

SOBORNOST

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American Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Diocese

*ECUMENICAL PATRIARCHATE
OF CONSTANTINOPLE*

SERVICES

**Wednesdays in Great Lent: Liturgy of
Presanctified Gifts 6:30 PM**

Saturday: Confession 4:30 PM

Great Vespers 5:00 PM

Sunday: Matins 8:45 AM | Sunday

School 9:30 AM | Divine Liturgy 10 AM

March 29, 2026 – 5th Sunday

in Great Lent (Saint Mary of Egypt)

The Inner Unity of the Triodion

This Sunday corresponds closely to the preceding one: just as the fourth Sunday is dedicated to St. John Climacus, the model of ascetics, so the fifth celebrates St. Mary of Egypt, the model of penitents. Like that of St. John Climacus, her feast has been transferred from the fixed calendar, where she is commemorated April 1. Her life, recounted by St. Sophronius, Patriarch of Jerusalem – it is read on Thursday of the fifth week – sets before us a true verbal icon of the essence of repentance. In her youth St. Mary lived in a dissolute and sinful way at Alexandria. Drawn by curiosity, she journeyed with some pilgrims to Jerusalem, arriving in time for the Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross. But when she tried to enter the Church of the Holy Sepulchre with the others, an invisible force thrust her back at the threshold. This happened three or four times. Brought to sudden contrition by this strange experience, she prayed all night with tears to the Mother of God, and next morning she found to her joy that she could enter the church without difficulty. After venerating the Cross, she left Jerusalem on that same day, made her way over the Jordan, and settled as a solitary in a remote region of the desert. Here for forty-seven years she remained, hidden from the world, until she



was eventually found by the ascetic St. Zosimas, who was able to give her Holy Communion shortly before her death. Some modern writers have questioned the historical accuracy of St. Sophronius' narrative, but there is in itself nothing impossible about such a story. In the year 1890 the Greek priest Joachim Spetsieris found a woman hermit in the desert beyond the Jordan, living almost exactly as St. Mary must have done.

On this Sunday the first Canon at Matins is based on the story of the Rich Man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31): like the parable of the Good Samaritan on the previous Sunday, this is applied symbolically to the repentant Christian.

During the services of this week, and to a still greater extent during Holy Week, the Tridion assumes the character of a historical narrative. Day by day we accompany Christ: we are with Him as He draws near to Jerusalem, as He reaches Bethany to raise Lazarus, as He enters the Holy City on Palm Sunday, as He approaches His Passion. The daily offices are marked by a sense of advancing movement and dramatic realism. Each day we call to mind, as exactly as possible, the things that must have occurred on the corresponding day during the last year of Christ's earthly ministry.

All this is not to be seen merely as the bare commemoration of occurrences in the distant past. On the contrary, through the liturgical celebration we *relive* these events, participating in them *as contemporaries*. We are raised from the level of secular time, as measured by the clock or calendar, to the level of 'liturgical' or 'sacred' time; we are transferred to the point where the vertical dimension of eternity breaks into linear time. This transposition of past into present, of remembrance into reality, is expressed in the liturgical texts above all through the word *Today*. So we sing on the Saturday of Lazarus, 'Today Bethany proclaims beforehand the Resurrection of Christ.' 'Today Christ enters the Holy City,' we affirm on Palm Sunday. 'Today Christ comes to the house of the Pharisee,' we state on Holy Wednesday, and 'the sinful woman draws near and falls down at His feet. . . . Today Judas makes a covenant with the chief priests.' 'Today the Master of Creation stands before Pilate,' we say on Great Friday: '. . . Today He who hung the earth upon the waters is hung upon the Cross.' So also at Easter Midnight we affirm: 'Yesterday I was buried with You, O Christ, and today I rise with Your arising. Yesterday I was crucified with You. . . . ' We shall not understand the meaning of these last two weeks in the Triodion unless we listen to this word *Today* that resounds at each service. It is not a mere metaphor or an instance of poetic license, but embodies a specific spiritual experience. All that was witnessed by the crowds in Holy Week, all the words addressed to the disciples, all the sufferings undergone by Christ – these are all to be experienced here and now *by me*.

Holy Week

The Saturday of Lazarus, along with Palm Sunday, occupies a special position between Lent and Holy Week. Following the forty days of penitence which have just ended, and immediately before the days of darkness and mourning which are to follow in the week of the Passion, there come two days of joy and triumph on which the Church keeps festival. The Saturday before Palm Sunday celebrates the raising of Lazarus at Bethany (John 11:1-46). This miracle is performed by Christ as a reassurance to His disciples before the coming Passion: they are to understand that, though He suffers and dies, yet He is Lord and Victor over death. The resurrection of Lazarus is a prophecy in the form of an action. It foreshadows Christ's own Resurrection eight days later, and at the same time it anticipates the resurrection of all the righteous on the Last Day: Lazarus is 'the saving first-fruits of the regeneration of the world.'

