

# 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: Confession 4:30 PM  
Vespers 5 PM**

**Sunday: Matins 8:45 AM**

**Sunday School 9:30 AM**

**Divine Liturgy 10 AM**

**October 13, 2024 – 16<sup>th</sup> Sunday After Pentecost (4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Luke) | Holy Fathers of the Seventh Ecumenical Council**

by Protopresbyter Fr. George Metallinos

Today our Church celebrates the memory of the Holy Fathers of the Seventh Ecumenical Synod (787). As in the past, a heresy also caused this synod, the Iconoclast heresy. Apart from its undeniable Christological content, Iconoclasm had a clear ecclesiastical character. It was an overt attack by the State, which was no longer acting as "God's minister for good" (Rom. 13:3), against the Church. The two ministries of the citizens, the "Priesthood" and the "Kingdom", the priestly and the state ministry, stood opposite each other. The State sought to subjugate the Church, in an unprecedented explosion of politicism. Heresy was the spiritual background of the problem.

Heresy, therefore, mainly Iconoclasm, like so many others, shocked our Church in its eternal course. But how did this happen? In other words, how did heresy threaten the Church and how was this danger neutralized? This is what we will attempt to develop next.



Everything that is necessary for our salvation was revealed to us by God "in many and various ways", throughout the development of the plan of the Divine Economy, from the times of the Old Testament, but mainly in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ. Our God-man Lord became "an example, that we may follow in his steps" (1 Pet. 2:21). He revealed to us what He was (the way, the truth and the life) and He lived what He taught. That is, He did not only explain to us what is true, but He revealed to us the Truth itself, that is, His Person which is the only and therefore eternal truth. It freed man from the agonizing effort to find the truth. Seeing Christ and His work, he has the Truth in front of him and all he has to do is follow Christ, so that he too can be "in the truth" (2 John 3). Whoever lives in the Church of Christ is not afraid of going astray, because the Church as the body of Christ is "the pillar and foundation of the Truth" (1 Tim. 3:15).

But Christ is not only the preacher and revealer, but also the proclaimed Truth. In His person the preaching of the Truth is concretized. This is why His Apostles proclaimed Christ (cf. 1 Cor. 1:23 et seq.). They did not develop a philosophical, vague, nebulous sermon. What was Paul saying to the Corinthians? "For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified" (1 Cor. 2:2). Christ was received by the Church, it was founded by Christ and it proclaimed Him. The apostles and the first Christians continued the work of Christ in the world. However, in order for their work to be the work of Christ, they too had to preach what Christ preached, and live as Christ lived. If this continuity and consistency were missing, Christians would not be members of the body of Christ, the Church, but a foreign body.

The work of Christ was fought by Satan from the beginning. This is because he saw his kingdom crumbled. Christ came to "undo the works of the devil." To crush his authority and dynasty and grant the freedom of His own kingdom. That is why Satan, who considers himself the ruler and mighty one of the world (cf. Matt. 4:9), declared open war against the kingdom of Christ. As his instruments - his soldiers - he used the rulers of Israel and the Romans, the political power of the world. His goal from the beginning was the very Person of our Christ. But when he saw that his attack was neutralized by the resurrection victory of the Lord and that the victim slipped through his hands, he turned against the body of Christ, the Church. If he could not crush Christ Himself, he would try to crush the continuation of Christ, the Church. Persecutions were his weapons again. He raised persecutions on behalf of the Jews and then on behalf of the Romans. The Church, as a continuation of the work of Christ, opposes both Jewish superstition and Jewish nationalism, and idolatry and pseudo-philosophy (e.g. Gnosticism). This is because she preached saving truth, true monotheism and true wisdom.

Despite all the war against it, the Church managed with the apostolic synod (49 AD) not to be enslaved to Jewish nationalism, because its mission is not to serve nationalistic, that is, ethno-tribal, plans. With the unity of her faith she was again able to keep pseudo-philosophy out of her bosom. Thus, despite all the persecutions, the Church, instead of diminishing, increased and continued the unity of faith and life of the Holy Apostles. It even forced the Jews to stop the open war against the Church, as the body of Christ, and the pagans to accept it and ask for its alliance, the philosophers to become Christians and the state to recognize it. The blood of her martyrs recorded her triumph.

But Satan regrouped. What he did not achieve by persecutions, from without, he will now seek to achieve from within, with his new formidable weapon, heresy. First he believed that he would win if he destroyed Christ and His disciples. Now, after his failure, he attacks the truth of Christ. And here's how. Christ gave us a faith, a teaching and a new way of life, which save. Satan tries to destroy this unity, to distort the divine Revelation. This is the purpose of heresy. It is not another religion, which is easily perceived. It is a destruction of faith, insidious and deceptive. It appears as the truth and as the correction of error. Heresy therefore does not offend the body, but the soul and therefore threatens the heart of the Church. If it prevailed, it would bring about an alteration of the essence of Christianity, because a diversity in faith, as unfounded Ecumenism unfortunately seeks it today, would mean the destruction of faith, which is then only ecclesiastical faith, when it is accompanied by unity.

