

SOBORNOST

St. Thomas the Apostle Orthodox Church

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American Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Diocese

*ECUMENICAL PATRIARCHATE
OF CONSTANTINOPLE*

SERVICES

Wed: Moleben to the Theotokos 6:00 AM

Friday: Moleben to the Cross 6:00 AM

Saturday: Confession 5:00 PM

Great Vespers 5:30 PM

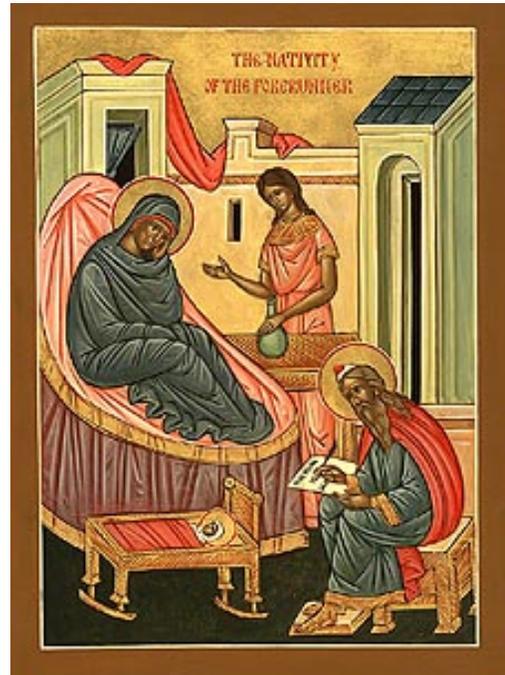
Sunday: Matins (Orthros) 8:45 AM

Children's Sunday School 9:30 AM | Divine Liturgy 10:00 AM.

June 24, 2017 – 4th Sunday After Pentecost | Nativity of the Holy Glorious Prophet, Forerunner and Baptist, John

The Gospel (Luke. 1: 5) relates that the righteous parents of Saint John the Baptist, the Priest Zachariah and Elizabeth (September 5), lived in the ancient city of Hebron. They reached old age without having children, since Elizabeth was barren. Once, Saint Zachariah was serving in the Temple at Jerusalem and saw the Archangel Gabriel, standing on the right side of the altar of incense. He predicted that Saint Zachariah would father a son, who would announce the Savior, the Messiah, awaited by the Old Testament Church. Zachariah was troubled, and fear fell upon him. He had doubts that in old age it was possible to have a son, and he asked for a sign. It was given to him, and it was also a chastisement for his unbelief. Zachariah was struck speechless until the time of the fulfillment of the archangel's words.

Saint Elizabeth came to be with child, and fearing derision at being pregnant so late in life, she kept it secret for five months. Then her relative, the Virgin Mary, came to share with her Her own joy. Elizabeth, "filled with the Holy Spirit," was the first to greet the Virgin Mary as the Mother of God. Saint John leaped in his mother's womb at the visit of the Most Holy Virgin Mary and the Son of God incarnate within Her.



Soon Saint Elizabeth gave birth to a son, and all the relatives and acquaintances rejoiced together with her. On the eighth day, in accordance with the Law of Moses, he was circumcised and was called John. Everyone was amazed, since no one in the family had this name. When they asked Saint Zachariah about this, he motioned for a tablet and wrote on it: "His name is John." Immediately his tongue was loosed, and Saint Zachariah glorified God. He also prophesied about the Coming into the world of the Messiah, and of his own son John, the Forerunner of the Lord (Luke. 1: 68-79).

After the Nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ and the worship of the shepherds and the Magi, wicked king Herod gave orders to kill all male infants. Hearing about this, Saint Elizabeth fled into the wilderness and hid in a cave. Saint Zachariah was at Jerusalem and was doing his priestly service in the Temple. Herod sent soldiers to him to find out the abode of the infant John and his mother. Zachariah answered that their whereabouts were unknown to him, and he was killed right there in the Temple. Righteous Elizabeth continued to live in the wilderness with her son and she died there. The child John, protected by an angel, dwelt in the wilderness until the time when he came preaching repentance, and was accounted worthy to baptize the Lord. (*from oca.org*)

Today's Epistle Lesson – St. Paul's Letter to the Romans 13:11-14:4

Brethren, *do* this, knowing the time, that now *it is* high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation *is* nearer than when we *first* believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light. Let us walk decently, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to *fulfill its* lusts. Receive one who is weak in the faith, *but* not to disputes over doubtful things. For one believes he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats *only* vegetables. Let not him who eats despise him who does not eat, and let not him who does not eat judge him who eats; for God has received him. Who are you to judge another's servant? To his own master he stands or falls. Indeed, he will be made to stand, for God is able to make him stand.