As the liturgical texts emphasize, the miracle at Bethany reveals the *two natures* of Christ the God-man. Christ asks where Lazarus is laid and weeps for him, and so He shows the fullness of His manhood, involving at it does human ignorance and genuine grief for a beloved friend. Then, disclosing the fullness of His divine power, Christ raises Lazarus from the dead, even though his corpse has already begun to decompose and stink. This double fullness of the Lord's divinity and His humanity is to be kept in view throughout Holy Week, and above all on Good Friday. On the Cross we see a genuinely human agony, both physical and mental, but we see more than this: we see not only suffering man but *suffering God*. (from *The Lenten Triodion*, translated by Mother Mary and Archimandrite Kallistos Ware, St. Tikhon's Seminary Press, 2002)

Today's Epistle Lesson – St. Paul's Letter to the Hebrews 9:11-14 EOB

Brethren, when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things to come, he entered through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation. It was not through the blood of goats and calves but through his own blood that he entered into the Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. Indeed, if the blood of goats and bulls, and the ashes of a heifer (sprinkling those who have been defiled) could sanctify to restore the purity of the flesh, how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify your conscience from dead works to offer divine service to the living God?

Today's Gospel Lesson – Saint Mark 10:32-45 EOB

At that time, Jesus took the Twelve [aside] and began to tell them about the things that were going to happen to him. "Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem. The Son of Man will be delivered to the chief priests and the scribes. They will

condemn him to death and deliver him to the Gentiles. They will mock him, spit on him, scourge him, and kill him. On the third day, he will rise again.” James and John, the sons of Zebedee, approached Jesus and said, “Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we will ask!” He replied, “What do you want me to do for you?” They answered, “Grant to us that we may sit, one at your right hand, and one at your left hand, in your glory.” But Jesus said to them, “You do not know what you are asking! Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?” They replied, “We are able!” Jesus said to them, “You shall indeed drink the cup that I drink, and you shall be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with! However, to sit at my right hand and at my left hand is not mine to give, but it is for whom it has been prepared.” When the ten heard this, they became upset with James and John. Jesus called them, and told them, “You know that those who are recognized as rulers over the nations lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. But it shall not be so among you! Whoever wants to become great among you shall be your servant. Whoever of you wants to become first among you shall be slave of all. For the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

Homily on the Fifth Sunday of Great Lent

By St. Gregory Palamas

“There are certain parts of the sea which teem with huge beasts like sea monsters. Those who sail there hang bells from their ships, so that the creatures panic and flee at the sound. Many wild things far more horrible breed in the sea of our life: the evil passions and the even more evil demons who supervise them. God's Church sails upon this sea like a ship, and instead of bells it has spiritual teachers to ward off the invisible beasts by the holy sound of their teaching. Prefiguring this, Aaron's robe had sweet-sounding bells fastened to its edge, and it was decreed that when Aaron ministered their sound should be heard (Exodus 27.21-35).

Turning the literal into the spiritual to good effect, let our words ring out to you now spiritually, especially in this time of fasting when visible and invisible beasts make terrible attacks. The visible ones are gluttony, drunkenness, and the like. The ones that lie invisibly in wait are vainglory, pride, self-conceit and hypocrisy. The same sound puts such beasts to flight and safeguards those who practice fasting.

Fasting and self-indulgence are opposites, like life and death. Fasting is a commandment of life as old as human nature, for it was originally given by God to Adam in paradise (Genesis 2.16-17), as a guardian of the life and grace engendered in him by God Himself. Self-indulgence, on the other hand, is a counsel of death for both soul and body, craftily given by the devil to Adam in paradise by means of Eve (Genesis 3.1-6), for banishment from life and estrangement from God-given

divine grace. God did not make death, nor does He delight in the destruction of the living. Does anyone want to find life and grace in God and from God? Let him flee lethal self-indulgence and run towards fasting and prayer which make divine, that he may return to paradise rejoicing.

