

SOBORNOST

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American Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Diocese

*ECUMENICAL PATRIARCHATE
OF CONSTANTINOPLE*

SERVICES

Wednesdays in Great Lent:
Liturgy of Presanctified
Gifts 6 PM

Saturday: Confession 4:30 PM
Vespers 5 PM

Sunday: Matins 8:45 AM

Sunday School 9:30 AM | Divine Liturgy 10 AM

March 30, 2025 – 4th Sunday in Great Lent (Saint John Climacus of Sinai)



In the icon of the Ladder of Divine Ascent, we only see the image of Christ at the very top, upon the last step (of love); but, this does not mean that Christ is not with us at every step. It is true that we only see the *“light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ”* in its full, unmediated vision, at the height of the ladder’s summit: divine love and union with God—that is, only after we have struggled long and hard, co-operating with God, and His grace has freed us from sin and passion; and He has made to grow within us the fullness of His love, making us to see Him within us in the fullness of His glory.

Even so, Christ is also the Foundation of our whole life and of our ascent into Him; Christ Himself is the Divine Ladder and every Step thereon; He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life; He is every virtue; for, every virtue that may be found in us, is a living and personal quality of Christ which dwells and acts within us; when we acquire virtue, we acquire Christ, we live in Christ, and He lives in us.

King Solomon confesses: *“The heart of the upright seeks a perception”*, that is, a sensation, a conscious, heart-felt feeling...of what? Of the indwelling eternal life of the Trinity, the Personal God.

However, to awake into this perception and knowledge of God—and in order for us to be resurrected into this true life found in God—we must suffer crucifixion, pain, dying, death.

A great theologian of our times, Fr. Dmitri Staniloae, a disciple of the holy and blessed Romanian Elder Cleopa, has this say:

“There are...two deaths: the first is produced by sin and is the death of our nature (soul and body). The second is a death like Christ’s, which is the death of sin and the death of death which is produced by sin.

“The death of our nature...does not come only at the final moment; rather, it nibbles away for a long time like a worm. So too, the death of sin and death is not something momentary, but must be prepared for through long ascetical mortification.

“Asceticism is a life-giving mortification, as St. Symeon the New Theologian calls it. Asceticism is the gradual slaying of sin and all tendencies toward it.

“According to the current use of the word, asceticism has a negative connotation...This is because the sinful tendencies of our nature, the habitual things that lead to its death, have come to be considered as the positive side of life...

“In reality, asceticism has a positive purpose: it seeks the fortification of our nature, and its liberation from the worms of sin that gnaw at it and hasten its ruin...

“The slaying of this weakness of death that has penetrated our nature, and fortifying it through asceticism, is possible by the mortification and life-creating death of Jesus Christ...

“Our asceticism is a gradual death with Christ...it is not only an imitation of Christ (as in the West), but a heroic mortification with Christ and in Christ. We are united with Christ already in the prolonged process of our mortification even before the culminating state of mystical union with Him [in love, upon the heights of the Ladder]. We are not only raised with Christ, but we also die with Him. We cannot be resurrected with Christ if we do not first die with Him.

“The resurrection with Christ follows as a continuation of death, not as a change in direction. It is true that, in union with Christ in death, His presence is not visible; but, this is because while the old man dies gradually within us, Christ also dies with us. His death is also a humbling, an eclipse of His glory.

“Christ isn’t seen in the state of mortification, but He is present, and it is known that He is. Now the establishment of our certainty regarding His presence in us, by faith and not by sight, makes clear once again the heroic character of our ascetic struggle.”

There is great comfort to be found here. What he is saying is that Christ is with us, every step of the way; whether we are consoled, at peace, or exalted above the passions; or whether we are afflicted, or suffering great temptations, agonizing dryness of soul, dark thoughts, and the painful struggle with sin...no matter where we are at, Christ is there, and He is with us; God is with us!