Today's Gospel Lesson – Saint Luke 1:5-25,57-68,76,80

There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the division of Abijah. His wife *was* of the daughters of Aaron, and her name *was* Elizabeth. And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blame-less. But they had no child, because Elizabeth was barren, and they were both well advanced in years. So it was, that while he was serving as priest before God in the order of his division,

according to the custom of the priesthood, his lot fell to burn incense when he went into the temple of the Lord. And the whole multitude of the people was praying outside at the hour of incense. Then an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing on the right side of the altar of incense. And when Zacharias saw *him*, he was troubled, and fear fell upon him. But the angel said to him, “Do not be afraid, Zacharias, for your prayer is heard; and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John. And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth. For he will be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink. He will also be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother’s womb. And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God. He will also go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, ‘to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children,’ and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.” And Zacharias said to the angel, “How shall I know this? For I am an old man, and my wife is well advanced in years.” And the angel answered and said to him, “I am Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God, and was sent to speak to you and bring you this good news. But behold, you will be mute and not able to speak until the day these things take place, because you did not believe my words which will be fulfilled in their own time.” And the people waited for Zacharias, and marveled that he lingered so long in the temple. But when he came out, he could not speak to them; and they perceived that he had seen a vision in the temple, for he beckoned to them and remained speechless. So it was, as soon as the days of his service were completed, that he departed to his own house. Now after those days his wife Elizabeth conceived; and she hid herself five months, saying, “Thus the Lord has dealt with me, in the days when He looked on *me*, to take away my reproach among people.”

Now Elizabeth’s full time came for her to be delivered, and she brought forth a son. When her neighbors and relatives heard how the Lord had shown great mercy to her, they rejoiced with her. So it was, on the eighth day, that they came to circumcise the child; and they would have called him by the name of his father, Zacharias. His mother answered and said, “No; he shall be called John.” But they said to her, “There is no one among your relatives who is called by this name.” So they made signs to his father—what he would have him called. And he asked for a writing tablet, and wrote, saying, “His name is John.” So they all marveled. Immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue *loosed*, and he spoke, praising God. Then fear came on all who dwelt around them; and all these sayings were discussed throughout all the hill country of Judea. And all those who heard *them* kept *them* in their hearts, saying, “What kind of child will this be?” And the hand of the Lord was with him.

Now his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Spirit, and prophesied, saying: “Blessed is the Lord God of Israel, for He has visited and redeemed His people, and you, child, will be called the prophet of the Highest; for you will go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways.” So the child grew and became strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his manifestation to Israel.

THE NEWLY-INSTALLED ICONS OF ST. THOMAS



The latest phase of iconography at St. Thomas is complete! The greatest change is in the sanctuary, where the previous icon of the Holy Supper is flanked by 10 bishops of the Church, 5 on each side. These are (from left to right) Sts. Polycarp, Peter Moghila, Gregory the Theologian, Leo the Great, John Chrysostom, Basil the Great, Cyprian of Carthage, Athanasius the Great, Ignatius of Antioch, and Cyril of Alexandria. A decorative tablecloth has been added to the space below the icons, symbolically including everyone present at the Table of the Lord. Finally, cherubim and seraphim have been added to the space above the curtains leading to the area behind the altar. In the nave, the only change is the addition of an icon of St. John of Damascus in place of the icon of Hieromartyr Gorazd, bishop of Prague, which has been moved into the sanctuary and sits on the deacon's table. In the narthex, icons of the Prophets Daniel, Elijah, and King David have been added, along with Melchizedek, King of Salem. As in the sanctuary, a decorative tablecloth border has been added below the icons.

Hieromartyr Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna was the favorite disciple of Apostle John the Theologian and was installed bishop of Smyrna by him. He was glorified as a zealous and invincible defender of the true faith and loving father of

Christians. He distributed all his estate to the poor. He ministered to the sick, disabled and aging, doing good not only for Christians but also for Jews and even Pagans. The leader of all Asia (Minor), as Blessed Jerome calls him; St. Polycarp not only enlightened it by his teaching and life, but was zealous about the enlightenment of the people of Gaul where he was sent on a mission during the reign of Marcus Aurelius. He wrote a letter to the Philippians, which is extant. After some Smyrnian Christians were martyred, the pagans, angry at their firmness, furiously demanded that the Bishop of Smyrna be sentenced to death. St. Polycarp, 85 years old, was led to the furnace for burning, but the flame did not touch the righteous man and the fire surrounded him like an arch. Seeing such a wonder, the Pagans pierced the holy elder with a sword in 167.