When Moses fasted forty days on the mountain he soared to the height of divine vision and received tablets of godliness (Exodus 34.28). Meanwhile the Hebrew people down below made themselves drunk, sank into ungodliness and cast an idol in the form of a calf, like the Egyptian god Apis (Exodus 32.1-8). If Moses had not stood before God, having made atonement earlier through the merciless killing of many of his people, God would not have spared them at all (Exodus 32.9-34.27). If we too need God's mercy, let us not become drunk on wine or weigh ourselves down by eating our fill, for debauchery and ungodliness accompany such behavior (Ephesians 5.18). Elijah also saw God, but he too was purified by fasting (1 Kings 19.8-12). Daniel attained to divine vision and saw one of the archangels, who granted him knowledge of things to come, but he had stayed without food for twenty whole days beforehand (Daniel 10.1-21). Another prophet was killed by a lion because he ate against God's will (1 Kings 13.11-26). You all know about Esau, Isaac's son, who, through gluttony, lost his father's blessing as well as his other rights as the first born son (Genesis 25.25-34; 26.34-35; Hebrews 12.16). We should be afraid lest, by being intent on our stomachs, we fall away from the blessings and inheritance promised to us by our Father on high. You are also not ignorant of the three youths devoted to fasting (Daniel 1.11-15), who, without turning their feet or bodies, trampled on the furnace in Babylon which had been heated seven times more on their account (Daniel 3.16-27).

If we practice true fasting we shall trample here and now on the fire in our flesh and quench it, and in the time to come we shall pass unharmed through the furnace when each one's work will be tried by fire (1 Corinthians 3.11-15). As for the Lord of the prophets, what can we say about Him? When He took flesh and became man for our sake, He taught us the way to defeat the devil by the fact that, while fasting, He was completely victorious over him when he stirred up every kind of temptation against Him. He also told His disciples, with reference to the deaf and dumb spirit, that "This demon comes forth by nothing, but by prayer and fasting" (Mark 9.29; Matthew 17.21).

Let us show you, brethren, what sort of fasting is true and pleasing to God. You should be aware that we do not commend physical fasting for its own sake, but because it brings about other, greater benefits for the soul. As the divine Paul says, "Bodily exercise profits a little" (1 Timothy 4.8). Speaking from experience, our God-bearing Fathers do not approve of fasting for days on end. They consider it more acceptable to eat once a day without satisfying your appetite. This is what

they refer to as a moderate and reasonable fasting, as the Scripture says as well: not to be led astray by a full stomach and the pleasure of eating, but to leave your food while still feeling hungry. The type and quantity of food should be appropriate to the strength and disposition of the eater's body, to preserve his health as far as possible. If a weak person eats foods appropriate to his weakness in moderation, without supplementing the necessities with more satisfying extras, and if he seeks nourishment not enjoyment, something to drink not drunkenness, and moderate consumption not excess, self-indulgence and abuse, he will not be deprived of holiness.

This is the starting point of true fasting which is pleasing to God. But Christians laid it down as a rule and held it in honor on account of its outcome, the purification of the soul. What good does it do to abstain from bodily food and to be defeated by fleshly ways of thinking and passions? What advantage is it to refrain from wine and be tormented by thirst, but to be drunk without wine - as it says in the Scriptures, "Woe to those who are drunk, but not with wine" (Isaiah 51.21; 28.1 LXX; 29.9) - and for our souls to be stirred up with anger and ill-will? How do we benefit by avoiding luxurious spreads, if our soul remains unhumiliated, or by depriving our flesh of its fatness, without humbling our soul in fasting as David did? What good does it to us if we are free of the vapor given off by excessive food, but our mind is rendered useless by vain cares and thoughts and our prayers to God also become of no avail?

Fasting is beneficial when it is undertaken for quelling desire, humbling the soul, transforming hatred, extinguishing anger, erasing remembrance of wrongs, and for the purity of the understanding and the practice of prayer. If you are well off, let your surplus food be a consolation for the needy. When you fast like this you not only suffer with Christ and are dead with Him, but you are risen with Him and reign with Him for ever and ever. If through such a fast you have been planted together in the likeness of His death, you shall also share in His resurrection and inherit life in Him (Romans 6.5). Should the faster be tempted, he overcomes his tempter. Should he not be, he preserves the peace of his soul and body by bruising his body, according to Paul, and bringing it into subjection, for fear of being rejected (1 Cor. 9.27). If Paul was afraid of this, how much more should we be? The faster brings his body into subjection and his soul is tried and tested. On the other hand, when someone fattens up his flesh, which is soon to perish, not eating to live, but rather living to eat, like animals we are preparing to slaughter, and supplements necessary foods with extras in order to make it fat and prosperous, either to rouse its evil desires or simply for sensual, bodily pleasure, obviously all he is doing is preparing more abundant food for the worms. David the prophet puts

it well when he sings, "What profit is there in my blood, when I go down into the pit?" (Psalm 30.9).

