

SOBORNOST

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American Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Diocese

*ECUMENICAL PATRIARCHATE
OF CONSTANTINOPLE*

SERVICES

Wednesday:

Reader Vespers 6:30 PM

Saturday:

Confession 4:30 PM

Great Vespers 5:00 PM

Sunday:

Matins (Orthros) 8:45 AM

Sunday School 9:30 AM

Divine Liturgy 10:00 AM

February 23, 2025 – Sunday of the Last Judgment (Meatfare) | Hieromartyr Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna

By Bishop Elias Meniates of Kernika and Kalavryta – Homily on Repentance
A virtuous soul with divinely-inspired zeal, what will it not do and what can it not find! The pious and wise monk Methodios was sent by God and by the Church to instruct the king of the Bulgarians in the Orthodox faith. This was when he had

renounced idolatry and entered into the true knowledge of God. He had been baptized and had submitted his authority to the empire of the Romans and to the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople.

So this good and faithful servant of God began to instruct the newly-illuminated with the power of his teaching, but more with the example of his life and to indicate to him with the doctrines of the faith and the commandments of the Gospel, how a true Christian should live.

But he was not satisfied with these: he skillfully painted two icons. On one he painted the Second Coming of Christ and on the other Hades. In the first, it presented the Son of God sitting on a high and majestic throne and surrounded by angelic powers, in great glory, clothed in all the light of His divine glory. A thousand thousands of angels and an innumerable multitude of people were present who were being tried and were waiting for the decision of the terrible Judge. There was also the sign of the Cross, which was seen in front of the terrible bema, the fiery river which issued from the fiery throne and in detail all the incidents of the coming Judgment. In the other icon it showed the all-consuming and insatiable Hades and the unquenchable fire there. There he showed the outer darkness, the worm that never sleeps, the various tortures of sinners in Hades and the various forms of the tormenting demons.

These two terrible images were placed by the wise teacher daily before the eyes of the royal student to make him understand that for an ungodly and sinful person such will be the Judgment, such will be Hades. In this way he tried to fix him in the right faith and motivate him to live a God-pleasing life....

We cannot wish for a more fitting time to be saved, than these holy days in which the Son of God negotiates for our salvation. Alas! Are you still resisting? Still not repenting? Are you therefore resisting by your will, by your desire, in your sin?

Hard-hearted, incorrigible sinners, listen to what I have to say to you today! I will talk to you about repentance and I will prove to you how whoever doesn't want to repent while he can, a time will come when he might want to but can't.

First Section

There was an issue between the Orthodox and heretics in the past as well as now. What is it that justifies and saves man? Is it the grace of God alone or the grace of God and the will of man together?...

Not only the will of man, nor only the grace of God, but together both the will and grace justify and save man. This is what our holy Church teaches in accordance with the Holy Scriptures, the sacred teachers and the divinely-inspired theologians. That is to say, the freedom of the human will and the help of divine grace are the

two wheels that run together to lead us to heaven. These are the two wings with which we can fly to Paradise!

Christ tells us: "Whoever wants to follow Me, let him deny himself". Here is the free will of man. Again He Himself says: "Without Me you can do nothing." Behold how necessary is the grace of God.

The famous sacred Augustine says that God who created man without man, that is, without man's will, is impossible to save man without man, that is, without man's will. In order to be saved, both we and God must want it. Saint Gregory the Theologian preaches, "Behold, it is for us, and it is from God that we are saved." Sacred Chrysostom teaches us the same. Grace, even though it is grace, saves those who want to be saved: "Grace, even willing grace, saves."

Therefore, for the work of our salvation, the will of man and the grace of God come together. The grace of God comes first, but the will of man must also follow. The grace of God invites and the will of man must listen. This means that God calls every person to repentance because he wants all people to be saved: "He wants everyone to be saved."

But man must want to repent and be saved, otherwise listen to what very bad things can happen. If man remains for a long time in sin without repenting, those two wheels, those two wings, that is, the will and grace, with time weaken and do not do anything. The will weakens due to long habit. Grace fades from forbearance. Man does not want to repent of sin, because he can no longer break the habit. God does not want to forgive sin, because it can no longer be endured. Whence is born impenitence on the part of man, abandonment on the part of God. And so when a man can, he does not want to repent.

Maybe the time will come when he wants to and can't. And this for two reasons: because he lacks the will and because he lacks grace. Let's start from the former. According to natural reason, the will of man inclines to evil more than to good. He barely ascends towards good, but he easily falls towards evil. And if he falls once, he almost stays there, as if motionless.

When Pentapolis was burned by that fire that God sent down from heaven to consume that one sin, he wanted to redeem righteous Lot and his family from this great evil. He said to him: Do you see that mountain, Zoar? Run there to save yourself. Walk as fast as you can, and be careful not to look back at all. Do not turn back because there is danger, if you see it with your eyes you will be captured by an evil and destroyed. "Save your life! Do not look behind you nor stay anywhere in the plain. Escape to the mountains, lest you be destroyed." Escape as fast as possible, don't waste time and above all don't turn to look back.

Lot's wife did not follow God's command. She stood, turned back to see, to say goodbye with a glance to her burning homeland. As she turned so he remained. She froze, became a pillar of salt! "But his wife looked back behind him, and she became a pillar of salt." She turned, she saw, she froze! This has a deep meaning, my beloved! Even Christ Himself orders us in the holy Gospel to remember this example; "Remember the wife of Lot."

The allegory is as follows: The whole earth is lit up and burning because of sin. Flames surround her from all sides. They are burning the world from the outside, but they also entered the Church of Christ! At every age and class. In laymen and priests, in men, in women, in elders, youths and children, evil dominates. The whole world became a Pentapolis. The fire grew and became a conflagration! The loss has reached its maximum.

God wants to save you, Christian, from such evil and it seems as if He is saying to you: get up, run away to be saved on the mountain, don't turn to look back, lest you also be included, hurry to be saved! Flee as quickly as possible from the corruption of the world. If it is possible for you, fly high, above earthly passions. Run for salvation to the mountain of Christian virtue and evangelical perfection. Keep your eyes and heart in front of the road! Don't look back to see the earthly vanity, where like an illusory viscosity it catches people's eyes. Do not turn because you are blocked from the way of your salvation! Are you caught by evil? You are at a loss. "Save your life, escape, and make haste to be saved." Beware, but also hurry to keep yourself from harm, don't waste time, don't turn "backwards".

So says the grace of God. But the will of man does not listen, it does not walk on the straight path of the divine commands. He abides in idleness, he turns to evil, and as he turns, he is caught by evil and remains there! He turns to see that person, seized by carnal appetite. He turns to see that profit, caught by avarice. He turns to see that vain glory, seized with pride. He turned to evil, he saw evil, he congealed in evil. He became like Lot's wife, a pillar of salt, solid in evil and immovable.