He rejoices with us, He suffers with us; in fact, we can say that He rejoices more in our joy than we do, and He suffers more in our sufferings than we do. How is this? Because He is the perfect man, fully alive, fully sensible, a man full of sympathetic love, a suffering love, a divine love.

Until God revealed Himself in our flesh, human kind could not understand this love of God in its fullness. But now, what do we see? Our God is born from the Virgin as a tiny babe; He comes forth and eats, drinks and sleeps like a man, He suffers and dies like a man—not just in appearance, but in truth and deed.

His divine and all-pure soul descended into that dark abyss of spiritual death, hades, where souls dwell in hopelessness. He came there, and He still comes there: whenever He enters our weary, dark and deadened hearts.

Then, He takes us by the hand and He lifts us up with Himself, and in Himself. Who could have asked for this? This is exactly what we see today in the Gospel: A man brings his son to Christ, saying that he is afflicted with an unclean demon who casts him into fire and water, and has stricken him with muteness and deafness.

What is this? This is exactly an image of our corrupted state. The demons, by our weakness and allowance, have come to dwell in us, not necessarily as full-blown demonic-possession, but in a moral sense: we are possessed by the burning flames of passion and the chilling waters of insensibility; and we are like deaf and mute men who cannot comprehend what is happening to us, what we should do, or how to express our need and ask for help.

Whoever seeks to war against his fallen state cannot but help to confront this. This is a truly overwhelming experience. It is frightening, lonely, dry, hopeless, dark and painful. But the person who does not confront this is worse off than the one who does, because sin is still lurking hidden within while he thinks he is fine.

What happens though? Christ comes, He confronts the demons, the passions, our many sins; He commands them to depart from us—but only after we are allowed to be tried to the extremity of our strength and patience, or even beyond it. His

superabundant compassion moves Him to suffer with us, and He cries out: “*O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you; how long shall I put up with you?*”

Christ commands the demons to depart; but they do not depart without a fight, nor do they leave quietly; but they rend, tear and torment. This is the same with the one who strives against evil in his own self.

What happens next? The boy falls down as one dead, in so much that many exclaim: “*He is dead*”. When Christ cuts out our sins, we are pained by this, just as a man who has had a large and deadly tumor growing on him for a long time; when it comes time to remove it, it is painful, because it has been so closely knit to him, as if it was always a natural part of him.

We become like dead men when sin departs from us. Why? Because sinful ways of thinking, feeling and acting have grown old with us, and have become the mainstay of our lives, they have become our strength and the foundation of our existence. Therefore, when these evil things depart, we feel dead, as if the end has come. Truly, the end *has* come, but not for us, but for our sinful selves.

New life is just dawning, just beginning to appear. What happened with the possessed boy after he fell down as one dead? Christ “*took him by the hand, and lifted him up*” and the boy arose!

This is a symbol of our resurrection in Christ. It is not just a coincidence that after this healing, Christ began to teach His disciples, saying: “*The Son of Man is delivered into the hands of men, and they shall kill Him, and after He is killed, He shall rise on the third day.*” This death and resurrection of Christ is our new life.

St. Nikolai Velimirovich says that it is a greater miracle to cast out demons from a man than to raise the dead. And furthermore, he says that to be possessed by sin and passion is worse than to be possessed by demons. This is a frightful truth!

But, if despite our poor state and our disbelief we yet cry out in desperation: “*I believe, O Lord, help my unbelief*”, then we shall see the greatest miracle take place, not over there, not long ago, but here, now, within our very selves.

What is this miracle, it is the life-giving resurrection of our souls by Christ, a deliverance from sins that have tormented us for a whole lifetime; it is the miracle of God’s incomprehensible and boundless power of loving-compassion which descends upon us, within us, casting out all evil, healing us, restoring us, granting us not only forgiveness from our past sins, but complete freedom from them; and not only this, but filling us completely with Himself, His love, grace, peace, joy and life, His eternal life.