When you are fasting and limiting your food, do not store up the surplus for the following day. The Lord made us rich through becoming poor, and you, by your voluntary hunger, should nourish those who are starving against their will. Then your fasting will be like a dove bearing an olive sprig which brings your soul the good tidings of deliverance from the flood (Genesis 8.11). "If you take away from the midst of thee", says the great Isaiah, "the yoke, the putting forth of the finger and speaking vanity: and if you draw out your soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul; then shall your light rise in obscurity and your darkness be as the noonday" (Isaiah 58.9-10). If you do not wish to give what is yours, at least keep away from what belongs to others and do not take possession of what is not yours, by unjustly seizing and keeping things, sometimes even from people poorer than yourselves. Otherwise you may rightly hear from the same prophet, "Is it such a fast that I have chosen? says the Lord, even if you bend your neck as a ring, your fast will not be acceptable, but loose the bands of wickedness, dissolve the ties of oppressive contracts, and tear up every unjust bond. Then shall your light break forth as the morning, and your health shall spring forth speedily: and your righteousness shall go before you; the glory of the Lord shall encompass you" (Isaiah 58.5-8 LXX).

If you do not give even what you have in excess of your needs to the poor, at least do not acquire extra things at their expense. When Christ, the Master of all, dispatches those on His left into the fire and curses them, He does not condemn them for seizing what belongs to others, but for not sharing with those in need (Matthew 25.41-45). Extortioners and unjust men will not be resurrected to appear and be judged, but only for an immediate greater judgment and condemnation. Even here such people appear never to have stood before God with their whole souls. "They eat up my people", it says, "as they eat bread, and call not upon the Lord" (Psalm 14.4). That rich man whose ground brought forth plentifully (Luke 12.16-21), and that other one who was clothed in purple and fine linen (Luke 16.19-21) were justly condemned, not for wronging anyone, but for not sharing what was theirs. Treasures are common to all, as they come from the common storehouses of God's creation. Anyone who appropriates what is common as his own is greedy, though not perhaps to the same extent as someone who openly takes possession of other people's belongings. The first, as an evil servant, will, alas, undergo the terrible punishment of being cut off. The second will be submitted to things even more dreadful and terrifying. Neither will ever be able to escape these penalties, unless they receive the poor with hospitality, the one making good use of

the things entrusted to him by God, the other distributing what he has accumulated by evil means.

The great Paul, writing to the Thessalonians, your ancestors in fact, says, "As touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another" (1 Thessalonians 4.9).

The Lord said to certain people, "If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham" (John 8.39). We should be afraid lest we hear these words, not addressed to us now, but, perish the thought, pronounced on that terrible day, when kinship will be judged rather by similarity of deeds. On that day all those who have loved poverty in Christ, or at very least have loved the poor, all who have despised glory, eagerly desired self-control, not just listened to but put into action the divine decrees in the Gospels, will, according to the prayer of the Father of us all by grace, be one in a way surpassing nature. "Grant them", He says, "that they all may be one; as we are one" (John 17.21-22). On that day the all-discerning sword of the Spirit will divide a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and will make those whose ways are different strangers to one another (Matthew 10.34-37). If this happens here, how much more there, where the All-knowing declares to those who were not like Him in virtue, "I know you not" (Matthew 25.1-12; Luke 13.25-27). It seems that they did not possess the heavenly likeness, and were not merciful as our Father is merciful. They did not share their possessions with the needy, as He freely shared His good things with everyone. They were not kind to their neighbors, nor did they make those far away their neighbors through their good works. Because of this dissimilarity with Himself, He who is good neither knew them nor brought them into His dwelling. If He acts in this way, those who lived here according to His will and are going to reign with Him there, will presumably say the same to those related to them by blood who do not resemble them in virtue.

If someone says he is their brother, he will hear, alas, that no man can ransom his brother. If someone says he was their father, he will hear that God is the only father. And if someone says he is their child, he will hear the words, "If you were my child, you would imitate me, but as it is, you are the child of that father whose desires you accomplish. Away with you and dwell with him for ever. I do not know you. Everything that is God's is mine, but you are not God's. What was mine and yours has now gone. We hated it ever in that fading world, and so we became heirs of this kingdom." The holy Fathers referred to "mine" and "yours" as cold words, and wherever they are found, the bond of love is absent and Christ has departed. Even in those days this passion of possessiveness produced love of self, love of money, hatred of one's fellow man, and every kind of evil in those it had overcome, and it still disgraces them now.