The will turns into a habit, which for the secular laws is a second law, and for ethics it becomes second nature. Both nature and law in the will. Nature because it becomes a necessity and drags with irresistible force the laws of nature itself. How many times do we do out of habit what we would never do naturally? It becomes a law in the will, which is ultimately a tyrannical law and extorts the laws of free will. How many times do we act not because we want to, but because we are used to it? Semiramis, the wife of the Assyrian king Ninus, thought to test how beautiful power is. So she begs her husband to let her be alone for just one day to do as she pleases with the kingdom. A heavy demand. Power is not easily handed over. We easier surrender our lives to other hands, rather than authority. At first Ninus

refuses to do her the favor. He tells her that what she is asking for is inappropriate, that whatever else she wants, he will gladly give it to her, but to put all the power in her hands, and indeed in the hands of a woman...

"Well," replies Semiramis, "is it a great thing for a single day?" And what can't the cunning of women do! A woman's pleas and tears are two irresistible weapons. She begged him so much, Semiramis cried so much, until she won over her husband, the king. She received it eagerly. That is, received all the power, to do whatever she wills and wants, but only for one day. Immediately, as soon as this proud woman had placed the crown on her head, took the scepter in her hand, sat on the royal throne, received the seals of kingship, and diagnosed the obedience of the people to her commands, hear what she did! The first order she gave was to handcuff her husband, Ninus, the king, her benefactor, and immediately cut off his head, and it happened!

Thoughtless king! You should never have believed the words of a deluded woman! You should never have left the scepter of power in the hands of a proud woman! Thus you lost both the kingdom and your life! So Semiramis remained sovereign queen and reigned for her entire life, she who asked to reign for one day only.

And now to our case. In this narrow realm of the microcosm, the will with self-determination looks like a free monarch, who, since he is a king, has authority over human actions.

Habit with necessity is a dynastic tyrant who, once in power, holds it forever. One day, one hour, one time, did you think, O Christian, that sin should reign over you? But when it received from your free will permission and authority, one day became your whole life!

Once you looked up and saw that face, but count how far you've come! Up until now you have been completely possessed by carnal appetite. You hunger for flesh and any flesh. In order to enjoy it, you spare no expense, you spare no effort, you leave no stone unturned. In time your very soul became flesh. You walk and your thoughts are constantly in the arms of your harlot. You stand and your desire wanders to find new food. You converse and your speech revolves around recounting your carnal achievements. You fall asleep and this is your last thought before closing your eyes to fall asleep. You are sleeping and this is what your imagination is dreaming. You wake up and this is your purpose. This today, this tomorrow, this forever, which at one time began as doing something just once!

Once you stretched out your hands to grab, but how many have you grabbed so far? Until now you have extended your estates beyond those of your neighbors. Your houses are filled with foreign things, enriched with the blood of the poor.

Interest upon interest, injustice upon injustice, they made a chain so long, that your conscience is tightly bound.

You are not touched by the tears of orphans, the sighs of the poor, the shame of people, the fear of God! You don't take your soul for account, you don't remember death, you don't contemplate the Judgment, you don't fear hell. You thirst for the blood of the poor, and the more you drink, the more the flame of your avarice burns. This today, this tomorrow, this forever, since it first began!

Come now if you want to repent, but your will is fastened to evil. You are hindered by habit, which reigns. You want to, but with wavering and unstable thoughts. You want to, but with a purpose not to leave your former sin. You want to confess, but you don't want to be corrected. A thing that is one and the same: you want and you don't want. A sign that the ropes that hold you are loosening a bit, but not breaking!

Now that you hear this teaching, your heart softens for a while, maybe you break down in tears that fall from your eyes, but as soon as you leave the Church, your heart is once again frozen in evil! You who before Holy Pascha repent because you sinned, but after Holy Pascha you yourself repent for having repented! You, with Divine Communion still in your mouth, return to your previous mud... What's driving you? The habit. And the will obeys the habit. So when will you decide to change your mind? Never! Listen to what the Holy Spirit says through the mouth of the prophet Jeremiah: "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or a leopard his spots? If so, you might be able to do what is good, you who are instructed in evil."

Ah! Once someone has learned evil, how long does it take to unlearn it? If for once Semiramis takes power from her husband, as if for once habit dominates the will, the temporary becomes eternal. One day becomes a lifetime! Once, is followed by forever! So one wheel doesn't move, one wing doesn't fly. But what does the other wheel, the other wing, namely the grace of God, do? That grace of God that made Paul from a persecutor of the Church, a teacher of the Church? Made Matthew from a tax collector, to an Evangelist? Made the Thief hanging on the cross, into a theologian? The grace that made so many sinners in a moment saints?

All these examples are a special grace, which is not always given to every person. Do not look for such grace, which God gives a few times to a few "who are pitiful". Consider rather that divine grace which God grants you and which reaches you to be saved, which always keeps you so that you do not perish, which wants to lead you to repentance, which you despise, that is why it leaves you.

I, says God through the mouth of Isaiah the prophet, planted you, O man, like a vine, not in a desolate, uninhabited and dry land. Not in a dry and stony place, without hope of bearing fruit. I did not make you to be born either in a synagogue

of Jews, nor in a mosque of the Hagarenes. "I planted you in a fertile place," in a thick, grassy place. Because I made you to be born in the arms of a true Church, to be nurtured by pious parents with the milk of a holy Faith. To protect you from external enemies, from the creeping delusion of worldly pleasures. I surrounded you with a barrier, with all the gifts of the Holy Spirit, which you received in the font so that you would not be afraid of the raids of robbers, the temptations of demons. I have rebuilt a tower among you, a mighty tower, My divine grace. And to make you bear fruit for the heavenly storehouse, I cultivated you often with the teaching of My Gospel. To water you, I shed My Blood once on the Cross and daily in My Mysteries. "What shall I do any more to My vineyard, that I have not done to it?"

But the effort was wasted, the diligence was in vain! I waited for this year and the next for My vine to produce grapes, fruits of virtue; to see this Christian of Mine repent, to be corrected, but it never happened. He was fruitless, grew wild, filled My vine with thorns. He became hardened to evil, he was completely involved in sins. "Whereas I expected it to bring forth grapes, but it has brought forth thorns."