St. John of Karpathos points out: *“When already well advanced in years, David offered thanks to God for choosing him, and he said this about the final fruits of God's blessing: ‘Now has Your servant found his own heart, so as to offer this prayer’ (2 Sam. 7:27. LXX). This he said to teach us that a great effort and much time are needed in prayer, before through struggle we can reach a state in which our mind is no longer troubled, and so attain the inward heaven of the heart where Jesus dwells. As the Apostle says, ‘Do you not know that Jesus Christ dwells within you?’ (cf. 2 Cor. 13:5).”*

We do not adhere to a dead moralism. We do not serve a dead god. We do not believe in cheap and quick techniques that will grant us supposed enlightenment and peace. No! We believe in the Living and Personal God: the All-Loving Father, the Most-Humble Son, and the Life-Giving Spirit.

We cannot force God beyond what He judges to be right for us at any given time; we cannot trick Him, or overstep our boundaries, or pry proudly into divine things with our feeble intellect, while casting aside constant dependence upon God through humility and prayer.

Surely, we are called to ascend to Him, even as St. John of the Ladder cries out: *“Ascend brothers, ascend eagerly...let us hasten until we attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of God, unto a perfect man, to the measure of the fullness of the stature of Christ”*; although this is said to us, it is tempered by the spiritual law that Abba Isaac points out: *“Do not try to make your course run more quickly than the divine will wishes; do not be in such a hurry that you try to get ahead of the providence which guides you—not that I am saying that you should not be eager.”*

This eagerness of spirit, which both saints speak about, is that good intention within us which desires to live fully in God. This small intention is, according to even the most ascetic saints, the only thing we can really offer to God for our salvation.

St. John Climacus, within the first step of his Ladder, on heroic renunciation of the world, says this: *“Let us who are weak and passionate have the courage to offer our infirmity and natural weakness to Christ with unhesitating faith, and confess it to Him; and we shall be certain to obtain His help, even beyond our worth, if only we continually plunge to the depth of humility.”*

Man offers, God purifies! Man seeks, God gives! Man weeps, God saves! Man falls, God lifts up! Man sins, God heals! Man falls again, God swiftly saves again! Man despairs, God gladdens and consoles! Man kills himself by sin, but God raises the dead, casts out demons and completely destroys deadly passions and sins.

“What God is as great as our God? Our God is He Who works wonders!” He alone makes all things out of nothing! He alone makes the Virgin a Mother, God a Man, man a god, earth into heaven! He alone makes most pure angels out of worldly and carnal men! He alone makes life out of death!

He alone makes fornicators into virgins; drunkards into sober, watchful and prayerful contemplatives; cursing mouths into theologizing rivers of most beautiful and gracious hymnody! He alone makes spiteful men into most meek and loving doves!

Come, let us fall down before this very God, in body, mind and all our soul; and let us weep and cry aloud unto Him, constantly calling upon the all-sweet name of the Lord Jesus, Who has created us, and Who has promised to re-create us, unto the eternal glory and praise of Father, Son and Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto the ages of ages! Amen. *(from holycross.org)*

Today’s Epistle Lesson – St. Paul’s Letter to the Hebrews 4:14-5:6 EOB

Brethren, Since we have such a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold on firmly to our confession. Certainly, we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our infirmities, but one who has been tempted in all things just as we are, yet without sin. Therefore, let us approach the throne of grace with boldness, so that we may receive mercy and find grace for assistance in time of need.

Every high priest is selected from among men and is appointed for their sake in matters pertaining to God, so that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for [their] sins. The high priest can deal gently with those who are ignorant and going astray since he himself is also subject to weakness. Because of this, he must offer sacrifices for the sins of the people, as well as for himself. Moreover, nobody assumes this honor by himself but one is called by God, just as Aaron was. Likewise, Christ did not glorify himself to be made a high priest, but it was God who said to him: “You are my Son: Today I have become your father.” As he says also in another place: “You are a priest forever, According to the order of Melchizedek.”