But the most important thing. A Church, in which heresy and error are imposed, is alien to that which Christ "acquired with his blood" (Acts 20:28). It is nothing but "the world", far from Christ and His grace.

The Holy Fathers saved the Church from this mortal danger of heresy, with the grace and illumination of our Christ. As genuine children of the Church, they became spiritual fathers and guides of her children. Meeting in synods, they separated with the sword of the Spirit the counterfeit from the genuine, the truth from error, death from salvation. With the synodal definitions and their holy canons, they handed us the concrete truth of Christ, Orthodoxy. Thus they set the spiritual boundaries, which clearly and effectively separate divine revelation from heresy. And because in every age God does not stop raising up Holy Fathers, that is why, as members of the Church, we always stay with the certainty that by following the path of our Holy Fathers, we stay in the truth of our Christ and become partakers of His salvation.

My brethren! Three times in the ecclesiastical year, our Church honors the Holy Fathers (of the First, Fourth and Seventh Ecumenical Synods). Three times in a year we live a "Sunday of the Holy Fathers". It is not coincidental of course,

because nothing is accidental and coincidental in the life of the Church. With the triple celebration, the Church emphasizes the great contribution of the Holy Fathers to the consolidation of our faith in the insurmountable mystery of the Holy Trinity. Projecting the first, fourth and seventh ecumenical synods, the beginning, the middle and the end of the so far (recognized) Ecumenical Synods, she embraces all those Saints, who offered their lives and existence, so that we can live in the freedom of God's children. Therefore, if we honor - and justly - those who give us our national freedom, how grateful we must be to those who saved us from the worst slavery that exists, heresy. But there is no greater sign of gratitude than to imitate their struggle and become, with the grace of Christ, fathers of the Church, like them. But this presupposes that we are her faithful children first. (*from johnsanidopoulos.com*)

### **Today's Epistle Lesson – St. Paul's Second Letter to the Corinthians 9:6-11 EOB**

Brethren, whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly. Whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Let everyone give according to what he has determined in his heart; not grudgingly or under compulsion; for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that by having what is needed in everything, you may overflow in every good work. As it is written: He has scattered abroad, he has given to the poor. His righteousness remains forever. Now, may he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food also supply and multiply your seed for sowing, and increase the fruits of your righteousness. Thus, may you be enriched in everything, so that you may be generous in all things, and through us, this brings thanksgiving to God.

### **Today's Gospel Lesson – Saint Luke 8:5-15 EOB**

The Lord said, "A farmer went out to sow his seed. As he was sowing, some [seed] fell along the wayside; it was trampled under foot, and the birds of the sky devoured it. Other seed fell on the rock, and as soon as it grew, it withered away because it had no moisture. Other fell among the thorns, and the thorns grew with it, and choked it. Other fell into the good ground, grew, and brought forth fruit a hundred times." As he said this, he exclaimed, "Let anyone with ears to hear listen!" Then his disciples asked him, "What does this parable mean?" Jesus replied, "To you it is given to know the mysteries of the Kingdom of God, but to the rest, [it is given] in parables, so that 'seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not understand.' Now, this what the parable means: The seed is the word of God. Those along the wayside are those who hear. Then, the devil comes and takes away the word from their heart, so that they may not believe and be saved. Those on the rock are those who receive the word with joy when they hear. But they have no root; they believe for a while, then fall away in time of temptation. What fell among the thorns is those who have heard, and as they go on their way,

they are choked with worries, wealth, and the pleasures of life; and they bring no fruit to maturity. As for the seed that fell in the rich soil, this is those who have heard the word with an honest and good heart, who retain it and bring forth fruit with endurance.

## **Homily on the Gospel for the Fourth Sunday of Luke**

By St. Luke, Metropolitan of Simferopol

“A farmer went out to sow....” I also went out to sow the word of God into your hearts, for you are God’s field. But I am a poor and wretched sower! “Why poor?” - you ask. But isn’t the farmer poor and wretched, having only an eighth of a tithe of land? Can’t I directly attribute to myself the words of God spoken to the holy prophet Isaiah when the Lord sent him to preach: “And He said, 'Go and tell this people: Keep on hearing, but do not understand; keep on seeing, but do not perceive. Make the heart of this people dull, and their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and return and be healed'” (Isaiah 6:9-10).

I should have led tens of thousands of Orthodox people living in the Tambov diocese to Christ, but the hearts of this people have become coarsened and they turn away their ears from the commandments of Christ, and they close their eyes, so as not to see what is holy, and not to understand in their hearts, and not to be converted, so that the Lord would heal them.

And only you, my close and beloved ones, the little flock of Christ, open your hearts to receive the word of God. But among you there are those to whom the words of God addressed to the holy prophet Ezekiel apply: “As for you, son of man, the children of your people are talking about you beside the walls and in the doors of the houses; and they speak to one another, everyone saying to his brother, ‘Please come and hear what the word is that comes from the Lord.’ So they come to you as people do, they sit before you as My people, and they hear your words, but they do not do them; for with their mouth they show much love, but their hearts pursue their own gain. Indeed you are to them as a very lovely song of one who has a pleasant voice and can play well on an instrument; for they hear your words, but they do not do them” (Ezek. 33:30–32).