Brethren, please let us be afraid of these truly dreadful evils. Let us organize our lives as it pleasing to God. Let us forgive that we may be forgiven, let us be merciful to those in need that we may receive mercy many time more abundantly. He who impoverished Himself to the uttermost for our sakes, Himself receives our alms, and in His munificence He will multiply the reward. We must either be poor as He was, and so live with Him, or share what we have with those who are poor for His sake, and so be saved through them. Let us acquire merciful hearts and give positive proof of brotherly love and of devotion towards the Father and Master of all. You will never find a more acceptable time to do this than these days of the fast. If you join almsgiving to fasting you will blot out every sin, venerate the saving passion with boldness, join in the rejoicing at Christ's resurrection and gain eternal redemption.

May we all attain to this in Christ Himself our God, to whom belong all glory, honor and worship, with His Father without beginning and the all-holy, good and life-giving Spirit, now and for ever and unto the ages of ages. Amen.

A Word From the Holy Fathers

All spiritual contemplation should be governed by faith, hope and love, but most of all by love. The first two teach us to be detached from visible delights, but love unites the soul with the excellence of God, searching out the Invisible by means of intellectual perception.

Only God is good by nature, but with God's help man can become good through careful attention to his way of life. He transforms himself into what he is not when his soul, by devoting its attention to true delight, unites itself to God, in so far as its energized power desires this. For it is written: 'Be good and merciful as is your Father in heaven' (cf Luke 6:36; Matt. 5:48).

Evil does not exist by nature, nor is any man naturally evil, for God made nothing that was not good. When in the desire of his heart someone conceives and gives form to what in reality has no existence, then what he desires begins to exist. We should therefore turn our attention away from the inclination to evil and concentrate it on the remembrance of God; for good, which exists by nature, is more powerful than our inclination to evil. The one has existence while the other has not, except when we give it existence through our actions.

When a man begins to perceive the love of God in all its richness, he begins also to love his neighbor with spiritual perception. This is the love of which all the scriptures speak. Friendship after the flesh is very easily destroyed on some slight pretext, since it is not held firm by spiritual perception. But when a person is spiritually awakened, even if something irritates him, the bond of love is not

dissolved: rekindling himself with the warmth of the love of God, he quickly recovers himself and with great joy seeks his neighbor's love, even though he has been gravely wronged or insulted by him. For the sweetness of God completely consumes the bitterness of the quarrel.

– St. Diadochos of Photiki, *from "On Spiritual Knowledge and Discrimination"*

I Fasted, But From Virtues

By Fr. George Dorbarakis

"Lord, I have fasted from all achievements, I have enjoyed my fill of errors; now, therefore, when I am hungry, fill me with your saving and revered food" (Ode 1, Tone 1).

From the first ode of the canon, the troparion expresses the spiritual state that usually occurs in people who are faithful to Christ: the multitude of sins, the lack of the fruits of the Spirit. And this should not surprise us. Because even if a person's life on earth lasts just one hour, the word of God teaches us, he will still unfortunately sin - it is the price of the disobedience of the first created beings, which, like a contaminated root, has permeated the entire tree of humanity ever since. And it is possible that the Lord Jesus Christ has come and has given us the opportunity, by our incorporation into His Holy Body through Holy Baptism, to overcome sin, but such is the laziness of our lives that we ultimately do not even do this: despite all His help, we continue on the path of our own disobedience. Therefore, as our life progresses, we see the increase of our sins.

However, we also see our sin from another perspective: the more we relate to the Lord, the more we strive with the grace of God to keep His commandments, the more our spiritual eye is opened and sees things that it was previously unaware of, that is, it sees sins that it had not even suspected before. Like the Apostle Paul, who, while not seeing any visible sin in his conscience, did not rest. For "My Judge is the Lord," he said, that is, He who sees even the most imperceptible movements of the soul, which we ourselves are unaware of. Is this not an indirect confirmation of what both the word of God and the modern Depth Psychology, as it is called, point out? That is, when we speak of the human soul, we are speaking of something that has a bottomless depth, literally of an "abyss" of the unconscious, which has its own "rules" and its own ways? So I fasted, says Saint Joseph the Hymnographer, though not from food and vices, but from achievements. And he reached satiety for this reason from errors and sins.

However, the poet does not leave us abandoned. He reminds us that there is always a way of escape, healing and salvation: turning to the Lord, who is ready to forgive us and offer us that food that fills our hungry soul, namely His grace, His very self.

The solution to all the negatives of ourselves, but also of this world, is always the love of our Creator.