Today’s Gospel Lesson – Saint Mark 8:34-9:1 EOB

At that time, Jesus called the multitude to himself with his disciples and said to them, “Whoever wants to come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me. Indeed, whoever wants to save his life will lose it; and whoever will lose his life for my sake and for the sake of the Good News will save it. What does it profit if someone, to gain the whole world, loses his life? For what will someone give in exchange for his life? Whoever will be ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man also will be

ashamed of when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.” Jesus said to them, “Amen, I tell you that there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the Kingdom of God come with power.”

A Word From the Holy Fathers

Today, beloved brothers and sisters, was read the Gospel passage from the Evangelist Mark on how a father asked Jesus Christ to heal his son, a deaf and dumb child who was possessed, by casting out the evil spirit who was the reason the child was deaf and dumb. “Deaf and dumb spirit,” said the Lord to the impure one, “I command you, come out of him and enter him no more.” Then the spirit cried out, convulsed him greatly, and came out of him. And he became as one dead, so that many said, “He is dead.” But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up, and he arose (Mark 9:25-27). But see how evil was the spirit who tormented the child. His father told the Lord how wherever it seizes him, it throws him down; he foams at the mouth, gnashes his teeth, and becomes rigid (Mark 9:18). This happened also at the time when the father brought his son to the Savior. And when the Lord asked the father, as if he did not already know, even though, as God, He knows all, “How long has this been happening to him?” And he said, “From childhood. And often he has thrown him both into the fire and into the water to destroy him,” and he asked the Lord to have compassion on him and his son, and to help them, if He can do anything. Jesus told him: “If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes.” And the unfortunate father of little faith cried out with tears “Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!” (Mark 9:21-24).

Do you see what power the Lord attributes to faith and to the one who believes? “All things are possible to him who believes,” He says. The one who believes is able to cast out demons and to heal all kinds of diseases. And how powerless and miserable is the unbeliever! He cannot even control himself, and cannot overcome his own sins, but as a slave he serves them and is tormented by them. And as the unfortunate father initially brought his possessed son to the Apostles and they were not able to expel this demon from him, they asked the Lord in private why they were not able to expel him. The Lord answered them: “This kind can come out by nothing but prayer and fasting” (Mark 9:29). Such is the Lord's praise for prayer and fasting. This is the evangelical basis for fasting. How could those who call themselves followers of the Gospel have expelled fasting from our common life, as if it was unnecessary?! Is it not because in our days passions and iniquity and demonic possessions of all kinds have multiplied, so much so that some Christians have broken their ties with the Church and have renounced prayer and fasting as something superfluous? And they live like dumb beasts, guided solely by their various lusts, while others, due to their malice, foam at the mouth like men truly

possessed, intent on committing every evil deed: murder, suicide, arson, placing mines, causing explosions, and so on.

Yes, beloved brothers and sisters, such people have reached such a terrible frenzy precisely because of their unbelief, intemperance, impurity, and from all of the ruinous consequences of this unbelief. The meek faith of the Gospel does not preach murder, regicide, placing mines, and causing explosions; it says: "Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God," and it is necessary to be subject unto them "not only because of wrath but also for conscience's sake" (Rom. 13:1, 5), and it commands us to pray "for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence" (1 Tim. 2:2). Lord, illumine the eyes of the hearts, blinded with malice, of these miserable possessed people of our unfortunate times, who rise up against the authority appointed by God, let them know what a terrible abyss they dig under their own selves, and unto what a terrible hellish pit they are about to plunge.

In ancient, pre-Christian times, some unfortunate Hebrews revolted against the established authority, against Moses and Aaron, reproaching them for an alleged love of power, only murmuring against them; and what came of it, what was God's punishment? The earth opened up underneath them, and they went down alive into the pit of hell together with their families, while others, not as guilty as those, were consumed by a fire that came from the temple (Num. 16:1-35). See what a terrible sin it is to revolt against those in authority! What then awaits our nihilists and terrorists? Baptized people, Christians, committing such acts of violence, such murders and suicides, such satanic villainy! Oh, why were they born? Why did they not perish in their mother's womb? It would have been better had they never been born. To trample so ungratefully, viciously, madly on God's gifts: on the grace of baptism, of chrismation, of communion of the Lord's Body and Blood, is something truly terrible! Oh, hapless parents of such children! What shame they must suffer!