Isn’t the farmer pitiful and wretched who sows his seed in unplowed ground? But I am in his position, for many years God’s field was abandoned, and few people cultivated it. And the earth of human hearts hardened, and the holy seed of the word of God did not grow in it.

But why am I complaining? Why do I confuse your hearts? “Why are you cast down, O my soul? And why are you disquieted within me? Hope in God; for I shall yet praise Him, the help of my countenance and my God” (Ps. 41:12). Is not the

Lord able to increase my flock? Don't I know those wondrous words that the Apostle Paul said: "The word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword; it penetrates even to the dividing of soul and spirit, joints and marrow" (Heb. 4:12). I know this, and therefore I will boldly sow the seeds of the word of God even into abandoned land, for I know that His word is powerful and will itself plow the soil of your hearts.

So, you, strong in faith, and you, fresh grass of God, young shoots, listen: "A sower went out to sow. And it happened, as he sowed, that some seed fell by the wayside; and the birds of the air came and devoured it." Jesus Christ spoke to us not about the peasant who sowed his seeds along the road, but about the broad path leading to destruction. The majority of people, eager to arrange their lives in complete prosperity, material contentment, dreaming of wealth and fame, despising the commandments of Christ, wanting to build their lives with their minds, strive along this path, pressing and driving each other. They run along this rough road, forgetting about God.

Sometimes such people, out of curiosity, look into our churches, and it happens that the word of God accidentally touches them, or in a conversation with believers they meet along the way, the seed of Christ falls into their souls. And the hearts of these people, busy in pursuit of earthly happiness, are confused. Then they stop in their running and think about whether they need to follow this broad path, whether they should think about their soul, and not just about the well-being of the body or the well-being of the family.

But on this wide path many invisible birds fly, enemies of the human race, dark demonic forces, in whose power these people are. They vigilantly watch so that nothing interferes with their dark deeds. And as soon as they notice that a person has stopped, has become thoughtful, that he intends to think about his soul, then, like birds of prey, they attack him and carry away the word of God sown in his heart. This is what it means that a seed that falls along the road is trampled and destroyed by birds.

"Some fell on stony ground, where it did not have much earth; and immediately it sprang up because it had no depth of earth. But when the sun was up it was scorched, and because it had no root it withered away." How many people there are who can be likened to this stony ground - good people, sincere people, overwhelmed by good impulses, but who do not have the depth of feeling and thought, who do not possess the great treasure of the concentration of their souls. They are fickle, are carried away by one thing or another; they passionately take up lofty matters, devote themselves to the service of science, art, philosophy, but soon give it up, because one passion is replaced by another, which captivates them.

The word of God's truth cannot take deep roots in their souls. The Lord said about such people that when sorrow or temptation comes to them, when they have to suffer for Christ, they easily and quickly abandon Him. Such people, as soon as they are touched by the admonishing hand of God, teaching them the righteous and sorrowful path, immediately begin to grumble, do not want to endure sorrow, blaspheme God and leave Him. And the work of God, which had just begun in their hearts, ends.

It happens even more often that as soon as such people hear ridicule of their faith, cowardice and false shame immediately take possession of their hearts, drowning out the seed of the faith of Christ in them. This is what the word of Christ means about the seed that fell on stony ground.

“And some seed fell among thorns; and the thorns grew up and choked it, and it yielded no crop.” This often happens with grains of wheat that fall into weeds, nettles and all kinds of thorns. This also happens to those whose soul and heart are like a field overgrown with weeds, nettles and all kinds of thorns.

“What are these weeds and thorns?” - you ask. This is all that the poisonous seed, worthless, which no one feeds on, produces - human malice, the desire to satisfy one's lusts, passions that crush everything good in our hearts. How can God's seed grow among these weeds? Of course, it will soon be drowned out and bear no fruit.

“But other seed fell on good ground and yielded a crop that sprang up, increased and produced: some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some a hundred.” It is necessary that this be so in human hearts, in your hearts, so that they are wide open and trembling before God, so that you open your spiritual eyes, your spiritual ears and perceive the word of God, which we, shepherds, diligently sow into your hearts.

It is necessary that you take care of it, so that, leaving the temple with trembling, you preserve the word of God with the greatest attention and carry it home like a precious cup overflowing to the brim, afraid to spill the slightest drop from it. It is necessary that you bring this grace of God untouched to your home. This is only possible for those whose hearts are like fertilized soil, and I know that many of you have kind and pure hearts.

And it is also necessary that the seeds be moistened by early and late rains, and warmed by the sun, and illuminated by its light. This is what you should take care of. You may ask, “How can we water God's seeds?” With tears. Water them with tears of repentance for your sins. Illuminate them, like the rays of the sun, with the light of love. Warm them with the warmth of good deeds, mercy and compassion for your neighbors.