Saint Diadochos of Photiki as a Model for Our Lives

By Protopresbyter Fr. George Papavarnavas

The life of the venerable Diadochos of Photiki is, unfortunately, largely unknown. What we know is that he was born in the first decades of the fifth century and that he became a Bishop, in the period between the years 451-458 in the District of Epirus in Photiki. The Diocese of Photiki, which is located in today's Paramythia, was important for many centuries.

He was a great Theologian of the fifth century, and the fact that he is not mentioned by his contemporaries, except only slightly, "can easily be explained," according to the late Fr. Theoklitos Dionysiatis, "if one considers the remoteness of Photiki at that time, not to mention that the education of Saint Diadochos remains unknown, in accordance with his desire as expressed out of humility, in the 13th chapter of the '100 Gnostic Chapters'."

Photios the Great mentions that from information in the Synodic epistle of Saint Sophronios of Jerusalem, Saint Diadochos of Photiki was one of the principal opponents of the Monophysites. Also, in mentioning the "100 Gnostic Chapters" of Saint Diadochos, Photios the Great says among other things: "His words are excellent and contain nothing unclear for those who exercise in the actions that cause spiritual perfection, because the teaching of empirical knowledge is with fluency." And the sacred hymnographer, in the Dismissal Hymn written for Saint Diadochos, says among other things:

You received the heavenly grace of the Spirit, and showed yourself to be a divine Archpastor of Photiki, Diadochos, with true wisdom and action you raised to virtue with the light of divine teaching those inspired by God, who cry unto to you: Glory to Christ who has glorified you, Glory to Him who has crowned you, Glory to Him who through you grants grace and mercy.

The venerable Diadochos, as evidenced through his works, held the dogmatic teachings of the Orthodox Church, but was also an experienced teacher of the spiritual life. Among his works are "The Vision", a "Discourse on the Ascension" and the "100 Gnostic Chapters", as well as a "Catechism".

He was perfected in peace around the year 486. His life and conduct gives us the opportunity to highlight the following:

First, the words of the Holy Fathers are pure and clear, as they are themselves, and they do not contain anything that is unclear. They offer comfort and ease, because

they are empirical words and not the result of reflection. Instead, scholastic or reflective words are cantankerous, vague, confusing and difficult for both listeners and readers, who often end up understanding completely different things. That is, one can wind up understanding something that is the complete opposite of what is understood by someone else.

The teachings of the Holy Fathers, in fact, are novel, since they are writing about their experiences, what they saw and heard. Because, then, what they teach they know very well, and they have digested it, to use a common phrase, this is why they speak and write in a simple and understandable way. In this way they give the readers and listeners of their words the opportunity to understand them with ease, even the most difficult meanings.

Saint Diadochos was an authentic pastor of reasonable sheep, entrusted to him by Christ, and advises pastors of the Church, telling them that before every homily to the people of God, they must pray and seek enlightenment from above. He says:

The spiritual word brings assurance to the noetic sense for it is brought from God by the activity of love, for which very reason our mind also sojourns uninjured in the movements of theology. For the mind does not then suffer hunger, which brings care, being broadened in contemplations as much as the activity of love wishes. Therefore it is good ever to await with faith acting through love the illumination of what to say; for there is nothing poorer than an intellect outside of God philosophizing the things of God.

Neither should one throw oneself unilluminated into spiritual speculations nor should he come to speak when richly shone upon by the goodness of the Holy Spirit. For wherever poverty is, it brings ignorance; but wherever wealth is, it does not permit speech. For then the soul, drunk with the love of God, wishes to enjoy with silent voice the glory of God. It is therefore necessary to come to divine words in guarding the median of this activity. For this measure grants a certain form of glorious words. The wealth of enlightenment, however, nourishes the faith of him who speaks in faith, so that he who teaches, first tastes the fruits of gnosis through love. For he says: 'The farmer who toils should first partake of the fruit.'

Furthermore, the teacher of divine words, in order to truly benefit the people of God, it is necessary for them to hold, or at least struggle to acquire, the knowledge (gnosis) of God and the wisdom "sent from above". Saint Diadochos says that knowledge and wisdom are "gifts of the one Holy Spirit... For gnosis joins a man to God by experience, not moving the soul to speech about these things... Wisdom,... manifests the very activities of gnosis, since the latter is accustomed to illuminate in activity, the former in word. But unceasing prayer and much stillness in complete freedom from care bring gnosis, whereas meditation on the sayings of

God which is free of vainglory and, first of all, the grace of God who gives, bring wisdom."