Brother and sisters! Let us hold onto the faith of God's Church wholeheartedly, onto this unique saving ark that saves us from the fiery universal flood that will befall all transgressors in due time. Let us hold onto the holy precepts of the Church, leading us to salvation, let us observe unwaveringly fasting and prayer, and be zealous to serve God. "The devil," the enemy of our salvation, does not sleep, but "walks about like a roaring lion" around us, "seeking whom he may devour" (1 Pet. 5:8), and how many has he already devoured! Fasting and prayer observed with zeal, with humility, with faith and love, are powerful weapons against the devil and against all the passions that war within us. Amen.

– St. John of Kronstadt

Homilies on the Visitation of the Theotokos with Elizabeth

by Archpriest Rodion Putyatin

"And Zechariah entered the house and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby in her womb leaped; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit" (Luke 1:40-41). The Most Holy Virgin Mary, soon after the angels told Her about the birth of the Son of God, went to the city of Judah to visit her relative Elizabeth, the wife of the righteous Zechariah. And this is what happened in Zechariah's house with Her arrival. When She entered the house and greeted Elizabeth, immediately the baby in Elizabeth's womb leaped joyfully, and she was filled with the Holy Spirit. You see, listeners, how from the presence and greeting of She who is full of grace the one welcoming was filled with God's grace. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby in her womb leaped; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit.

Such is the grace of the Holy Spirit: from one it can be communicated and transferred to another. From a grace-filled, pure, holy person, the place where they are is filled with purity, holiness, and grace. The grace of God, the invisible power of God, is visibly manifested and reflected in the appearance of a grace-filled person: it shines in their eyes, is heard in their words, is visible in their face; they who are grace-filled breathe, one might say, grace, and from the garments of the grace-filled comes grace. And therefore, blessed is the house in which there is at least one good, pure, and grace-filled person. Just as from fragrant incense, located in one place, a fragrance spreads throughout the whole house; just as from one burning candle the whole room is illuminated with light, so from one virtuous, grace-filled person, grace spreads its fragrance throughout the whole house and its light shines on everyone. The grace of God is so easily communicated!

Unfortunately, vices are also easily communicated. And vices conveniently and easily pass from one person to another; from the perverse the most innocent can become infected with vices. No matter how hidden a vice may be, it is certainly revealed and manifested in the appearance of the perverse one. He is wicked and breathes a wicked stench, and from his clothes comes a wicked stench. The very air where the wicked live is filled with a perverse stench. And therefore it is a great misfortune for a house when there is at least one person in it who indulges in vices. The perverse, like fire, must be fled; like an infection, feared. Being with a perverse person for a long time and communicating often is dangerous. The most contagious and infectious disease is vices. May the Lord God save us from friendship and cohabitation with perverse people! Christian listener! Have an icon of the Mother of God in your house where you live, be sure to have it. With Her presence, the grace of God will dwell in your home. Where there is an icon of grace, there is grace. Amen.

"My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior" (Lk. 1:46-47). Beginning this sermon to you with the song of the Mother of God, I do not think, listeners, that you will get bored with it: this is the kind of song that is never boring to repeat; it is filled with such joy that even in the most bitter moments you will rejoice in spirit, if only you have the strength to sing it. So now we rejoice when we sing this song. What joy was the heart of the Most Holy Virgin Mary filled with when She sang this song for the first time? It is not for our unclean heart to feel this joy: only the Angels of God can understand its loftiness.