Tell me now you teachers, theologians, spiritual fathers, judge between Me and my vineyard, judge My long-suffering and his ingratitude after so much love, so much patience, decide, what should I do? "I will take away its hedge, and it shall be for a spoil; and I will pull down its walls, and it shall be left to be trodden down. And I will forsake my vineyard; and it shall not be pruned, nor dug, and thorns shall come up upon it as on barren land; and I will command the clouds to rain no rain upon it" (5:1-7). Aren't these terrible words, with which God clearly tells you that at last He is tired of you and leaves you, that His long-suffering turns to indignation? His patience to wrath?

With how much kindness He calls you and waits for you and you despise Him, says the blessed apostle Paul! So, finally, what do you think? "Do you despise the wealth of His goodness and tolerance and long-suffering, unaware that God's goodness leads you to repentance?"

This is the rope I spoke to you about another time, with which God pulls you to repentance. But if you resist strongly, the rope is cut and you fall to your final loss. And God offers you all the treasures of divine grace, but you prefer the treasures of wrath: "And you," continues the same Apostle, "according to your cruelty and unrepentant heart, you treasure up wrath for yourself."

So it is only fair that you should suffer for what you have done. Have you forgotten God? May you be forgotten by God. As when He invited you and you didn't want Him, so may you beg and Him not want you! Saint Gregory, Bishop of Nyssa, says about this: "The divine judgment, following with impartial and just verdict the

results of our purpose, confers on each person whatever he has personally provided as his own" (Oration 5, *On the Beatitudes*).

There are many examples in Holy Scripture, but among the others is the deplorable one of King Zedekiah of Judah. When he began to reign he was a young man, about twenty years old. His youth led him to many blunders, certainly having the possibility that royal authority gave him. Transgressing every divine and human law, he ran like an unbridled horse without fear towards all impiety and wickedness, dragging into this perdition, by his example, the priests, the rulers and all his people. God wanted the return of the ungodly king, so He mostly sent the prophet Jeremiah, as well as other prophets to instruct him, so that he would return. Jeremiah did it with so much desire, that he did not stop day and night, secretly and openly, sometimes to invite him to repentance, sometimes to rebuke him and sometimes to strike fear in him. But, as the Holy Spirit says, "When an ungodly man comes into a depth of evils, he despises." Zedekiah's heart became very hard. "He did evil in the sight of the Lord his God, and did not humble himself before Jeremiah the prophet, who spoke from the mouth of the Lord."

Yes, but all this until when? "Until the wrath of the Lord arose against His people, till there was no remedy." God raised up the greatest tyrant of the world, Nebuchadnezzar, the king of the Assyrians. He came with a numerous army and surrounded Jerusalem. Only then did Zedekiah remember God and the prophets. He sent people to Jeremiah, begging him to pray so that God would deliver him from the dangerous enemy. But what happened? Jeremiah did not plead, God did not help. The tyrant entered the holy city, trampled the temple, seized the sacred vessels, put a knife through the mouths of all the inhabitants from the greatest to the least, arrested the king himself, slaughtered all his children before his eyes, blinded him and carried him in irons captive, along with those left, into Babylon.

This seems strange! Didn't God not accept the repentance of Zedekiah? No! So many times Zedekiah despised God, so finally God abandoned Zedekiah. Does God sometimes give up too? Yes! But when? "When the anger of the Lord arose." Then there was no remedy. But here it seems that Zedekiah repented. However, there was no remedy, even though he sent people to Jeremiah to entreat God. With all this "there was no remedy." Why? Because "the anger of the Lord rose." Because when God loses His patience "there was no remedy." So, just as Zedekiah did not want when he could, so the time came when he wanted and could not. And as once he lacked the will, so in the end he lacked grace. In other words, "The righteous judgment of God takes into consideration our disposition. He grants to us according to our inner feelings."

Oh, what a fearsome example, which I cannot explain! I want to be silent and let you figure it out. You by yourself. I want to be silent because the words I had to say about this case, tear apart the soul of the one who will hear them! But what voice is that I hear? Woe to me! It is the voice of God, Who speaks through the mouth of the prophet Ezekiel: "Son of man, I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel; therefore hear a word from My mouth, and give them warning from Me: When I say to the wicked, 'You shall surely die,' and you give him no warning, nor speak to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life, that same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood I will require at your hand." So God tells me and can I keep quiet? I will speak, I will speak, without looking "in the face of man," without fear or shyness!

Youth completely uneducated, horses without a bridle, blind without a guide, sheep confused and lost! Incorrigible old men, who have grown old in sin despite your years! You irreverent priests who outrank the laity in scandals! People who do not fear God! Foolishly ambitious women who have only the name of the Christian faith, but none of the works of this faith! God sent you priests who read you the Gospel daily. Teachers who admonish you from the pulpit. Spiritual fathers who interpret for you the matters in confession. All together they invite you to repentance, they rebuke you with your sins, they instill fear in you with the Judgment and hell, but you defy their words, mock their advice, as Zedekiah did with the prophets!

You are hardened in sin, frozen in the habit of evil! And so, I tell you on His behalf: by sin you lived, by sin you will die - "and you will die in your sin"! Such a decision was made by the Son of God in the Gospel. "The anger of the Lord rose." The anger of God was kindled to the fullest, which can no longer suffer you. "There was no remedy." You are dying! You are dying!

There will come a time when sudden death may hopelessly overtake you. It can happen tomorrow, today, at this moment! What if it comes and finds you entangled in the arms of some obscene woman? If you have a stroke? Then, lying on a bed, afflicted with sickness, you will remember only the past, not the life to come. You will be pained by separation from this world, rather than contrite for your sins. You'll want to figure out how to fix your assets, rather than your soul! But even if you want even then to repent, seeing your wife and your children crying around at the head of your bed; your friends and relatives feeling sorry; the doctor who despairs of your illness; the notary who writes your will and testament; the spiritual father who awaits your confession; seeing very close to your eyes imminent death, what kind of repentance will you have with a mind troubled by so much dizziness? What kind of confession with a diseased tongue? And what kind of brokenness will you be able to show with a heart beaten by so many pains? Then will you have the

strength to break so many chains of a long habit? How is it possible that you can correct in an hour the evils of a lifetime?

But let's suppose that you will then have the mind and will intact and you want to repent. That is why you send alms, as supplications and intercessions to propitiate God. But does God accept such repentance? Who confirms this to you? Was it when God, in contempt, withdrew from Zedekiah and many others? Those who lived badly and died well are very few. Those who lived evil and died evil, are innumerable. And as the example of the few gives you hope, why does not the example of the many frighten you? God, in order to give you His grace, aims at your will, but the will is caught by such and such a habit. Perhaps His grace is tired of enduring so long

God has looked for you so many times and has not found you. Perhaps you too will look for Him and not find Him. He Himself says, "You will seek Me and not find Me." You lived in sin, perhaps you will die in sin; "and you will die in your sin." What then? What a frightening conclusion! You lacked the will once, you will also once lack the grace! If now that you can, you don't want to repent, then a time will come when you might want to and won't be able to. That's what I wanted to prove to you. I proved it to you, so I feel at rest.