And the seed sown by me, an unworthy servant of God, will grow in your hearts. When I finish my work as a sower and go into eternal rest, then I will boldly stand before the Throne of the Most High and say: "Here am I and the children whom God has given me" (Heb. 2:13). Amen. (*trans. John Sanidopoulos*)

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

by Metropolitan Hierotheos of Nafpaktos and Agiou Vlasiou

(*continued from last week*) The second request of the Lord's Prayer is "Your Kingdom come", that is, we supplicate God to send His Kingdom or for His Kingdom to come.

Much has been written about this request, in regards to what the Kingdom of God is and how the Kingdom of God comes to man and the world. Here in this brief homily we will present the interpretive analysis of the Holy Fathers.

One interpretation of the coming of the Kingdom of God is for the Second Coming of Christ to come quickly so that Christ can come and judge the world, meaning that this day would come so the bodies of all will rise from the dead and their judgment will begin. Such a request is the request of a grateful child, who is not fixated on visible things, but they hasten to the Father and desire future things. Such a search is the fruit of a good conscience and a soul that has been set free from earthly things. And indeed, as it is interpreted this way, the one who has this love for the coming of the Kingdom of God, or His Second Coming, does not become puffed up and boastful for the goods of this life, nor are they humiliated and overwhelmed over the sad events of this life. They feel as if they are in exile in a strange land, and they expect to return to their homeland.

The early Christians, as well as all authentic Christians who are nostalgic for this Kingdom, desire the coming of Christ and to unite with Him like it is done in a wedding, since now they feel their spiritual betrothal to Him. This of course requires internal purity, and to not be rebuked by our conscience. The Apostles characteristically wrote that the Kingdom of God is near, which means that they lived eschatologically. And the Apocalypse ends with the cry: "Come, Lord Jesus" (Rev. 22:20).

The other interpretation of "Your Kingdom come" is for the Grace of God to come into our hearts. Christ would say: "The Kingdom of God is within you" (Lk. 17:21). "Within you" does not indicate that it is in our midst, but within our hearts. Of course, whoever has the Grace of God within their hearts feels the communion between them. They feel the Kingdom of God as a spiritual state, and not as a psychological or emotional upsurge during the Divine Liturgy or during divine worship in general. Moreover, during the Divine Liturgy, according to the interpretation of the Holy Fathers, there are eschatological references, that is, it



refers to the experience of the Kingdom of God that will happen in all its fullness in the future.

The Kingdom of God within us comes when we open our hearts and accept in various ways the Grace of God. This begins with repentance, when the Grace of God burns away the passions and we feel it as a caustic energy. Then, this Grace increases with inner gladness and joy, when a person will constantly remember the name of God and pray to Him, and their nous illuminates, it shines. And finally, when a person is made worthy by God to see Him within His Light, then that person sees the Kingdom of God.

This is shown in the Holy Gospels. Before His transfiguration, Christ told His disciples that there were some among them who would not die before seeing the Kingdom of God, which will come "with power". Soon after He took three of His disciples up Mount Tabor and was transfigured before them, so that His disciples saw His face shining like the sun and His garments became white as light. According to the interpretation of the Fathers, this vision of Christ in Light was a vision of the Kingdom of God.

In our lives we must be seekers of the Kingdom of God. First we must receive it in our hearts, together with the purifying, illuminating and deifying energy of God, and then also we will enjoy it in the future. Or it can happen the other way around. When we are nostalgic for the coming of the future Kingdom of God, it will make us desire it, so that it will lead us to repentance and we will have a foretaste of it in this life. Hence, the Kingdom of God has come with the incarnation of Christ, it comes with our repentance and communion with Christ, and it will come at the Second Coming.

Unfortunately, many of us want earthly kingdoms, powers and joys, as we also want to set up our own kingdom and not to have the Kingdom of Christ prevail on earth. But we must change our behavior and seek the Kingdom of God in the manner mentioned above, in order to conform with the "spirit" of the Lord's Prayer. *(to be continued next week) (Translated by John Sanidopoulos)*

## A Word From the Holy Fathers

Proomion I – Even while the outlaw's feet were being washed in his Master's hands, Judas, like a thief, secretly honed his treacherous tongue. From this depth of inhumanity, Christ our Lord, rescue us, as we chant in the basilica of the Mother of God: "Mercy, be merciful to us, O Lord, in your mercy, ever forbearing, never despairing."

Proomion II – Heavenly Father, you are loving and compassionate. Mercy, be merciful to us, O Lord, in your mercy, ever forbearing, never despairing.

Who could hear and not grow numb? Who could watch and not tremble? Jesus kissed treacherously; Christ sold greedily; God seized willingly. What land could bear the outrage, what ocean witness and endure the sacrilege? How did the high heavens contain their wrath, the stars maintain their path, when Judas bargained, then sold and delivered his Supreme Judge? Mercy, be merciful to us, O Lord, in your mercy, ever forbearing, never despairing.