But here, listeners, is another song that has now come to my mind, a song that the Holy Church sings on behalf of the Most Holy Virgin Mary. Ah, just remembering this song fills my heart with sorrow! Listen to it: "Woe is me, O my Child! Woe is me, Light of mine eyes and beloved Fruit of my womb!..." You don't need to tell to whom this lamentable song was addressed: this is how the Mother of God cried when she stood before the lifeless body of Her Son and God. Oh, who will not be struck with sorrow by this mournful song? What sorrow the heart of the Mother of God was filled with when She grieved so much! It is not for our hearts to know this sorrow; its depth could only be felt by those who stood at the cross of the deceased Lord Jesus.

So, pious listeners, in this life the Mother of God suffered a lot. Can we live here in such a way that we can all rejoice and have fun? No, we also need to grieve and suffer; without sorrow and suffering no one can enter the Kingdom of Heaven. After the joy of the Annunciation, the Mother of God saw few joys in her life. And you, Christian, after joy, expect some kind of sorrow, be sure to wait, for it will certainly come, for it is saving for you. This is the law of God's Providence for those seeking salvation: after joy there will certainly be sorrow. This is God's order in visible nature: after the bucket comes bad weather.

What does this mean? Why does God want us to experience so much grief in life? God has arranged everything wisely, and everything is for our salvation, everything is for our blessing.

God does not allow us to have much joy on earth, so that we do not become too attached to earthly things. God often sends us sorrows in life, so that it is not too difficult for us to part with life. God does not allow us to have much fun on earth, so that we can live more joyfully in Heaven. Yes, it's fun in Heaven. But we will have even more fun there when here on earth we suffer more, cry, grieve for the sake of the Lord. Our present temporary sorrow prepares for us eternal joy in Heaven; our present sorrow is the seed of our future joy. And therefore, the more sorrows and griefs someone endures for the sake of salvation, the more consolation and joys he will have there. It's hard to grieve in life, it's tiresome to work, but there it will be fun to rejoice, there it will be sweet to rest.

Queen of Heaven! We are ready to beg You to send us more troubles and sorrows, when they are so necessary and saving for us. But, Mother of God, You know, You have experienced how difficult it is to be in poverty and sorrow, and therefore we pray to You, Joy of all who mourn, save us from troubles and sorrows. And if we really need troubles and sorrows, if they are inevitable, then help us to patiently endure these troubles and sorrows. Amen.

Venerable Father John, the author of the Ladder

*You diligently ascended the ladder Father;
shining with the virtues, you reached as far as
the heavens. On the thirtieth John rejoiced to be
set free.*

Our Venerable Father John lived during the reign of Emperor Justin II the Younger (565-574), nephew of Emperor Justinian. When he became sixteen years old, and received experience in general and external wisdom, then he offered himself to God as a most sacred sacrifice. Therefore he went up to Mount Sinai, and passed his life subject under an elder. When he attained nineteen years of age, he withdrew from his subjugation, and entered the arena of hesychia, far from the Kyriakon of the Skete at Sinai, about five miles away, at a place called Tholas.

There the renowned man lived for forty entire years, daily inflamed with burning eros and the fire of love for God. He would eat from all the foods allowed to be eaten by monastics, yet he ate little. He ate from all these foods because, being discerning, all-wisely he struck at the horn of arrogance, which he thought would trouble him if he ate, as we are informed by the other monks.

How is it possible to narrate the streams of tears that ran from the eyes of this blessed man? He slept very little, as much as needed so that he would not harm his mind from extravagant vigilance. The entire path of his life was spent in perpetual and ever-flowing prayer, and incomparable eros towards God. Having therefore acquired every virtue, and entered a beautiful state, for this reason he was made worthy to receive from God great theoria, and the gift of foresight. Wherefore when his disciple fell asleep underneath a certain rock, which was about to fall on him and crush him, the Saint had foreknowledge of this through the Holy Spirit while sitting in his cell, and appeared in the dream of his disciple, waking him from sleep, and redeeming him from death. Having attained the pinnacle of virtue,



and becoming Abbot of the Monastery at Mount Sinai, he departed this temporary life, and entered the eternal one. Before his death he wrote the all-wise book of the thirty divine and spiritual ascents, namely the rungs of the ladder, which is why it is called the *Ladder*. (from johnsanidopoulos.com)

Blessed Matrenushka the Barefooted of St. Petersburg, the Fool for Christ

Matrona (Matrenushka) Petrovna Mylnikova was born in 1814 to a peasant family in the Kostroma province. Her parents Peter and Agafia also had three sons named Macarius, Allexander and Ivan. Nothing is known about her childhood except that she was never educated.