Section Two

I think today's discourse will seem very harsh to you. It's a sharp blade that wounds the heart, but what can we do? When the wound is festering it does not need light emollients. It needs fire and iron. And for our case there is no need for flattering and sweet words, but bitter and terrible. This is a great truth.

We do not repent because we hope that we will always have time. But we are wrong. To repent properly, we lack the will, which cannot leave the habit. We still lack the grace of God, which can no longer endure, tolerate sin. The devil invented this art. That is, to lead people to perdition, with the hope of later repentance. Hades will be full of people who hoped to reach Paradise! Ah! The false hope of our salvation, is the true cause of our hell!

Do you, Christian, want to repent and be truly saved? Behold the time, behold the way. Now is the time when we "go up to Jerusalem", now that the holy days have arrived, now that the holy Passion has approached, "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." The way is the one that God showed to Lot: "Save your soul! Do not look behind you, make haste to be saved."

These divine words lead to three conclusions: First, "save your soul" that is, take care to redeem your soul from the flame of sin through repentance. Your soul, if you lose it, you've lost everything. If you gain it, you've gained it all. And if you either lose it or gain it once, you either lost it or gained it forever. Second, "do not

look behind you." That is, don't turn to see your first sin anymore, after you have decided to leave it. Third, and the most important, "make haste to be saved." Hurry, go quickly, not waiting for tomorrow because you don't know what tomorrow will bring: "We do not know what the next day will bring." Tomorrow, the day after tomorrow, from day to day your ropes become thicker and your bonds tighter!

Among the fetters of sins, which bind the conscience, three are the most important. They are the bond of remembrance of wrongs, the bond of avarice, and the bond of the flesh. Do you want me to show you how it is possible to cut them off? Listen!

When Alexander the Great campaigned to conquer Asia, he arrived at Gordium in Phrygia. He entered the temple of Zeus and saw that famous Gordian Knot. It was so called from the ancient Gordias who wove it with skillful art. He listened to the priest of the temple who told him: "There is an old oracle that whoever manages to solve it, he will conquer all of Asia." What a small effort, to untie a knot, a bond! What a great gain to reign over all Asia! The ambitious king was inflamed with a desire to solve it. He seized it, looked at it carefully from all sides, but found neither a beginning nor an end. Its ends were hidden, tightly bound, entangled one within the other, so that they would remain untied. He turned it, turned it again, tried with his hands, struggled, but could not solve it. And when he saw that there was no other way, then he drew his sword and said: "It is the same thing whether I untie it or cut it." So he cut it, and as a Latin historian says, "he either fulfilled or made a mockery of the oracle."

Knots that become more entangled, are these very sins, Christian! It is a sure oracle of God, that whoever solves them inherits the Kingdom of Heaven. How little effort and how much is gained!

When you cannot solve them with reasoning, cut them with the sword of a firm decision and thus you fulfill the divine law. The bond of remembrance of wrongs grips you and you find it too tight. What a great distress! To forgive, you say, that enemy, who envied my happiness, who ensnared my life, who offended my honor, the most precious thing that man has? And what would people say? But I must repent. On one side is the Kingdom of Heaven, on the other is remembrance of wrongs. Here passion fights with repentance, the world with the gospel, the law of men with the law of God. And you, fighting from both sides, don't know what to do and wonder: "Ah, Christian! If you are constantly thinking these and other similar things you are never going to break the bond."

A sword is needed, a sword! A firm decision is needed here. You must say that I want to forgive my enemy, because this is what God commands me with His commandments. He says "love your enemies." He shows me this with His

example! Nailed to the Cross, He forgave those who crucified Him: "Father, forgive them." I want to, because if I do not forgive, there will be no forgiveness for me either. Thus the first bond is severed.

Let us now come to the other, avarice. There are many complications here. The blood of the poor is very sweet, the foreign thing is very tasty. You ate it, you grabbed it, and now you say: "How can I return it? To impoverish my home and my children? Should I reduce my income? To be deprived of my riches? Yes, but I must repent sometime." This is about the Kingdom of Heaven. Here avarice has a great grip on you. You want to reach out and she holds your hand. You want to make amends where you wronged and she makes you think about what will be left of you. Ah, Christian! As long as you make such considerations, you are never going to break the bond.

Sword, sword! A firm decision is needed here. You must say that I must return the foreign thing, or there is no salvation for me. What is unjust is not blessed. I'd rather be poor than go to hell. I love my children, but I also love my soul. Sacred Chrysostom says: "If you want to leave your children much wealth, leave them God's providence." This is how this bond is cut.

Let us now come to the third bond, which is the carnal. Oh, and what a tight bond this is! Here you really see neither beginning nor end. That is, to leave either the harlot or that foreign woman you are holding. The long habit of living with her is not a simple bond, it has become an iron chain. What to say? Either her beauty or her art or I don't know what, bewitched you, enslaved you, took away your senses and your mind and your freedom.

But, glory to God, you want to sincerely repent. This is the Kingdom of Heaven! But her tears, her words, her passionate loves don't leave you, some promises keep you. I see you and feel sorry for you! You go out with one foot and stay in her house with the other. You leave and come back, you avoid her and yet you love her. Your heart is torn in two. She has one part, your spiritual father has the other. In the confusion of your conflicting thoughts, you don't know what to do. Don't know what to do? I will tell you! But I want to know who I'm talking to first.

A sick man who is in danger of dying, when he is pinched or stung and shows that he feels something, he still has hope of life, so the doctor does everything possible to save him. But if he does not feel anything, the patient is in a hopeless situation, so the doctor is in vain, the medicine is in vain.

So is the sinner. If he is not stirred by conscience, if he is not gripped by the fear of God and the shame of men, so that he feels nothing, he is in a hopeless situation. God has abandoned him and I don't talk to him because words are wasted. I am talking to you, you listen to your conscience and you fear God and you are

ashamed of people and therefore you want to repent. But you do not know how to loosen the bond of the flesh that holds you. Listen to me, then, and I hope we will cut it with the "sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God."

By God's grace and for our sins, the Hagarites occupied Constantinople, the queen of cities and the royal throne of the Romans. The bloodshed, capture and plunder lasted three days. Among the other women who fell into the hands of the Hagarenes, there was also one who was unfortunate, but noble and beautiful, named Irene. The soldiers saw fit to offer her as a worthy gift to their king, Mehmed the Conqueror. He, as soon as he saw her, fell in love with her so fervently that for her sake he gave up his cruelty, his weapons, and all the affairs of his new kingdom. He became captivated by the captive Irene, he was lost in her beauty and he was interested in nothing more than being pleased with his love and satisfying his appetites.