Second, perfection, according to the Holy Fathers, does not have an end, which is why the "struggler for piety" must fight "the good fight" continuously and uninterruptedly until the end of their life, watching and trying not to acquire spiritual self-sufficiency, so that they say "now I am well, if only everyone else was like me." Rather they should, without being overcome by the difficulties of life and the attacks of the demons, to walk towards the higher stages of the spiritual life, ("you raised to virtue with the light of divine teaching those inspired by God") without any interruption in prayer and in the spiritual struggle in general. Because as Saint Diadochos says: "Those who want to eliminate their impurity should not pray at certain times, and other times not pray, but they should always occupy themselves with prayer, protecting their nous, even if they are outside of the sacred churches... A characteristic of people who love virtue is to eliminate through the unceasing remembrance of God the earthly passions of the heart."

With unceasing prayer, the study of the divinely inspired words, the sacramental life and asceticism, the soul is purified of passions. And according to Saint Diadochos: "The characteristics of a pure soul: words without envy, zeal without malice, and unceasing eros for Jesus, the Lord of Glory." (*from johnsanidopoulos.com*)

Venerable Mother Eutropia of Kherson

On 9 August 2011 the Ukrainian Orthodox Church glorified a local Saint, the Venerable Eutropia Isayenkova of Kherson in Crimea.

Little is known of St. Eutropia's childhood, but she was native to the Kherson region and born on 24 November 1863 to her parents Leontius and Agatha. Because she was born on the feast of St. Katherine, this was her name before becoming a monastic.

At the age of twelve she was sent to nearby Aleshkovskii Monastery. Together with her education, it was here that she learned to love prayer and sacred studies. Eventually she dedicated her life to the Monastery and took the name of Eutropia, inspired by St. Eutropia of Alexandria (Oct. 30). Her monastic obedience was singing in the choir and reading. To others, she was known for her kindness and modesty.

Eutropia witnessed the flowering of the Monastery, with the building of magnificent churches and a school for orphans. But soon revolution, civil war, famine, destruction, and the worst - the godless power of Communism interrupted the monastic life of the nuns. The Monastery was abolished, churches closed, the

nuns dispersed. Eutropia, like many other nuns of the Monastery, went to Kherson. There she settled in the area of Kindiyskih near the Church of the Nativity of the Theotokos. During this time she earned a living sewing quilts. She and the nuns would often go to the church there to pray, but in 1938 it was shut down and they were forced to pray in a private home. When the Germans and Romanians came to Kherson in 1941, the churches once again opened.

Many people would visit Eutropia and she eventually became renowned for her clairvoyance and commitment to praying for the dead who had no one to serve funerals or memorials for them due to the Soviets' closure of churches. God would reveal to her the names of the reposed in order for her to pray for them. A blank piece of paper near her bed at night was full of names by the morning for her to pray for. Many would visit her, even from great distances, so that the yard of her house seemed to always be full. Spiritual children testify that she wore fetters on her feet and in her hands was always a Bible which she studied. Though she received many gifts from the people, she only lived on unleavened bread and holy water, and everything else she gave to those in need. As she was near death her spiritual children would ask to whom they should now go to for their needs; Eutropia responded that they were to come to her grave as if she were among the living.

When she reposed on 29 March 1968 she was 105-years old. The funeral took place in the Church of the Nativity of the Theotokos with thousands in attendance. She was buried in the cemetery Kindiyskom. At her grave many received her grace-filled help and healing. The Saint's relics now rest in Kherson's Cathedral of the Holy Spirit. *(from johnsanidopoulos.com)*

Also Commemorated Today

[Follow the links below for more information. - Ed.]

Martyr [Mark](#), bishop of Arethusa (364), and with him Hieromartyr Cyril the Deacon of Heliopolis, and others, who suffered under Julian the Apostate (362).
New Martyrs Priest Paul (Voinarsky), and brothers Paul and Alexis Kiryan, of the Crimea (1919).

New Hieromartyr Micael priest(1933).

Venerable [John](#), Anchorite of Egypt (4th c.).

St. [Eustathius](#) (Eustace) the Confessor, bishop of Kios in Bithynia(9thc.).

Martyrs [Jonah](#), Barachisios and 9 with them of Persia

Venerables [Jonah](#), presbyter, (1480) Bassa and [Mark](#) of the Pskov Caves.

Venerable [Niketas](#) of the Roslavl Forests (1793)

St. [Diadochus](#), bishop of Photike in Epirus (ca. 486).

Ven. [Eutropia](#) of Kherson (1968)

St. Eustasius, abbot of Luxeuil (625).

Sts. Gwynllw and Gwladys, parents of St. Cadoc.

St. Lasar (Lassar, Lassera), virgin of Clonard (6th c.)

Sts. Armogastes, Saturus and companions, confessors (c. 460)

St. Firminus, bishop of Viviers (6th c.)