Peter Moghila was born on Dec. 21, 1596 in Moldavia into a boyar family, the Movilesti. The family had given Moldavia and Wallachia several rulers, including his father, Ieremia Movila. His mother Margareta was a Hungarian princess. Due to political turmoil, the family was forced to flee to Poland while Peter was young. Peter's early education was at the Orthodox school in Lvov and continued in Western Europe, including at universities in Paris and Holland. He served as an officer in Poland, but he was more interested in a monastic life. He maintained his loyalty to the Orthodox Church while living in the Latin and Protestant West.

In 1625 he entered the Pechersk Lavra in Kiev. After receiving minor orders, he was tonsured a monk in 1627. He was ordained a priest and then raised to the dignity of archimandrite. Finally, he was consecrated a bishop shortly thereafter and was enthroned as Metropolitan of Kiev in 1632. He was the founder of Kiev-Mogila Academy, which based academic instruction on the western system of seminary and university education, with instruction mainly in Latin and secondarily in Greek and Russian. Peter headed the Orthodox Church in what is now Ukraine during a period when it was under Polish rule. He wrote a widely accepted Orthodox Confession of the Catholic and Apostolic Eastern Church. He was chiefly responsible for reviving Orthodoxy during the times after the 1596 Union of Brest-Litovsk, when a large amount of Orthodox in southwestern Russia submitted to Rome. With strong interests in the fortunes of the Orthodox Church, Peter devoted his energies to strengthening the position of those Orthodox who remained independent of Rome. Against strong, even violent, political and social pressures he was able to recover possession and restore many churches, including the Cathedral of St. Sophia in Kiev. He died on Dec. 22, 1646 in Kiev. His feast day is January 1.

St. Gregory (Nazianzus) the Theologian was born about 326-328 in Arianus near Nazianzus in Cappadocia where his father was at first the town mayor and then Bishop. At first he received his formation in Neocaesarea from Amphilocius, the famous teacher of rhetoric, then in Alexandria and, finally, in Athens where he became friends with St. Basil the Great.

In 356 St. Gregory was baptized and with no less zeal continued to study the Holy Scriptures and practice the asceticism of meditation on God, fasting and prayer. Known for his special love for his parents and always treating them with true filial respect and moving care, Saint Gregory, at the insistence of his father, was ordained a presbyter. Being weighed down with this rank, which he did not want; St. Gregory left for the desert to see St. Basil the Great. Having returned from there reconciled in soul, he also began to reconcile others: he reconciled the Nazianzians to his father, who according to them signed a clever symbol of faith of the half-Arian.

In 372 St. Basil the Great used a few strong measures to incline his friend to accept the rank of bishop. St. Gregory considered himself, in deep humility, unworthy of this dignity, but, convinced by his father, unwillingly accepted consecration as the bishop of the city of Sasima. Meanwhile due to the intrigues of the enemies of St. Basil, another bishop was assigned to Sasima and St. Gregory conceded the See to him. In 379 St. Gregory, as most experienced in the affairs of faith, was invited by the Orthodox to Constantinople where the heretics dominated for 46 years for the building up of the church. St. Gregory could preach only in one private house

when he was in the capital, and at first only before a small number of the Orthodox. As the inhabitants of the capital, enemies of Orthodoxy, being seduced only by the external glamour of luxury, at first looked contemptuously at the holy elder, stooping under the burden of years, with his simple and poor clothes, his bare head and his face exhausted by tears of repentance. They laughed at his origins from an unknown poor village. St. Gregory with the power of his mind and eloquence turned to shame the malicious attacks of his enemies. He surprised all with his profound knowledge of Holy Scripture, with right judgment and authority, with fruitful and brilliant expression, with warmth and depth of feeling, with an unusual easiness of explanations and precise and concise speech. He is famous for his Five Theological Orations, preached in Constantinople in support of Orthodoxy.

In 381 at the Second Ecumenical Council St. Gregory was worthily assigned to the See of Constantinople and presided over the Council after the death of Meletius of Antioch. Meanwhile, other bishops challenged the assignment of St. Gregory to the see. The humbly wise, gentle and peace loving Gregory offered himself for peace in the Church and resigned from his archepiscopal chair. He spent the rest of his life in his native land, and reposed in 389. St. Gregory was honored by the Church for his sermons with the name of Theologian similarly to the Holy Apostle and Evangelist John; St. Gregory, in his research of true Christianity, and in the light of the book of Revelation, deeply comprehended and expressed fully and precisely the depths of the Divinity as far as is possible for a human being.