But even the most secret acts of kings become known to the people and as they judge everyone, so they themselves are judged by everyone. The army began to grumble in secret and speak against the king openly. It is displeasing to all to see their king, and such a brave king, victorious and invincible, living buried in the arms of a woman. He learned what everyone criticized him for, he stood, pondered and his reasoning becomes a terrible war of his heart. Love is at war with glory. How? He thinks from one side: "Should I become a slave to a woman! And am I worthy to be called a king?" But from the other side: "The beauty of Irene deserves a kingdom. The common condemnation of the people hurts me, but the passionate loves of Irene makes me bleed. If I keep it, I shall lose all the gain of my conquests, which is my glory. If I leave her, I will lose the good of my desires, my love. What should I do? But as long as I make such reasonings, I never break the bond."

Sword, sword! So he says, he immediately gets up, runs, finds Irene and slaughters her, she who never expected such evil! With terrible pain and anger he says to himself: "If I had not done so I would never have been freed. Let the world now know how with this valor of mine I conquer my countries and my passions; how I am king of Constantinople and of myself."

Who is this, Christian? He is a Hagarene king whose faith and power allows him to have as many wives as he wants. And with all this, he not only left, divorced, banished, but also slaughtered a beloved maiden, in order to avoid the condemnation of the world and to preserve the reputation of his name.

And who are you? A Christian whose faith allows only one woman, the one offered to you by the Church and God. A Christian who must avoid not only the condemnation of the world, but also eternal hell; who must guard not only the name but also the soul. A Christian who hopes for the Kingdom of Heaven.

But now, because of the harlot or foreign woman with whom you live, your parents are sad, your wife cries, your relatives reproach you, the spiritual ones secretly and the teachers openly rebuke you, the whole world criticizes you. You have become the legend of the city... Everyone cries for your downfall or laughs at your stupidity. But that's the least of it. The Church turns away from you for this and does not provide you with the Immaculate Mysteries! You have been abandoned by your guardian angel, who is a pure spirit and abhors your impurities! God is fed up with you and can no longer bear you! The devil is on the lookout to steal your soul! Hades is waiting for you with its mouth open to swallow you into hell! Are you still waiting? Are you in wonder and don't know what to do to break up with her? Ah, Christian! As long as you make these reasonings and consider this and that, you never break the bond... Today one obstacle is created, tomorrow another and the devil makes the bond even tighter...

Sword, sword! Brother, a firm decision is required here, and you must say that I want to repent; to put away the harlot and save my soul. "I want to, because as long as I remain a whoremaster, I cease to be a Christian! Far from confession, far from the Immaculate Mysteries, far from my Mother the Church and from my Father God, a son disenfranchised and living in hell! I want it, I want it like nothing else, without wasting time!" This is how the bond is cut and may God enlighten you to cut it as soon as possible. If possible today, not counting tomorrow, the last hour! Because you already heard that whoever is able now and does not want to repent, perhaps the time will come when he will want to and cannot. (*from mystagogyresourcecenter.com*)



Today's Epistle Lesson – St. Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians 8:8-9:2 EOB

Brethren, food will not commend us to God. If we do not eat, we are not worse; and if we do eat, we are not better! However, be careful that your freedom may never become a stumbling block to the weak. For if someone sees you who have knowledge sitting in an idol's temple, will not this person's conscience, if weak, be emboldened to eat things sacrificed to idols? And thus, through your knowledge, the weak one perishes, even the brethren for whose sake Christ died. And so, by sinning against the brethren and wounding their conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ! Therefore, if food causes my brethren to stumble, I will never ever eat meat, so that I may not cause my brethren to stumble. Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus Christ, our Lord? Are you not my work in the Lord? If to others, I am not an apostle, yet at least for you I am one! You are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord.

Today's Gospel Lesson – Saint Matthew 25:31-46 EOB

The Lord said, "When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, just as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will place the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then, the King will tell those on his right hand, 'Come, you blessed of my Father! Inherit the Kingdom prepared for you since the foundation of the world! For I was hungry and you gave me food to eat; I was thirsty and you gave me drink; I was a stranger and you took me in. I was naked and you clothed me; I was sick and you visited me; I was in prison, and you came to me.' Then the righteous will answer him, saying: 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you; or thirsty and give you a drink? When did we see you as a stranger and take you in; or naked, and clothe you? When did we see you sick, or in prison, and visit you?' The King will answer them, 'Amen, I tell you: as much as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me.' Then, he will also say to those on his left hand, 'Depart from me, you accursed, into the eternal fire which is prepared for the devil and his angels! For I was hungry and you gave me no food; I was thirsty and you gave me no drink; I was a stranger and you did not receive me; naked, and you did not clothe me; sick, and in prison, and you did not visit me.' Then, they will answer: 'Lord, when did we see you hungry, or thirsty, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not help you?' Then he will answer them, saying: 'Amen, I tell you: as much as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.' These ones on the left will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.'"

A Word From the Holy Fathers

Polycarp and the presbyters who are with him unto the Church of God which sojourns at Philippi; may mercy and peace from God Almighty and Jesus Christ our Savior be yours in abundance.

I greatly rejoice with you in our Lord Jesus Christ because you welcomed the representatives of the true Love and, as was proper for you, helped on their way, confined by chains suitable for saints, which are the diadems of those who are truly chosen by God and our Lord. I also rejoice because your firmly rooted faith, renowned from the earliest times, still perseveres and bears fruit to our Lord Jesus Christ, who endured for our sins, facing even death, "whom God raised up, having loosed the birth pangs of Hades." "Though you have not seen Him, you believe in him with an inexpressible and glorious joy" (which many desire to experience), knowing that "by grace you are being saved, not because of works," but by the will of God through Jesus Christ.

“Therefore prepare for action and serve God in fear” and truth, leaving behind the empty and meaningless talk and the error of the crowd, and believing in “the One who raised our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead and gave Him glory” and a throne at His right hand. To Him all things in heaven and on earth were subjected, whom every breathing creature serves, who is coming to “judge the living and the dead,” for whose blood God will hold responsible those who are disobey Him. But the One who raised Him from the dead will raise us also, if we do His will and follow His commandments and love the things He loved, while avoiding every kind of unrighteousness, greed, love of money, slander and, false testimony, “not repaying evil for evil or insult for insult” or blow for blow or curse for curse, but instead remembering what the Lord said as He taught, “Do not judge, so that you may not be judged; forgive, and you will be forgiven; show mercy, so that you may be shown mercy; with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you;” and again, “blessed are the poor and those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of God.”

