Father Kyriakos and told him all that we had heard from the blessed Mary. Father Kyriakos marveled and said, 'Glory to You, our God! How many are Your saints - not only men, but women as well - who labor for You in secret! Go now, my children, to God's handmaiden, and do whatever she tells you.'

As we returned from Father Kyriakos, we arrived at the cave of the blessed Mary, and we cried out thus, 'O handmaiden of God Mary! We have come, just as you told us to!' But there was no reply. We entered the cave and found that she had reposed in the Lord. Her holy body emitted a sweet fragrance, but we had nothing with which to clothe and bury her. We then went to the monastery and brought all things necessary, and having dressed her, we buried her in the cave, sealing the opening with a stone."

As Father John told me these things, I marveled at the life of this handmaiden of God, and I resolved to commit it to writing, that those who heard it be moved to compunction and that God, Who loves mankind and is merciful to them that love Him, might be glorified. *(from johnsanidopoulos.com)*

Also Commemorated Today

New Hieromartyr John, archbishop of Riga in Latvia (1934).

Martyrs [Dada](#), Gabdelas, and Casdoe (Casdoa) of Persia (4th c.).

[154](#) Martyrs of Egypt and Palestine

Venerable [Theophanes](#) the Merciful of Gaza.

Holy Martyr [Gudelia](#) of Persia (4th c.).

Holy Martyr [Petronia](#)

Venerable [Cyprian](#), abbot, of Ustiug (Vologda) (1276).

The Eighty Holy Martyrs of Byzantium (4th c.).

Holy Monk-martyrs of [Strofades](#) (1537)

Martyrs [Tryphon](#), Trophimus, and Dorymedon (Greek).

St. Auxentius the Wonderworker (Greek).

New Monk-martyr [Malachias](#) of [Rhodes](#) (1500).

St. [Onuphrius](#) the Wonderworker of Garesja, Georgia (18th c.).

New Martyrs [Lambros](#), Theodore, and one unknown of Vrachori (1786)

Uncovering of the Relics of St. [John Maximovich](#) (1993)

St. [Alaricus](#) (Adalricus, Adalrai), anchorite on Ufenau Island (975)(Switzerland)

Sts. [Catholdus](#), Anno, & Diethardus, monk-evangelists of Eichstaett (8th c.)(Germany)

Heiromartyr [Fraternus](#), bishop of Auxerre (c. 450)

St. [Liutwin](#), bishop of Trier (c. 722)

No Social Team for October 6 - Light fare only

Feel free to bring something to share. It's our patronal feast next week, though, so consider bringing something substantial. 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.)