Saint Leo, Pope of Rome was known for his piety and learning. As a true shepherd of the flock, he was a zealous defender of the Orthodox teaching against heresies of the Manichaeans and the Eutychians. In his famous Tome of Leo, read at the Council of Chalcedon, he persuasively condemned the heresy of Eutychius. In 452 St. Leo by the power of his words kept Attila (leader of the Huns) from destroying Rome, and in 455 convinced Genseric (king of the Vandals) not to shed blood and not to burn the buildings in Rome. For his piety and zealousness for Orthodoxy he is called "great". He died in 461.

Saint John Chrysostom, Archbishop of Constantinople was born at Antioch in about the year 347 into the family of a military-commander. The youth studied under the finest philosophers and rhetoricians, but scorning the vain disciplines of pagan knowledge the future hierarch turned himself to the profound study of Holy Scripture and prayerful contemplation.

Saint Meletios, Bishop of Antioch, loved John like a son, guided him in the faith, and in the year 367 baptised him. After three years John was made a church-reader. Later on, when Saint Meletios had been sent off into exile by the emperor

Valens in the year 372, John together with Theodore (afterwards bishop of Mopsuetia) studied under the experienced instructors of ascetic life, the presbyters Flavian and Diodor of Tarsis. Soon John and his friend Basil came to be regarded for the occupying of episcopal cathedra-chairs, and the friends decided to withdraw into the wilderness, fleeing assignment. The saint spent four years in the toils of wilderness life. But to recover his health the saint was obliged to return to Antioch. In the year 381 the bishop of Antioch Saint Meletios ordained him deacon.

In the year 386 Saint John was ordained presbyter by the bishop of Antioch, Flavian. They imposed upon him the duty to preach the Word of God. Saint John was a splendid preacher, and for his rare talent with God-inspired words he received from his flock the title "Golden-Tongued" (Chrysostom). For twelve years the saint preached in church amidst a crowded throng of people, deeply stirring the hearts of his listeners, usually twice a week, but sometimes daily. His extant sermons are voluminous. The fame of the holy preacher grew, and in the year 397 with the demise of the Constantinople archbishop Nektarios – successor to St. Gregory the Theologian – St. John was summoned from Antioch for placement upon the Constantinople cathedra-seat.

When the empress Eudoxia connived at the confiscation of the last properties of the widow and children of a disgraced dignitary, the saint rose to their defense. The arrogant empress did not concede and nursed a grudge against the archpastor. The hatred of Eudoxia against the saint blazed forth anew, when malefactors told her that apparently the saint had her particularly in mind in his instruction on women of vanity. A trial-court was convened composed of hierarchs who earlier had been justly condemned by Chrysostom: Theophilos of Alexandria, Severian, bishop of Gabala, and others. This court of judgement declared Saint John deposed, and for his insult to the empress to be subject to execution. The emperor substituted exile for execution. At the church surged an angry crowd, resolved to defend their pastor. The saint, in order to avoid a riot, gave himself over into the hands of the authorities. That very night at Constantinople there occurred an earthquake. The terrified Eudoxia urgently besought the emperor to bring back the saint and promptly dispatched a letter to the banished pastor, beseeching him to return. And anew, in the capital church, the saint in a short talk praised the Lord, "For All His Ways." The slanderers fled to Alexandria.

A mere two months a new denunciation provoked the wrath of Eudoxia. In March, 404 an unjust Council exiled of Saint John. In the winter of 406 Saint John was confined to his bed with sickness. But his enemies were not to be appeased. From the capital came orders to transfer Saint John to desolate Pitius (in Abkhazia). Worn out by sickness, under accompanying military escort for three months in the

rain and frost, the saint made his final transferal; at Comana his powers failed him. At the crypt of Saint Basiliskos, comforted by a vision of the martyr ("Despair not, brother John! Tomorrow we shall be together"), and having communed the Holy Mysteries, the ecumenical hierarch with the words, "Glory to God in all things!", expired to the Lord on 14 September 407.



Basil the Great, Archbishop of Caesarea in Cappadocia was born in 329 in Caesarea, Cappadocia from god-fearing and noble Christian parents. The child's first education was received from his god-fearing grandmother Macrina, and his first instruction in the rules of eloquent speech was from his father in Neocaesarea. Reaching a youthful age, St. Basil traveled to the then prominent cities to complete his education. In Athens he met Gregory the Theologian and submitted himself to him and for the rest of his life remained his faithful friend. Having a brilliant mind and wisdom, St. Basil at the same time distinguished himself with good moral behavior, humility and a pure way of life. After accepting baptism, he was tonsured Reader and became interested in monasticism. He went to study monastic life in Syria, Palestine and Egypt. Returning from his travels, he settled in a hermitage near Neocaesarea, devoting himself to the ascetical efforts of fasting and prayer. When danger threatened the faith, St. Basil left the hermitage and was revealed as a most fervent fighter for Orthodoxy.