She married Egor Mylnikov, a tradesman of the city of Kostroma. The family had their own house and grocery store. During the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-1878 her husband was drafted into the army, and Matronushka went with him to the front where she served as a nurse. Even then, her humble soul, which received from God a great gift of compassion, was fully manifested. She helped everyone as she could, distributing all her meager belongings to poor soldiers.

After her husband died in the war, Matronushka decided to devote her whole life to God. After the war ended, Matronushka returned to Kostroma, sold the property, distributed the money to the poor and went on a pilgrimage throughout Russia and Palestine, taking a vow of foolishness for the sake of Christ. From that moment until her death (33 years later) she went about only barefoot. Even in winter, Matronushka wore light summer clothes, always white.

Matronushka spent the last 30 years of her life in St. Petersburg. She lived first on the Petersburg side, and then 16 years at the Chapel of the Mother of God “Joy of All Who Sorrow” at Shlisselburgsky Avenue. Barefoot in winter and summer, in a light white robe, with a staff in her hand, she often prayed at the Sorrowful Chapel. In the 1880s, she took monastic vows under the name of Maria.

Several thousand people visited the blessed Matronushka every year, asking for her prayers to help in illnesses, the sorrows of everyday life and a wide variety of needs. She radiated love and warmth, was perspicacious, and her prayers, by the will of the Lord, had great power. She received everyone, consoled them, gave advice, prayed with the afflicted. Through her prayers, alcoholics got rid of their serious illness; many descriptions of cases of miraculous healings have been preserved. People who had any serious need received what was necessary by praying to God with her. Matronushka warned many people of imminent danger. They carefully listened to her words.

Sometimes receiving large funds as a gift, Matronushka immediately distributed them to the destitute poor, sent donations to poor parishes and monasteries, and also bought the Gospels and icons that blessed people who came to her.

The discerning old woman helped people with her prayers, warned against impending misfortunes, and opened the Providence of God to many. High-ranking loyal subjects of the sovereign, going to places covered by epidemics and wars, came to her. The old woman sprinkled everyone with holy water, blessed with an icon, and amid mortal danger, they remained unharmed. But sometimes the blessed old woman refused to pray for someone's health, indicating instead the day of the impending death of the patient.

From the beginning of 1909, Matronushka began to prepare for death. Every Sunday during the last two years of her life, she partook of the Holy Eucharist and was anointed with Holy Unction several times. In early March 1911, she felt very unwell and was weakening. Towards the end of the month, the old woman said: "I will leave you together with water and ice."

The old woman quietly departed on March 30, 1911, when the ice drift began on the Neva. The funeral day for Matronushka coincided with Palm Sunday. It is noteworthy that the liturgy, on the day of the funeral, was performed by priest Pyotr Skipterov, who became the first Petrograd new martyr a few years later.

It is known that Matronushka was highly revered by the royal family. In 1901 Empress Alexandra Feodorovna gave birth to her fourth daughter, Anastasia, and there was a fear by Tsar Nicholas II and the Empress that he would not have an heir. Matronushka the Barefooted was the first of those renowned for their prophetic gift to be brought to the palace and over the course of several days they were assured through her prophetic gift that they would receive a male heir. Empress Alexandra Feodorovna, upon learning of the death of the blessed old woman, cried for a long time. By her order, a wreath was sent to the grave. Known photographer Karl Bulla and the poet Anna Akhmatova also revered Matronushka.