When he plotted his treason, when he arranged your murder, Judas, though loved, rejected you; though welcomed, spurned you; though honored, scorned you. Even then, ever tender and all-generous Lord, you wanted to show inexpressible pity for the assassin. So you filled a basin and bent your back, and became a servant of the servants. Then, our Redeemer, Judas gave you his feet to wash them clean. Mercy, be merciful to us, O Lord, in your mercy, ever forbearing, never despairing. You cleansed with water the feet of a man who had rushed to betray you; you gave bread for his soul to the foe of your tenderness, the one who stripped off your blessings. You lifted up a beggar with your charity; you honored that wretch with our gifts, made him rich and happy. With your name on his tongue, Judas once cast out demons and cured those in pain; to repay these favors, the assassin defected and did not repent. Mercy, be merciful to us, O Lord, in your mercy, ever forbearing, never despairing.

Who ever saw a man having his feet washed while poised to kick? Who ever heard of a horse being stroked while straining to throw his rider? The Lord sponged him and served him food; treacherous Judas bucked and chomped like a wild stallion. Though the manger was full, the rogue beast suddenly bolted from his Groom, and bowed his back, so Satan could mount. Mercy, be merciful to us, O Lord, in your mercy, ever forbearing, never despairing.

Outlaw, heartless and pitiless! Pirate, traitor, scoundrel! What happened that made you reject the Lord? What sight sparked such insanity? What slight fired such hatred? Didn't Christ call you his dear friend, his brother, though he knew that you had become a creature of deception? All his funds, that small bag of coins, the Lord placed in your trust; yet suddenly, callously you betrayed all his confidence in you. Mercy, be merciful to us, O Lord, in your mercy, ever forbearing, never despairing.

When the Father's only Son bent to bathe his feet, Peter instantly protested, "Lord, Lord, do not wash my feet." The basin lay there, brimming with water; the Savior stood there, aproned like a bond-slave. The ranks of angels watched from heaven and cried out in shock; yet brazen Judas did not turn back. He turned against Christ. Mercy, be merciful to us, O Lord, in your mercy, ever forbearing, never despairing.

The fiery spirits stood in dread, the invisible choirs drew back, when they saw the Infinite Lord willingly bend low to serve creatures of clay. The Archangel Gabriel, astounded, spoke: "My comrades, hallowed angels, look and be stunned. Peter offers his foot; the Virgin's Son takes it and cleanses it. He washes not merely Peter – see, Judas is beside him." Mercy, be merciful to us, O Lord, in your mercy, ever forbearing, never despairing.

"The ocean washes a mud brick. The deep cleanses a lump of clay, yet does not destroy its structure. This water makes human nature firmer; it scours men's wills. Look at what the one who made man from clay is doing; look how marvelously the Creator treats his creatures! They sit, he stands; they eat, he serves; they are cleansed, he washes – and the earthlings' feet do not melt in the hands of fire." Mercy, be merciful to us, O Lord, in your mercy, ever forbearing, never despairing. That was what Gabriel said when he saw the Sacred Vine nourishing its own branches, spreading them over all the earth, stretching them into the sky. But Peter, leader of Christ's comrades, exemplar of his disciples, commander of his entourage, was also there. He saw the Lord at work and asked in anguish: "Are you going to wash my feet? The hand that created me shall never, never bathe my feet!" Mercy, be merciful to us, O Lord, in your mercy, ever forbearing, never despairing.

May my sleep slide into death, if I allow the deathless Lord to bend low before me, a mortal. May the enemy mock me, if you do this to me. Is it not enough that I have been named your comrade? What's more, you regard me as the leader of those who love you. Master Potter of the Universe, how will you wash my feet, which are cast in clay? My Redeemer, why do you want to wash my mortal limbs and feet?" Mercy, be merciful to us, O Lord, in your mercy, ever forbearing, never despairing.

To the Apostles' words of protest his Teacher replied, "Listen to me, Peter. If I do not wash you now, You will not share my gift of life; I'll mark you as my foe." When the Creator gave that answer, fear and trembling gripped his disciple: "My Lord, when you wash, bathe my whole body, not just my feet. Wash me more, as you wish, so I do not lose your blessings." Mercy, be merciful to us, O Lord, in your mercy, ever forbearing, never despairing.

This was a momentous exchange, but Judas was not reconciled. Marvelous words were spoken, deeds done – yet the hardened enemy was not converted, not softened. As Judas, without a grain of faith, drank the wine and ate the bread, he kicked up his heels, as the Bible says. Then he fled from the fold, deserted the sheep, and rushed to the wolves. He rejected the breast of sweetness to suck a bitter teat. Mercy, be merciful to us, O Lord, in your mercy, ever forbearing, never despairing.

A while ago the devil retreated from Judas' miracles – no need, because Judas now surrenders to the one he had repelled, and becomes completely diabolical. No need for Satan's swarms to have feared this apostle; Judas now wants to possess everyone, dares to trade the Lord. No need for disease to fall away when Judas spoke; he himself was already infected. The plagues of avarice and atheism were deep within him. Mercy, be merciful to us, O Lord, in your mercy, ever forbearing, never despairing.