In 364 he was ordained a presbyter in the church in Caesarea. In 370 St. Basil was installed as the Bishop of Caesarea and in this rank, and not abandoning his ascetical paradigm of life, he fervently cared for his clergy from the first server at the altar to the last, all becoming wiser, and demanding from all strict virtue. St. Basil himself loved the beauty of the church, the elegance of the temple, harmony in worship, and this feeling inspired those around him. By word and purity of life that fervently edifies all his flock in faith and piety, he was "the father of orphans, protector of widows, and wealth for the poor, consolation of the ill, and guide of the wealthy, a staff for the old", "and a teacher of virtue for the youth who lived the monastic life". With burning Christian love for his neighbors, St. Basil built shelters, alms-houses, and hospitable hospices. In the words of St. Gregory the Theologian, he neither slept nor dozed and because of his efforts he exhausted the rest of his body, yet up to now he did not find the cure for evil. And only due to his efforts the church in Caesarea was saved from Arianism. He wrote influential works *On the Holy Spirit* and *On the Hexaemeron* (the six days of Creation). St. Basil died in 379 at the age of 50.

Hieromartyr Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage was son of a rich Carthaginian senator. He was a pagan for 46 years and received a brilliant education. Teaching rhetoric in Carthage and at the same time a lawyer, Cyprian was not free from sins. But leading an undisciplined life, he did not feel right with himself, was betrayed by his weaknesses, and hoped to find something better in life. His acquaintance with the Carthaginian priest Cecilius led Cyprian to learn the Christian faith and to receive baptism. This completely changed his life. Within a year after baptism he accepted the call to the presbytery (247), and after the death of the Carthaginian Bishop Donatus (in 248) he became bishop. According to contemporaries St. Cyprian had a serious mien, friendly and sincere. In his life he worked hard for good church order and for the correction of the abuse and disorder that dominated the Carthaginian church. During the severe persecution of Decius, at the suggestion of a revelation, he disappeared, but always was in spirit with his own flock and wrote from isolation a letter to Carthage in which he convinced the weak in faith to ascetic exploits, and calmed the mighty, protecting the latter from self-conceit and pride. St. Cyprian was revealed a sympathetic judge to those who fell from the faith, calming them hopefully for forgiveness and unity with the Church under the condition of sincere repentance.

In the year 252 in Carthage there was a terrible plague. During this time St. Cyprian was revealed truly as a guardian angel not only for Christians but also for pagans. Both by his own example and conviction he had Christians assist those suffering from the plague. In 257 during the Valerian persecution, St. Cyprian was imprisoned and within a year he was summoned to trial in Carthage and suffered

for Christ, beheaded by the sword. Before the completion of his execution, he removed his outer clothing. Having prayed to God, Cyprian blessed the people and ordered that 25 coins be given to the executioner in a sign of complete forgiveness. Then Cyprian blindfolded himself, extending his hands to join with the presbyter and the subdeacon standing near him and bent his head. Christians in scarves and towels collected his blood as precious treasure, and that same night by the light of torches, with prayers and great solemnity, buried the body of the hieromartyr.

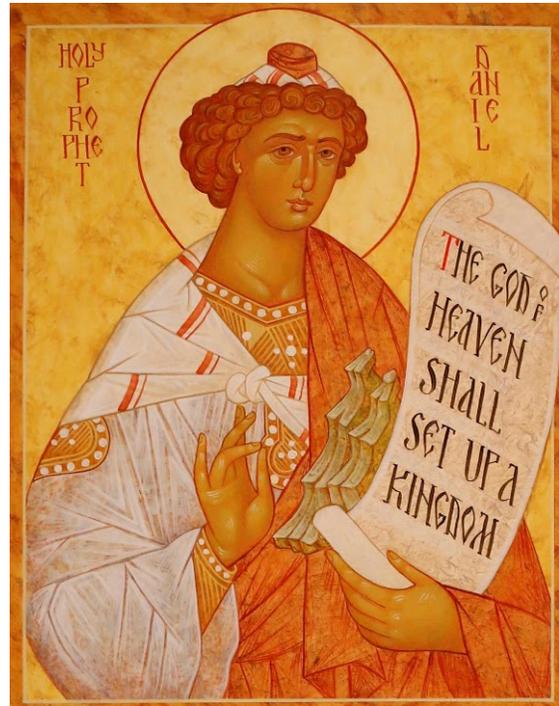
Saint Athanasius the Great, Patriarch of Alexandria was born at the end of the 3rd century in Alexandria where he also received his formation. Most of all he studied the Holy Scriptures, reading day and night and so he studied all the books of the Holy Scriptures as if it were one book. Zealously he also studied the works of the fathers before him, especially their commentaries. Together with all this he led a strictly ascetic life. Knowing all this, the Bishop of Alexandria Alexander ordained him a deacon. As a deacon, together with Bishop Alexander, St. Athanasius was present at the Ecumenical Council in Nicaea and actively participated in the dispute with Arius. After returning from Nicaea when Bishop Alexander died, the general choice of the heir fell upon Athanasius. The Arians had no other such awesome and implacable opponent as St. Athanasius, who conducted a merciless struggle with them up to the end of his life and came out of this struggle with the victory banner of Orthodoxy unharmed.