About 25,000 people gathered for the funeral of the blessed old woman Matronushka. The farewell words of Archimandrite Alexander were touching: "... The Lord sets aside such lamps that arouse among the people a love for the Orthodox Church.... We will pray in the hope that there, in the other world, we will be not far from this woman who has risen to such a spiritual height. At the height of the Heavenly Throne, do not forget us, Matronushka, with your prayers."

They buried her at the at the Chapel of the Mother of God "Joy of All Who Sorrow". In Soviet times, this chapel was destroyed, and the grave of the blessed Matronushka was lost. In the 1990s, the surviving chapel turned into a church, which became the courtyard of the Zelenetsk Holy Trinity Monastery.

In 1997, the grave of the blessed Matronushka the Barefooted was found and restored, and near her on Sundays funeral services are performed. Newly believing people got the opportunity to come to the blessed old woman to ask her for help through her intercessions. The Matronushka does not reject anyone, she prays for everyone, and helps everyone as much as possible, as testified by her numerous miracles. (*from johnsanidopoulos.com*)

Also Commemorated Today

Feast of the [Visitation](#) of the Theotokos to St. Elizabeth

St. [Sophronius](#), bishop of Irkutsk (1771).

Prophet [Joad](#) (Joel) (I Kings 13:11 -10th c. BC) who dwelt in Bethel.

Holy Apostles [Sosthenes](#), [Apollon](#), [Cephas](#), [Caesar](#), and [Epaphroditus](#), of the Seventy (1st c.).

Holy Martyr [Victor](#) of Thessaloniki and 11 companions (306)

The [Negligent Monk](#) Who Died Joyfully Because He Did Not Condemn Anyone

St. [Eubula](#), mother of St. Panteleimon (304).

Venerable [John](#) the Silent of St. Sabbas monastery, bishop of Colonia (558).

Venerable [Zosimas](#), bishop of Syracuse (662).

St. [John](#) II, patriarch of Jerusalem (417).

St. [Gabriel](#), Archbishop of Chisinau and Hotin (1821)

Hieromartyr [Zacharias](#), bishop of Corinth (1684).

St. [Osburga](#) (Osburgh) of Coventry, virgin and abbess (1015) (Celtic & British).

Translation of the relics of Martyr-King Edmund of East Anglia (Celtic & British).

Venerable [John](#) of [the Well](#) (John the Hermit) of Cilicia with Ven. Pharmuthius & Chrysios (4th c.).

St. [Rule](#) (Regulus, Riaghai), abbot of St. Andrews (4th? c.) (also Oct 17)

St. [Regulus](#) (Rieul), bishop of Senlis (and Arles) (c. 260)(France)

St. [Fergus](#) (Fergustus, Fergusius), bishop of Downpatrick (6th c.) (also Nov 18?)

St. [Patto](#) (Pacifcus), bishop of Werden, Saxony (788)

St. [Tola](#), abbot-bishop of Disert-Tola in Meath(733)

St. Malon (Brittany)

St. [Clinius](#), abbot of St. Peter's near Pontecorvo (unk)(Italy)

St. [Irene](#) of Rome, widow of Martyr Castulus (c. 300)

St. [Mamertinus](#), abbot of Sts. Cosmas and Damian in Auxerre (c. 462)(France)

St. [Pastor](#) (Pasteur), bishop of Orleans (557)

Martyr [Quirinus](#) of Rome (c. 117)

Social Team for April 6 – Light Fare Only

Feel free to bring something to share. Thank you!

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In Your Prayers – Please Remember... His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch BARTHOLOMEW, His Eminence Metropolitan GREGORY, Fr. Joseph & Family, His Grace Bishop Neofitos of Nyeri & Mt. Kenya, Bennett family, Tatyana & Slava Chumak & family, Luke & Marlena Cooper, Roberta Corson, Tina Crull, Marlene Doukas, Linda A. Georgiev, Sandi Hebel, Howl family, 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, and those in need of our prayers. (Please advise Fr. Joseph of changes.)