The outlaw Judas marched off to the camp of the lawless. Anticipating their murderous conspiracy, the defector betrayed his deserted lord – and is left a pauper. “What do you wish to give me?” he says to those seeking to buy the blood of the living, abiding Lord. Earth, hear and tremble! Sea, prepare to flee! They bargain over murder, set a price on the Priceless, plan the murder of the Life! Mercy, be merciful to us, O Lord, in your mercy, ever forbearing, never despairing.

Now your greed is revealed, your gluttony evident. Judas, you are an implacable, insatiable profligate, a shameless blood-sucker, a conscienceless money-luster! “What do you wish to give me?” you say to those seeking to buy the blood of the Ever-living Lord. What gift did you not have? What wealth was not yours? What reward did you lack? Earth-born, you shared heaven's treasure, yet you betray God. Mercy, be merciful to us, O Lord, in your mercy, ever forbearing, never despairing.

In your grasp, all riches; you were an inexhaustible vault. Your wealth was unbounded: gold in your hands, God in your heart. Why did it happen, you miserable man, that, like a pauper, you ran to men who have nothing to give you? What can they give you, how can they pay for the one whom you are selling? Neither sky, nor land, nor the entire universe can match him. Mercy, be merciful to us, O Lord, in your mercy, ever forbearing, never despairing.

Madman, stop! Control yourself! Rein in your rearing boldness! Snaffle your outrageous schemes! Prick your conscience! Fools, stop and think! You cannot put a price on the head of the Lord. The conspirators cannot buy him who holds the world in his hand. Suppose you do sell him, and he balks – who will dare to force him? Who will place a hand on the Lord, without his permission? Mercy, be merciful to us, O Lord, in your mercy, ever forbearing, never despairing.

Dressed in a hair shirt, Elijah once acted like a rich warlord. He paid out heavenly fire to destroy those set against him – first one troop of fifty Samaritans, then another. Long ago Elijah could not be captured; now the Lord god of Elijah is held cheap by a shameless man. What absolute madness! Elijah was a servant of the one the traitor seeks to sell. Judas does not honor as a prophet the Creator of the prophets. Mercy, be merciful to us, O Lord, in your mercy, ever forbearing, never despairing.

Thus, you fool, you were drunk with arrogance and did not realize that the Lord planned to be sold by you. But the terms of the bargain reveal whom you plotted to sell. Miserable Judas, think. You received thirty precious pieces: which of the patriarchs was sold like this? Joseph, who was sold into Egypt, prefigured Jesus: the Lord's price was his price. From that sum you profit amounted to a noose – and hell. Mercy, be merciful to us, O Lord, in your mercy, ever forbearing, never despairing.

Mercy, Lord, have mercy. How disastrous was the apostle's fall! What heights he failed to scale! How far he plummeted! What a crash he made! Before time began, Lucifer fell in a lightning plunge. Judas imitated him: springing up against Christ and kicking at the goads, he was crushed and cast down into the depths of Hell. There he earned his reward. Mercy, be merciful to us, O Lord, in your mercy, ever forbearing, never despairing.

So the outlaw rushed up and betrayed the Lord of Mercy with a kiss. Judas deliberately seized the Lord, who willingly accepted his passion and bestowed life on us all. Judas, once a lamb of Christ, became a wolf and like a savage beast attacked his shepherd. Did you dare to kiss him? What a kiss that was, you fool – a kiss of betrayal! You mastered Satan's schemes and were not ashamed to serve. Mercy, be merciful to us, O Lord, in your mercy, ever forbearing, never despairing.

Wait, you utterly miserable man, here is your irrevocable sentence. Your own conscience condemns you. By dying a terrible death you will know what you have done. A tree branch serves as your gibbet, paying you a just wage. But where is your money, greedy one? You will lose even the silver, and will not save yourself by desperate contrition, because you handed over Christ, the treasure of your soul. Mercy, be merciful to us, O Lord, in your mercy, ever forbearing, never despairing.

Holy, holy, holy, All-hallowed Master of the Universe, save your servants from a final fall. Raise your creatures so we can flee that peril. My brothers, now that we know the fate of Judas, who sold the Lord and fell, let us steady our steps and set our feet firmly on the rising ramp of the Creator's commandments. Let us flee the path to Hell, by crying out to our Redeemer: Mercy, be merciful to us, O Lord, in your mercy, ever forbearing, never despairing.

– St. Romanus the Melodist, *Kontakion O.17, On Judas*

### **Holy New-Martyr Chryse of Meglen**

*In torments, O Chryse, you were as brilliant as gold that has been purified by fire.*

By St. Nicodemus the Hagiorite

Chryse [*in Greek, Zlata in Slavic; both mean “Golden”*. – Ed.], the New Virgin-Martyr and undefiled bride of the Heavenly King, Christ God, was from the village of Slatena of the district of Meglen which lies near the border of Serbia and

Bulgaria. She was of a poor family, being one of four daughters. Yet she was rich in acquired and natural virtues; in acquired virtues, that is to say, by her fervent faith in God and by her virginity and prudence; in natural virtues, by her comeliness and beauty for which also the blessed one was deemed worthy of being perfected by a glorious and noble martyrdom.