Everyone who liked Orthodoxy were converted to him after the council, conformed their teaching to his doctrine. Against contemporary errors he was armed with words and writings and in general by all measures he cared for the pacification of the Church. During this struggle he was exposed to countless dangers and persecutions by the Arians, he was repeatedly expelled from Alexandria and hid in Gallia, Italy and in the Egyptian desert by local ascetics. Distinguished by an unbowed steadfastness, heroic courage and flaming zeal, he endured all the trials, underwent all the sufferings and with the greatest patience, without the slightest change to his position for which he devoted all his life and for which he was ready at all times even to pour out his blood. According to St. Gregory the Theologian, St. Athanasius had all the virtues; his life and morals were a rule for bishops; his teachings were the laws for Orthodoxy. He is glorified by the Holy Church as a golden trumpet of theology, an advocate of the faith, a pillar of light and the foundation of the church. St. Athanasius left many writings, representing in itself an eternal monument of the indestructibility of Orthodoxy by any enemy. Some of his creations are treatises against the Arians, in others he explains the Holy Scriptures, in the third group he wrote canons of moral teaching. He also wrote a biography of St. Anthony the Great. St. Athanasius the Great reposed in 373 at the age of 80.

Holy Hieromartyr Ignatius the God-bearer – As the brightly shining lamp of the church, the pillar of patience and the rule of courage and the confirmation of faith, he was the disciple of the Holy Apostle John the Theologian and the second Bishop of Antioch. He ruled his own flock for 40 years, showing himself an example of a highly virtuous life. He was the first to establish antiphonal singing in the church. During the Dometian persecution, the holy shepherd "with the rudder of prayer and fasting, with indefatigableness in doctrine and zealousness of spirit, counteracted the turmoil in order that none would sink from lack of courage or inexperience", and from his side he expressed full readiness to accept the crown of martyrdom. This was his desire, and to his sincere joy it was soon fulfilled. During the reign of Trajan, St. Ignatius for his confession and propagation of the Christian faith was sent to Rome in fetters where for the entertainment of the people he was given to be torn apart by wild beasts in the Coliseum in the year 107. On the way to Rome, St. Ignatius wrote seven epistles to various churches. He was called God-bearer because in his childhood, according to tradition, he was taken into the hands of Jesus Christ Himself. But also because he became so used to feeding his heart with the memory of the sweet name of Jesus Christ, that this deep spiritual seal with sensitive images was stamped on this bodily organ and when, after his martyr's death, when his heart was cut asunder, the name of Jesus Christ was seen alphabetically represented in it.

Saint Cyril, Archbishop of Alexandria was born in Alexandria in the second half of the 4th century and at first practiced asceticism for about 5 years in Nitrian Desert. His uncle Theophilus, Archbishop of Alexandria, called and ordained him to be his deacon. Theophilus knew of Cyril's great talents, his firm faith and broad knowledge (he knew almost all the Holy Scriptures from memory) and is why he often assigned Cyril to the preaching of the word of God. After the death of Theophilus, endeared for his virtuous life, Cyril was elected in his place in the year 412. Removing Jews and Pagans, the enemies of the holy faith, from among his flock, St. Cyril was also busy establishing his flock in faith and piety. His fervent zealousness about the purity of Christian doctrines and unshakeable firmness in the defense of the faith was especially evident in the struggle against Nestorius, who disturbed the church with his heresy. St. Cyril wrote an exhortatory message to the Nestorians, letters to Emperor Theodosius the Younger, to Pope Celestine I and to various monasteries, opposing the opinions of Nestorius and stating the true Christian teaching about the incarnation of the Son of God. At the Third Ecumenical Council called in the city of Ephesus in the year 431, St. Cyril was the presiding officer. St. Cyril died in the year 444. He left many instructions in the faith and exhortatory works.