I am writing you these comments about righteousness, brothers, not on my own initiative but because you invited me to do so. For neither I nor anyone like me can keep pace with the wisdom of the blessed and glorious Paul. When he was with you in the presence of the people of that time, he accurately and reliably taught the word concerning the truth. And when he was absent he wrote you letters; if you study them carefully, you will be able to build yourselves up in the faith that has been given to you, “which is the mother of us all,” while hope follows and love for God and Christ and for our neighbor leads the way. For if anyone is occupied with these, that person has fulfilled the commandment of righteousness, for whoever has love is far from all sin.

“But the love of money is the beginning of all troubles.” Knowing, therefore, that we brought nothing into the world and cannot take anything out, let us arm ourselves with the weapons of righteousness, and let us first teach ourselves to follow the commandment of the Lord. Then instruct your wives to continue in the faith delivered to them and in love and purity, cherishing their own husbands in all fidelity and loving all others equally in all chastity, and to teach their children with instruction that leads to the fear of God. The widows must think soberly about the faith of the Lord and pray unceasingly for everyone and stay far away from all malicious talk, slander, false testimony, love of money, and any kind of evil, knowing that they are God's altar, and that all sacrifices are carefully inspected and nothing escapes Him, whether thoughts or intentions or secrets of the heart.

Knowing, therefore, that God is not mocked, we ought to live in a manner that is worthy of His commandment and glory. Similarly, deacons must be blameless in the presence of His righteousness, as servants of God and Christ and not of people.

They must not be slanderers, not insincere, not lovers of money, but self-controlled in every respect, compassionate, diligent, acting in accordance with the truth of the Lord, Who became a servant of all. If we please Him in this present world, we will receive the world to come as well, inasmuch as He promised that He will raise us from the dead and that if we prove to be citizens worthy of Him, we will also reign with Him – if, that is, we continue to believe.

Similarly, the younger men must be blameless in all things; they should be concerned about purity above all, reining themselves away from all evil. For it is good to be cut off from the sinful desires in the world, because every “sinful desire wages war against the spirit,” and “neither fornicators nor men who have sex with men (whether as the passive or as the active partner) will inherit the kingdom of God,” nor will those who do perverse things. Therefore one must keep away from all these things and be obedient to the presbyters and deacons as to God and Christ. The young women must maintain a pure and blameless conscience.

The presbyters, for their part, must be compassionate, merciful to all, turning back those who have gone astray, visiting all the sick, not neglecting a widow, orphan, or poor person, but “always aiming at what is honorable in the sight of God and of people.” They must avoid all anger, partiality, unjust judgment, staying far away from all love of money; they must be neither quick to believe things spoken against anyone nor harsh in judgment, knowing that we are all in debt with respect to sin. Therefore if we ask the Lord to forgive us, then we ourselves ought to forgive, for we are in full view of the eyes of the Lord and God, and we must all stand before the judgment seat of Christ, and each one must account for his own actions. So, then, let us serve Him with fear and all reverence, just as He Himself has commanded, as did the apostles who preached the gospel to us, and the prophets who announced in advance the coming of our Lord. Let us be eager with regard to what is good, and let us avoid those who tempt others to sin, and false brothers, and those who bear the name of the Lord hypocritically, who lead foolish people astray.

For everyone “who does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is antichrist;” and whoever does not acknowledge the testimony of the cross is of the devil; and whoever twists the sayings of the Lord to suit his own sinful desires and claims that there is neither resurrection nor judgment – well, that person is the firstborn of Satan. Therefore let us leave behind the worthless speculation of the crowd and their false teachings and let us return to the word delivered to us from the beginning; let us be self-controlled with respect to prayer and persevere in fasting, earnestly asking the all-seeing God to “lead us not into temptation,” because, as the Lord said, “the spirit is indeed willing, but the flesh is weak.”

Let us, therefore, hold steadfastly and unceasingly to our hope and the guarantee of our righteousness, who is Christ Jesus, who “bore our sins in His own body upon the tree,” “who committed no sin, and no deceit was found in His mouth”; instead, for our sakes He endured all things, in order that we might live in Him. Let us, therefore become imitators of His patient endurance, and if we should suffer for the sake of His name, let us glorify Him. For this is the example He set for us in His own person, and this is what we have believed.

I urge all of you, therefore, to obey the teaching about righteousness and to exercise unlimited endurance, like that which you saw with your own eyes not only in the blessed Ignatius and Zosimus and Rufus but also in others from your congregation and in Paul himself and the rest of the Apostles. Be assured that all these did not run in vain but with faith and righteousness, and that they are now in the place due them with the Lord, with whom they also suffered. For they did not love the present world but the One who died on our behalf and was raised by God for our sakes.

Stand fast, therefore, in these things and follow the example of the Lord, firm and immovable in the faith, loving the family of believers, cherishing one another, united in the truth, giving way to one another in the gentleness of the Lord, despising no one. When you are able to do good, do not put it off, because “charity delivers from death.” All of you be subject to one another, and maintain an irreproachable standard of conduct among the gentiles, so that you may be praised for your good deeds and the Lord may not be blasphemed because of you. But woe to the one through whom the name of the Lord is blasphemed. Therefore teach all to the self-control by which you yourselves live.

I am deeply grieved for Valens, who once was a presbyter among you, because he so fails to understand the office that was entrusted to him. I warn you, therefore: avoid love of money, and be pure and truthful. Avoid every kind of evil. But how can someone who is unable to exercise self-control in these matters preach self-control to anyone else? Anyone who does not avoid love of money will be polluted by idolatry and will be judged as one of the Gentiles, who are ignorant of the Lord's judgment. Or do we not know that the saints will judge the world, as Paul teaches? But I have not observed or heard of any such thing among you, in whose midst the blessed Paul labored, and who are praised in the beginning of his letter. For he boasts about you in all the churches – the ones that at that time had come to know the Lord, for we had not yet come to know Him. Therefore, brethren, I am deeply grieved for him and for his wife; may the Lord grant them true repentance. You, therefore, for your part must be reasonable in this matter, and do not regard such people as enemies, but, as sick and straying members,

restore them, in order that you may save your body in its entirety. For by doing this you build up one another.

For I am convinced that you are all well trained in the sacred scriptures and that nothing is hidden from you (something not granted to me.) Only, as it is said in these scriptures, “be angry but do not sin,” and “do not let the sun set on your anger.” Blessed is the one who remembers this, which I believe to be the case with you.