There was a certain Turk there who, seeing her beauty and comeliness, was pierced in the heart by satanic love for her and kept watch to find an appropriate time to accomplish the evil purpose which he had conceived. One day the Saint came out with other women to gather wood. When the Hagarene - that plotter against the Saint's virginity - learned of this he took some other Turks with him also, and going there, seized her and carried her off by force to his house. At first he began to flatter the Saint with many promises, attempting in this manner to pervert her convictions and lead her to his religion. He told her that if she accepted and became Muslim, he would take her as wife. At the same time he began to threaten her also, saying that if she were not convinced by his words he would submit her to great tortures. But when she who was truly golden, both in mind and in name, heard these things so unexpectedly she did not fear at all but in her heart she called upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to come to her aid, and with great nobility and boldness she answered: "I believe and worship my Christ and Him alone do I have as my Bridegroom Whom I shall never deny, even though you inflict ten thousand tortures upon me - even though you cut my body into small pieces."

When they heard these things they understood that they alone would not be able to convince her. For this cause they used other means. Wherefore, knowing that women are more adept than men in deceiving others, especially other women, they gave the Saint over to their women and commanded them to use every means and device to convince her. When they had taken the Martyr, what did they not do, what did they not devise, what magic spells did they not use against the virgin? For nearly six months they incited the blessed one to accept their religion but in vain did they labor, for the blessed Chryse was firmly established upon the immovable rock of the Faith of Christ. Afterwards they called the Martyr's own parents and sisters and with great threats commanded them to incite their daughter to become Muslim, or else she would be put to death and they would be tortured and would suffer great loss.

Therefore when the parents and sisters of the Martyr drew near to her (for fear constrained them to do this, though unwillingly), they said and did all those things which are able to soften even the hardest and most adamant soul, and they wept and cried and said: "O sweetest daughter, have pity on yourself and on us your parents and your sisters who are all in danger of being destroyed on your account. Deny Christ just for the sake of appearances, so that both you and we might be

delivered. Christ is compassionate and will forgive you this sin because of the necessity and violence." And here, let each one consider how vehement and how great was this warfare which the devil had devised and set in motion against the Martyr, and what thoughts of weakness and sympathy could have overcome the tender virgin from the rivers of tears which her mother and father and sisters shed in her presence.

But take courage, beloved, the power of Christ conquered even this warfare and device of the devil; for being aflame with the heartfelt fire of love for Christ, Chryse, who was manly and mighty in soul, was not at all inclined to sympathy by the words and tears of her parents and sisters, as nature demanded. Rather, like one above flesh and blood, and beyond the laws and limits of nature, she turned and spoke these praiseworthy and most wise words to her parents and sisters: "You, who incite me to deny Christ, the true God, are no longer my parents and sisters, nor do I wish to have you as such henceforth. But in your stead, I have my Lord Jesus Christ as father, my Lady the Theotokos as mother, and the Saints as my brothers and sisters." And with this answer she turned them away.

Well done to your stouthearted courage, O Saint! Well done to your true love for God! Well done to your wise convictions, worthy of heavenly praises! Truly, brethren, in this Saint there is fulfilled that which the divine David said: "My father and my mother have forsaken me, but the Lord has taken me to Himself" (Ps. 26:10), and that which the Lord said: "I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and a daughter against her mother...And a man's foes shall be those of his own household" (Matt. 10:35-36).

When the Muslims, and especially that evil lover of the virgin, saw that they could achieve nothing, nor pervert the Saint from the Faith of Christ, even with those means and instruments which they had conceived, they abandoned flattery and words from that time forward, and began torturing the Martyr. At first, for three whole months, they beat her daily with clubs. Later they skinned her and took many strips from her flesh and left them hanging in front of her, so that she might be stricken with fear at the sight of them. The blood ran like a river from the virginal body of the Martyr, and the nearby earth was reddened. Afterwards they heated a skewer and passed it directly through the ears of the Martyr, so that smoke came forth from her nose and mouth.

While suffering such numerous and such grievous tortures, which would humble even the most stouthearted of men, the Martyr of Christ endured with great nobility, being strengthened by the power of the Cross and by her heartfelt love for Christ. For as Symeon Metaphrastes says: "The soul that is held by bonds of love for God deems suffering as nothing; rather it revels in pain and prospers in adversity." When the Saint heard that there was nearby the priest Timothy, the

abbot of the august Monastery of Stavronikita on Mount Athos, a man modest and trustworthy whom she had as her spiritual father, who also narrated her martyrdom, she sent word to him by a certain Christian that he make supplication unto God, that she might be accounted worthy to finish the course of her martyrdom in a manner pleasing to God.