Holy Prophet Daniel – He was the child of notable Jews. Taken in captivity by the Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar, he was brought up at the court of this king, but he was faithful to his God and "not willing to be defiled by the most unlawful food." For opening and interpreting the dream which was seen by and bothered Nebuchadnezzar, the prophet Daniel was made the ruler of Babylon. During the reign of Belshazzar the Holy Prophet Daniel interpreted a mysterious inscription which was shown on the wall during a feast and announcing the downfall of the Babylonian kingdom. During the reign of the Persian King Darius, St. Daniel, on the slander of his enemies, was into a pit with lions, but the Lord shut up the mouth of the lions and the prophet remained unharmed. St. Daniel died in Persia. He wrote a book in which he precisely tells the specified time of the coming of the Messiah. The Holy Empress Helena translated the relics of St. Daniel to Constantinople.



The Holy King David came from simple stock, and was the youngest son of Jesse, from the root of Judah, and was engaged in shepherding sheep, but he was distinguished by a rare mind, great courage, unshakable patience, great meekness, with a touching tenderness of heart, strict godliness, had a deep faith in God and truly loved Him, living with the constant feeling of the presence of the unseen God and complete dependence on His leadership, and he was "a man according to the heart of God," and that is why he was selected by God to the kingdom in Israel. He reigned 1,000 years before the Nativity of the Savior and was the second king of the Israelites.

Before his reign, when he was still a young man, when the strong nation of the Philistines warred against the Israelites, he left,

with his firm trust in the help of God, for a one on one struggle with Goliath and with a single hit with a stone struck down the Philistine giant. Glorified for this by his compatriots, the young David with unshakable patience, meekness, and magnanimity had endured various attacks and evil intentions of Saul. Having become the king of the Israelites, David conducted various wars with the neighboring peoples, conquered them, and in his reign has extended the limits of the kingdom to a rather significant degree. He made Jerusalem the capitol of the state. He transferred the ark of testimony there and resolutely was going to construct a permanent magnificent temple to the Lord to house the ark; but rather the will of God was declared to him, that he would not construct the temple, but that it would be his son (Solomon), that David only prepared all that was necessary for the building of the temple and entrusted to his son his intention and desire to carry out its fulfillment.

Although the deeply edifying life of King David was also darkened, due to the frailty of human nature, with a heavy downfall, in this downfall he taught us the greatest example of repentant contrition and firm faith in God (see Psalm 50), which gave him the opportunity and power to throw off from himself the burden of sinfulness and raise himself up for a new spiritual life. The Book of Psalms serves as an inexhaustible treasury of the best examples of prayers, supplications, petitions, thanksgiving to God, the healing consolations for suffering souls, for those living in poverty, for those consumed with passions, and for the down-trodden. As a God-inspired prophet, the Holy David in his psalms proclaimed many clear and strong prophecies about Jesus Christ.

Holy Glorious Prophet Elijah – He was born in Tishbe (in Palestine), the son of Shobach, from the family of Levi. St. Elijah, chosen a vessel of the grace of the Holy Spirit since his very birth, was one of the most flaming adherents to true faith and piety, so that he could never indifferently know the impious, who left the true God and His law, and he was ready to exterminate them immediately if he did not see them repenting and turning to God. Elijah was called by God for prophetic service during the reign of the Israelite King Ahab (900 years before Christ).

To teach the impious King Ahab and the Israelite people seduced by him, Elijah struck the earth with a three year drought, "ended by



prayer to the heavens." After this, according to the word of God, he "hid himself by the brook Cherith" where "ravens brought him bread and meat every morning and evening" for his livelihood. Within a year "the Divine Prophet" wonderfully satisfied the Zarephath widow and son with a jar of flour and a cruse of oil increased through prayer and resurrected her son through prayer. Then, St. Elijah through prayer brought down fire from the heavens on the offering on Mount Carmel and proved to those people that Yahweh is the true God; after this by earnest prayers he stopped the rain on the ground thirsting from a prolonged drought, and burning with zeal he slew the priests of shame (priests of Baal and Astarte who seduced the people into idolatry) with his own blameless hands.

On Mount Horeb the great prophet was worthy as far as it is possible for one in the flesh of human nature to contemplate God face to face. By these great miracles Elijah contributed much to the maintenance of the true faith in God among the Israelite people and to the destruction of idolatry and prepared the way for the One who was the expectation of Israel and of all the world. Because of his saintly life and for his extraordinary flaming zeal for the glory of God St. Elijah was taken into heaven alive. This mysterious taking of Elijah alive into the upper world, according to the explanation of the Church, assures us that the dead will arise and serves as a proof of the general resurrection of the dead and the translation alive on the final day of judgment.