Now may the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the eternal High-priest Himself, the Son of God Jesus Christ, build you up in faith and truth and in all gentleness and in all freedom from anger and in forbearance and steadfastness and patient endurance and in purity; and may He give to you a share and a place among His saints, and to us with you, and to all those under heaven who will yet believe in our Lord and God Jesus Christ and in His Father Who raised him from the dead. Pray for all the saints. Pray also for kings and magistrates and rulers, and for those who persecute and hate you, and for all the enemies of the cross, so that your fruit may be evident among all people, so that you may be perfect in Him.

Both you and Ignatius have written me that if anyone is traveling to Syria, he should also take along your letter. This I will do, if I get a good opportunity, either myself or the one whom I will send as a representative, on your behalf as well as ours. We are sending to you the letters of Ignatius that were sent to us by him together with any others that we have in our possession, just as you requested. They are appended to this letter; you will be able to receive great benefit from them, for they deal with faith and patient endurance and every kind of spiritual growth that has to do with our Lord. As for Ignatius himself and those with him, if you learn anything more definite, let us know.

I am writing these things to you via Crescens, whom I recently commended to you and now commend again, for his conduct while with us has been blameless, and I believe that it will be likewise with you. And you will consider his sister to be commended when she comes to you. Farewell in the Lord Jesus Christ in grace, you and all those with you. Amen.

– St. Polycarp, *Letter to the Philipppians*

Holy Hieromartyr Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna

*Polycarp sacrificed himself for You O Word, bearing much fruit in an astonishing manner by being bound to the fire. * On the 23rd Polycarp was burned in the flames.*

Saint Polycarp was a close disciple of John the Theologian and Evangelist, together with Ignatius the God-bearer. He became Bishop of Smyrna after Saint Boukolos, who had prophesied concerning the episcopacy he was to receive. When

the impious Antoninus Pius (138-161) instituted a persecution against the Christians in the year 143, then this divine Polycarp was captured and brought before the proconsul, namely the second under the highest in command. Having boldly confessed Christ, he was perfected in martyrdom by fire, and so the blessed one received from the Lord the unfading crown of martyrdom.

This Saint also received from the Lord the grace of wonderworking. Thus before he became a Hierarch, through his prayers he filled the storerooms with grain of that woman who raised him, whose storerooms he had beforehand emptied and distributed for the needs of the poor brethren. After he became a Hierarch, he prevailed over a rapid fire, and through his prayers brought rain upon the earth during a time of drought, and he also prevented the rain from being too excessive. His Synaxis is celebrated in the most-holy Great Church. (*from johnsanidopoulos.com*)

Venerable Gorgonia as a Model for Our Lives

By Protopresbyter Fr. George Papavarnavas

Saint Gorgonia was from Cappadocia and lived in the fourth century. She was the fruit of holy parents, Gregory the Bishop of Nazianzus and Nonna, as well as the sister of Saint Gregory the Theologian and Saint Caesarius. She was a model wife and mother. From her marriage she bore five children, two boys and three girls, whom she raised "in the education and admonition of the Lord." For reasons only God knows she left this vain world prematurely, at the age of thirty-eight. Her brother Saint Gregory the Theologian in his funeral oration describes her God-pleasing life, which although brief, it was worthy of wonder and worthy of imitation. We will offer below some brief excerpts from this wonderful oration:

"In modesty she so greatly excelled, and so far surpassed, those of her own day, to say nothing of those of old time who have been illustrious for modesty, that, in regard to the two divisions of the life of all, that is, the married and the unmarried state, the latter being higher and more divine, though more difficult and dangerous, while the former is more humble and more safe, she was able to avoid the disadvantages of each, and to select and combine all that is best in both, namely, the elevation of the one and the security of the other, thus becoming modest without pride, blending the excellence of the married with that of the unmarried state, and proving that neither of them absolutely binds us to, or separates us from, God or the world (so that the one from its own nature must be utterly avoided, and the other altogether praised): but that it is mind which nobly presides over wedlock and maidenhood, and arranges and works upon them as the raw material of virtue under the master-hand of reason.

For though she had entered upon a carnal union, she was not therefore separated from the Spirit, nor, because her husband was her head, did she ignore her first Head: but, performing those few ministrations due to the world and nature, according to the will of the law of the flesh, or rather of Him who gave to the flesh these laws, she consecrated herself entirely to God. But what is most excellent and honorable, she also won over her husband to her side, and made of him a good fellow-servant, instead of an unreasonable master. And not only so, but she further made the fruit of her body, her children and her children's children, to be the fruit of her spirit, dedicating to God not her single soul, but the whole family and household, and making wedlock illustrious through her own acceptability in wedlock, and the fair harvest she had reaped thereby; presenting herself, as long as she lived, as an example to her offspring of all that was good, and when summoned hence, leaving her will behind her, as a silent exhortation to her house."

Her life and conduct give us the opportunity to highlight the following:

First, it is often said that God permits some people to live a few years, some many more, and others to reach deep old age. The first thing that can be done is to repeat the Apostle Paul's words: "Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor?" Truly, who can know the will of God? It can be added that God is continually working for the salvation of all mankind, and takes each of us "in our best time", that is, when we are ready. But there are times when one leaves the world at a particular moment, by their personal choice and not because God wants it. And this happens when we depart from God and the Church and do not want to do the will of God in our life.

Someone once asked Saint Porphyrios of Kavsokalyva if people departed this world according to the will of God, and he replied that it does not always happen this way, because when someone makes a bad use of their freedom, which is a divine gift, and doesn't allow God to act in their lives, then they bear the responsibility for what is happening, and God is not responsible for their choices and calamities. He went on to mention how at one time a young man visited him, and with the gifts granted to the Elder by God, he saw that the young man, if he traveled that night with his car, he would die because he was too tired to drive. Otherwise he would live many years and reach deep old age. He therefore insisted that he rest there and leave the next day in the morning. However, despite the persistent exhortations and petitions of the Saint he did not change his decision and, unfortunately, had a tragic end. And Saint Porphyrios would say that in this instance God did not "take" him, but he "left" on his own. Therefore, they who love God and obey His commandments, are blessed, because the will of God is what will turn out to be for the best of someone.

Wise Solomon stresses that honorable old age has nothing to do with living many years, but with prudence and a virtuous life. "But wisdom is the gray hair unto men, and an unspotted life is old age." After all, time is a gift of God to people in order to prepare them for eternity. And when they are ready, rather very much ready, then "speedily was he taken away, lest that wickedness should alter his understanding, or deceit beguile his soul." Those, however, who have no hope in God and invest in that which is temporal, while denying the eternal, think they are "lucky" for living so many years. Yet no matter how many years someone lives upon the earth, before eternity it is like a drop in the ocean. Unfortunately, we do not realize that our lives are temporary, but life is eternal. Life is substantial. Christ is life, and whoever loves Him and struggles to apply His commandments, such will learn to overcome their daily difficulties and various temptations and in this way will truly rejoice in their lives.