Martyr Secundus of Asti in Piedmont (119)

St. Achive, abbot of Saint-Maurice at Agaune in Valais (525)

Sts. Aule, Eumaque, Firminus, & Longin, bishops of Viviers in the Rhone valley (6th c.)

St. Gère (Ivery, Juéry) Metropolitan bishop of Sens in Burgundy (711)

Martyr Limin of Clermont of Auvergne (264)

Pray for our priests and seminarians!

Prayer is powerful, and we need more priests in our Diocese. Metropolitan Gregory is asking that each one of us pray daily that we have more vocations to the priesthood. He also wants us to pray by name for our clergy and seminarians--they aren't sick! The clergy that we are to pray for are: Fr. Kevin Greenwood, Fr. Andrew Gromm, and Deacon Donald Koch. The seminarians are: Fr. Peter Sodini, Deacon Maximus Cannaverde, Fr. Alexander Hurtsellers, Bradley Shaffer, Nicholas Cizin, John Bonnewicz-Coffey, John Fedornock III, Clay Raburn, Spyridon Raburn and Ignatios Leonardo (please also pray for Joshua Horner, who is taking a break from seminary to work full-time). We started this four years ago, and we already see its fruit – Fr. Seamus was on this list the last time I ran it!

Prayer for vocations

Master of all, You promised us, “I will be with you always, even until the very end of the world,” and You have taught, “I will build My Church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” Mindful of this pledge, we beseech Your great goodness to inspire men to the Holy Priesthood, the service of Your Holy Orthodox Church, so that she may properly be able to fulfill Your will for Your people in this age. There are children to baptize, the sick to heal, and the dying to care for. There is the Bread of Life to distribute, and the Word of God to teach. There are sins to forgive, and charity to be done in Your Name. Send Your Church in this hour and in every age “vessels of clay” to be instruments of Your presence. Hear us, O Lord, and have mercy.

Prayer for the priesthood

O Lord Jesus Christ, Good Shepherd of Your sheep, light the fire of ardent love in the hearts of all Your priests, that they may ever and in all things seek only Your glory. Remember especially, Lord, our Metropolitan Gregory, and our spiritual father Seamus, who are laboring in Your vineyard for the salvation of all those whom You have entrusted to them. Remember also, O Lord, our priests Fr. Kevin

Greenwood, Fr. Andrew Gromm, and Deacon Donald Koch, and seminarians Fr. Peter Sodini. Deacon Maximus Cannaverde, Fr. Alexander Hurtsellers, Bradley Shaffer, Nicholas Cizin, John Bonnewicz-Coffey, John Fedornock III, Spyridon Raburn, Clay Wood and Ignatios Leonardo. Make their lives as holy as the word they preach. Keep them from being discouraged. Hear their prayers for our salvation. Give them wisdom and courage to proclaim Your truth. Make them priests after Your own heart. For You are a merciful God who loves us, and to You we give glory, together with Your eternal Father and Your all-holy, good and life-giving Spirit, now and ever and forever. Amen.

Parish Services This Week

In addition to the usual services this week, we will commemorate the raising of Lazarus with a Divine Liturgy on Saturday at 10:00 AM. On Sunday, we will bless palms and distribute them between Matins and Divine Liturgy; come early! Additionally, we will serve Bridegroom Matins next Sunday after social hour.

Follow Our Diocese On-Line

Diocesan Website: <http://www.acrod.org>

Camp Nazareth: <http://www.campnazareth.org>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/acroddiocese>

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

In Your Prayers – Please Remember... His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch BARTHOLOMEW, His Eminence Metropolitan GREGORY, Fr. Seamus & Family, Fr. Joseph & Family, His Grace Bishop Neofitos of Eldoret and Northern Kenya, Patty Blaydoe, Bennett family, Tatyana & Slava Chumak & family, Luke & Marlena Cooper, Roberta Corson, Tina Crull, Marlene Doukas, Alaina Espinal, Angelo Espinal, Linda A. Georgiev, Sandi Hebel, Howl family, John M. Janowiak, Johnson family, Andrew Kinn, Kopan family, Helen, Brian, Luke and Mia Mahony, Valentina Makowelski, David & Kathryn Newman, Bobby Nutter & family, Nicholas Pavlik, Weston Perry & family, John Reece, Mary Reed, Marge Rusnak, Rose Song, Dennis Thomidis, Fr. Nectarios & Ia, Mother Virginia Marie & the Carmelite Nuns of Port Tobacco, the suffering people of Ukraine & the Middle East, and those in need of our prayers. (Please advise Fr. Seamus of changes.)