Righteous Melchizedek, king of Salem – He was a "priest of the most high God" (Genesis 14:18-20), who blessed our Forefather Abraham and "brought forth bread and wine," prefiguring the Holy Eucharist, centuries before the Law was given to Moses or Christ became incarnate. The Epistle to the Hebrews (ch. 7) reveals Melchizedek, the Priest-King, to be a type of Christ.

Venerable Father John of Damascus – The son of a famous dignitary serving at the court of the Damascus Caliph Abdalmalik, he received a high Christian education and was made the mayor of Damascus. He always valued the higher truth of life and zealously pursued the truth in the hope of salvation. During the reign of Emperor Leo the Isaurian, St. John, fired up with zeal, was revealed as the courageous defender of icon veneration, and full of fervent faith, indestructible persuasiveness and the living eloquence in writing in defense of icon veneration, strongly influenced his contemporaries.





The Emperor, wishing to ruin John sent a slanderous letter to the Caliph accusing John of treason to his master. The Caliph believed the slander and issued an order to chop off John's right hand. But after the prayer of St. John, the hand wonderfully was joined to the joint. [In thanksgiving, St. John painted the Icon of the Theotokos "of the Three Hands", a copy of which is in our cry room – Ed.] Soon after this St. John entered the Monastery of St. Sabbas the Sanctified in Palestine as a monk. Because of his former high rank, his spiritual father, as proof of John's obedience, forbade the Venerable John to write anything. The Venerable John carried out this obedience for a long time. When one of the brothers persistently asked him to compose a graveside hymn

on the occasion of the death of his brother, the Venerable John was touched by the tears of the unfortunate one and wrote those highly, poetical, tender hymns, which from then on have been sung in our Church during the burial service. The preceptor of Venerable John forgave him the infringement of his obedience and gave permission to write only after the Ven. John explicitly did his special assignments for penance, consisting in the cleaning of all dirty places in the monastery. Elevated to the rank of presbyter by the Jerusalem patriarch, Ven. John lived for a short time in Jerusalem. A few times he was imprisoned for his zeal for Orthodoxy. The rest of his days the Ven. John lived in the St. Sabbas Monastery where he practiced asceticism up to an extreme old age in deep humility and obedience. His "Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith" presents his foremost work of learned Christian theology, and serves hitherto as a paradigm for theologians. He wrote some especially remarkable hymns: the Octoechos, the



service for Pascha, the Canons for Christmas, Epiphany, Ascension, etc. St. John was called the "Golden Strings" for his soul inspiring fervent church hymns. He died in 777. (adapted from various sources)





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In Your Prayers – Please Remember... His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch BARTHOLOMEW, His Grace Bishop GREGORY, Fr. Joseph & Family, Greek Orthodox Archbishop Paul Yazigi of Aleppo, Syriac Orthodox Archbishop Yohanna Ibrahim of Aleppo, His Grace Bishop Neofitos of Nyeri and Mt. Kenya, Fr. John & Pani Betty Jean Baranik, Fr. Vincent Saverino, Presbyteria Katie Baker and family, Santiago Alzugaray, Alicia Barosio and family, Jeffrey Carey, Tatyana and Slava Chumak & family, Xenia Chilkowich, Jon Church, Ramius Connour, Curtis Cooper, Luke Cooper, Tina Crull, Mary Diane David, Ron Dominiecki, Linda A. Georgiev, Heather Himler, John Homick, Cameron Houk, Helen Janowiak, John M. Janowiak, Tucker Karl and family, Robert & Pam Karpin, Andrew Kinn, Kopan family, Brian, Helen, and Luke Mahony, Valentina Makowelski, Susan Matula, Anna Meinhold, Dn. Henry Middleton, David & Kathryn Newman, Bobby Nutter & Family, Henry & Lisa Osborne, Westin Perry & Parents, John Reece, Mary Reed, Chris & Kaitlin Rixey, Jerry Von Ronne, Anne Rosario, James, Theodore and Christina Ristas, Samson Family, Sharon Sheptak, Alexander Shostko, Bernie Takabayashi & family, Dawn & Faith Ulmschneider, Lydia Vita, Christine, Marshall, Nathaniel, Subdcn. Nectarios and Ia, the Syrian Christians displaced by war, Mother Virginia Marie and the Carmelite Nuns of Port Tobacco, and all those in need of our prayers. (Please advise Fr. Joseph of changes.)