Second, the begetting of children in marriage is indeed an important event. More important, however, is raising them and guiding them in such a way so that they acquire the Grace of God and become "children of the light" and "full of grace". In other words, to acquire spiritual eyes to be able to see that which is invisible and eternal, as opposed to what is visible and temporal. Although physical sight is important, flies and mosquitoes also have such sight. Incomparably higher are the eyes of the soul, by which we can see God, and when this happens, then we are like the angels, according to Saint Anthony the Great, who, upon meeting a theologian in Alexandria named Didymus who was physically blind, said to him: "Didymus, let not the loss of your physical eyes distress you, for you are deprived of such eyes merely as they are the common possession of mosquitoes and flies; rather rejoice that you have eyes such as angels see with, by which the Deity himself is discerned, and his light comprehended."

One is fulfilled who is "full of the Holy Spirit" and because of this their nous is enlightened, "by which the Deity himself is discerned, and his light comprehended." (*from johnsanidopoulos.com*)

Also Commemorated Today

New Hieromartyrs Alexis, Nicholas priests and Martyr Sergius (1938).

New Hieromartyrs [Maximus](#), Bishop of Serpukhov, Hieromonks Seraphim and Cronid, Prot priest Alexander, priest Nicholas, and 12 others (1931)

Venerable [Polycarp](#), hegumen, of Briansk (1620-21 (1492 or 1499 bhk)).

Venerables [John](#), Antioch, Antoninus, Moses, [Zebinas](#), Polychronius, Moses, and Damian, ascetics of the Syrian desert (5th c.).

Venerable [Alexander](#), founder of the order of the Unsleping Ones (430).

Venerable [Moses](#), monk, of White Lake (1480).

Venerable [Damian](#) of Esphigmenou, Mt. Athos (1280) (Greek).

New Monk-martyr [Damian](#) the New of Philotheou, who suffered at Larissa (1568)
 St. [John](#) the Harvester of Stylos in Calabria (11th c.).
 Venerable Cosmas of Zographou, Mt. Athos (1281).
 New Hieromartyr [Lazarus](#) of the Peloponnese (1618).
 St. [Nazarius](#), abbot of Valaam (1809).
 St. [Mildburga](#) (Milburgh), abbess of Much Wenlock.. (722) (England)
 Martyr [Clement](#) (Greek).
 Martyr [Thea](#) (Greek).
 St. [Jurmin](#) ([Germin](#)), prince of East Anglia, brother of St. Etheldreda (653)
 St. [Boswell](#) (Boisil), prior of Melrose (ca. 661)
 St. [Felix](#) of Brescia, bishop (c. 650)
 St. [Florentius](#) of Seville (c. 485) (Spain)
 Virgin-martyr [Martha](#) of Astorga (251) (Spain)
 St. [Medrald](#) (Mérald, Méraut), abbot of Vendôme (c. 850) (France)
 St. [Polycarp](#), priest in Rome (c. 300)
 St. [Romana](#) of Rome, virgin anchoress (324)
 Martyrs [Syncrotas](#), Antigonus, Rutilus, Libius, Senerotas & Rogatianus at Syrmium (4th c.)
 St. [Willigis](#) (Willigise), archbishop of Mainz (1011) (Germany)
 St. Madeg of Brittany
 St. Finnian of Ireland, founder of Clonard (6th c)
 St. Celsus of Trier, bishop (c. 150) (finding of his relics; reposed Jan 4)
 Confessor Lazarus of Constantinople, iconographer (860) (translation Oct 17?)

Social Team for March 2 – Light Fare Only

Feel free to bring something to share (even something more substantial, if you wish; it is, after all, the last day we may partake of eggs and dairy products until Pascha. Thank you!



Notice from John Janowiak Regarding the Passing of His Mother Helen

Last month, my mother, Helen Pavlik Janowiak, reposed in the Lord at the age of 97 years, 8 months and 1 week. Due to fear of the COVID virus, she had not been physically in church for almost 5 years, though we faithfully attended services online from the American Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Diocese cathedral in Johnstown, Pennsylvania. There will be a viewing on Friday, February 28th, 2025 from 2pm to 4pm with panakhida at 2:30 at Lee Funeral Home (301-868-0900), located at 6633



Old Alexandria Ferry Road, Clinton, Maryland 20735. It may be that despite the long-elapsed time since anyone at St. Thomas Orthodox Church had seen or spoken with her or me, you may remember us and desire to pay your last respects. It will be most appreciated by the family if we could give Mom well-attended last rites. If you are unable to be with us for her wake, we ask you fervently to entreat the Heavenly Father, Our Lord and God and Savior Jesus Christ, and the All-Holy, Pure and Life-Giving Spirit for the remission of all her sins and Memory Eternal/Vichnaja Pamjat in the Kingdom of Heaven. We also ask you to remember us, her children Linda and John, granddaughter Helen, great-grandson Luke and great-granddaughter Mia, her younger brother Nicholas (thankfully still with us at age 94) and her nieces and nephews in your prayers. Her interment at Arlington National Cemetery will be towards the end of the summer, and will probably be preceded by a funeral service. If inclined to join the family at that time, please call me at 240-766-9904 (preferred number) or 240-229-3783 (if no answer, please leave a voicemail) or email at janow1234@yahoo.com.

Sincere thanks to our Orthodox brothers and sisters in Christ,
John Janowiak

 <h1 style="text-align: center;">SUNDAY OF ORTHODOXY PAN-ORTHODOX VESPERS</h1>		
 <p>Festal Homily Offered by Metropolitan Tikhon of the Orthodox Church in America</p>	 <p>His Eminence Metropolitan Apostolos of New Jersey</p>	 <p>His Grace Bishop Thomas of Oakland, Charleston, and the Mid-Atlantic</p>
<p>Sunday, March 9, 2025 5 P.M.</p>	<p>St. Katherine Greek Orthodox Church 3149 Glen Carlyn Road Falls Church, VA 22041 (703) 671-1515</p>	<p>DINNER RECEPTION TO FOLLOW</p>

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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, 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. Nectarios & Ia, Mother Virginia Marie & the Carmelite Nuns of Port Tobacco, the suffering people of Ukraine & the Holy Land, the newly reposed handmaiden of God Helen P. Janowiak, and those in need of our prayers. (Please advise Fr. Joseph of changes.) (Please advise Fr. Joseph of changes.)