Finally, not being satisfied with the numerous torments which they had inflicted upon the Saint, but rather marvelling how she remained yet alive and did not die, those cruel and hard-hearted ones - nay, one should say rather those crueler than the wild beasts themselves - could not endure the fact that they all had been conquered by a maiden, and they became so angry and obstinate - Oh! what does not evil devise! - that they hung the lamb of Christ upon a wild pear tree, and all ran at her with their knives and cut the sacred body of the virgin to pieces. This took place on October 13, 1795 (or 1796).

In this manner was the good Chryse tested and made radiant by such numerous tortures, like gold in a furnace. She surrendered her holy soul into the hands of her immortal Bridegroom, and received a double crown as virgin and as athlete. And now she dances and rejoices together with the prudent and prize-winning virgins in the heavenly bridal chambers, and stands at the right hand of the Bridegroom, Christ, and reigns together with Him unto the ages of ages. As for her victorious and virginal relics, certain Christians took them secretly and buried them with honor and reverence.

By her intercessions may we also be accounted worthy of the Kingdom of Heaven. Amen. *(from johnsanidopoulos.com)*

### **Also Commemorated Today**

Translation [into Moscow](#) of the Iveron Icon of the Most Holy Theotokos (1648).

Martyrs [Carpus](#), bishop at Thyateira, Papyrus the deacon, Agathadorus, and Agathonica at Pergamus (251).

New Hieromartyr [Constantine](#) Sergeyev, priest of Kutush (1918)

New Hieromartyrs [Innocent](#) and [Nicholas](#) priests (1937).

[Uncovering](#) of the Relics of New Hieromartyr Thaddeus Uspensky, archbishop of Tver (1993)(old calendar)

Venerable [Benjamin](#) of the Kiev Caves (14th c.).

Martyr [Florentius](#) of Thessalonica (1st-2nd c.).

Martyr [Dioscorus](#) the Skenopolite (288)

Martyr [Benjamin](#), deacon, of Persia (ca. 424).

Holy Martyr [Antigonos](#)

Venerable [Nicetas](#) the Confessor of Paphlagonia (838).

St. [Meletius I Pegas](#), archbishop of Alexandria (1601).



Holy Hieromartyr [Jacob](#) of Hamatoura

St. [Vanantius](#) (Venantius), Abbot of St. Martin of Tours (5<sup>th</sup> c.) (Gaul).

St. [Anthony](#) Metropolitan of Chkondidi and his disciple Hieromonk Jacob the Elder (18th-19th c.) (Georgia).

Holy New Martyr [Bosiljka](#) Rajicic of Pasjane (late 19<sup>th</sup> c.)

Translation of the Relics of St. [Sava](#) the Sanctified [from Venice to Jerusalem](#) (1965)

St. [Comgan](#), abbot of Lochalsh.(Cowan) (8<sup>th</sup> c.)

St. [Coloman](#) of Stockerau (of Melk), Martyr (1012)

Ss. [Fyncana](#) and Fyndoca of Scotland, Virgin Martyrs

St. [Edward](#) the Confessor, King (1066)

St. Berthoald, bishop of Cambrai-Arras (7<sup>th</sup> c.)(France)

Martyrs [Faustus](#), Januarius, and Martial of Córdoba (7<sup>th</sup> c.) (Spain)

Ven. [Gerald](#) of Aurillac (909)(France)

St. [Luke](#), abbot of Demenna (984)(Sicily)

St. [Regimbald](#) (Reginbald, Regimbaut), Prince-Bishop of Speyer (1039)

St. [Romulus](#), bishop of Genoa (c. 641)(Italy)

St. [Simbert](#) (Simpert, Sinthert), prince-bishop of Augsburg (Germany) (c. 809)

## **Social Team for October 20**

Team 7 – Samouris, Maher. Thank you!

### **Follow Our Diocese On-Line**

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## **Assembly of Bishops XIII Concludes; Hierarchs Pray for Victims of Hurricane "Helene," Peace in the Middle East & Ukraine**

The Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of the United States of America met for their 13<sup>th</sup> meeting from September 28 – October 1, 2024. The Atlanta Inter-Parish Association graciously hosted the 29 Hierarchs with customary southern hospitality.

The Members of the Assembly expressed sorrow for the absence of their Brother Hierarchs of the Russian Orthodox Church and sincerely encouraged their return to participate in future Assemblies....

During their deliberations, the Hierarchs called to mind and lamented the immense loss of life and vast devastation in the wake of Hurricane “Helene,” whose aftermath from heavy rains and unprecedented floods leaves behind a crisis of

disastrous proportions from Florida's Gulf Coast to Virginia's Appalachian Mountains, and especially the State of North Carolina. IOCC is coordinating deployment in response with the Hierarchy and local parishes for short- and long-term recovery efforts for those impacted. (*Donation link follows*) **The Assembly encourages the faithful to support IOCC's efforts.** [*Our parish will be providing assistance; Fr. Joseph encourages all who can to contribute as well. - Ed.*]



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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.)