

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

Sunday School 9:30 AM | Divine Liturgy 10:00 AM

October 14, 2018 – 20th Sunday After Pentecost

Holy Fathers of the Seventh Ecumenical Council

“You are most glorified, O Christ our God, Who have established our Fathers as luminous stars upon the earth, and through them has guided us all to the true Faith” (troparion for the Fathers of the Seventh Ecumenical Council).

Holy Father, keep through Your name those whom You have given Me, that they may be one as We are... I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us (John 17:11, 20-21). We need to bring this prayer of the Savior to mind more and more often, in order not to stray from the path within the darkness of the godless world; in order not to be deceived by the bright, shrill light of ungodly doctrines; in order to be with God always; and in order to remember that this unity is possibly only in God’s Church.

Fear not, little flock! – only believe, the Lord is with you all days (Luke 12:32). Fear not, little flock! – I shall leave you God’s Church, the pillar and ground of truth. Live in it; live through it; only it is immovable, neither changing nor deceiving, for the Lord Himself is in it. He guards the holy truth in the catholicity of the Church’s decisions.

For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us (Acts 15:28): conciliar decisions were proclaimed using these words on every occasion and at all times. The seven

pillars – the Seven Ecumenical Councils – firmly and unwaveringly support the vault of the Church, while the canons protect God’s truth in the world.

My dear ones, it is the Fathers of the Seventh Ecumenical Council to whom we are obliged to give thanks that our churches, our cells, and our homes are sanctified with holy icons; that living flames glimmer before them in lampadas; that we fall down in prostration before the holy relics; and that the smoke of holy incense lifts our hearts to the heavenly abodes, parting us from earth. The grace of revelation from these holy objects has filled many, many hearts with love for God and animated many spirits that were already quite dead.

But all this might not have been, if there had not been a time in the eighth century when the Holy Fathers of the Church – holy hierarchs and monks – stood up in defense of these holy objects. Their struggle, to the shedding of blood, extinguished many bonfires made up of icons, which had been blazing over the course of fifty years.

The Seventh Ecumenical Council affirmed that iconography is a special form of revelation of Divine reality; and that through the Divine services and icons, Divine revelation becomes accessible to the faithful, to our domain. Through the icon, just as through Holy Scripture, we not only learn about God, but we come to know God; through the holy icons of the God-pleasers we touch transfigured man, a partaker of the Divine life; through the icon we receive the all-sanctifying grace of the Holy Spirit.

The icon, according to the Fathers, is also prayer. A consecrated icon is itself holy. When we pray before it, the holy words of our prayers and the visible holy image of the icon before us simultaneously transfigure us, directing even us sinners and earthly people to holiness....

My friends! If you have a sacred object like an icon at home, do not forget about it. Let us turn our gaze to it daily, let us speak with it in the words of prayer or of a troparion, or let us simply stand silently, clinging to it with our soul. Then we will draw daily sanctification, life for the soul, and strength from the icon.

I will not list examples of God’s gifts that we have received through the holy icons and through the holy Mysteries of the Church. They are innumerable. Every day the Holy Church glorifies the icons of the Mother of God and celebrates the memory of the holy God-pleasers. Their icons are placed before us on analogions for veneration. The living religious experience of each one of us, the experience of our gradual transfiguration through them, makes us faithful children of the Holy, Universal, Orthodox Church. This is the true embodiment in the world of the works of the Holy Fathers of the Seventh Ecumenical Council. That is why, of all the victories over a multitude of various heresies, only the victory over iconoclasm

and the restoration of icon-veneration was proclaimed to be the Triumph of Orthodoxy. The faith of the Fathers of the Seven Ecumenical Councils is the eternal and immutable foundation of Orthodoxy. But now the terrible waves of the worldwide flood that once destroyed the human race are again covering the world with lies and falsehood, ready to engulf the universe, to destroy faith in Christ, and to distort His teaching. Our only salvation, our ark, is the Holy Church, guided on its way by its heavenly luminaries: the writings of the holy God-pleasers.

Let us not neglect this ark! Let us not deviate by our self-opinion and pride from humbly obeying the truth of the church! Let us not board any other ship that has been damaged by false teachings! Let us not fall away through coldness and duplicity of soul from the guidance of holy scripture! And let us be saved!

Glory to the Immortal and Unseen God the Father! Glory to the Immortal God the Son, Who has revealed Himself in the flesh! Glory to the Immortal God the Holy Spirit, Who has spoken through the Prophets, Apostles, and Holy Fathers! Most Holy Trinity, Glory to You! For each and every thing, glory to You! Amen.

– Archimandrite John Krestiankin (*adapted from pramvir.com*)

Today's Epistle Lesson – St. Paul's Letter to the Hebrews 13:7-16

Brethren, remember those who rule over you, who have spoken the word of God to you, whose faith follow, considering the outcome of *their* conduct. Jesus Christ *is* the same yesterday, today, and forever. Do not be carried away with various and strange doctrines. For *it is* good that the heart be established by grace, not with foods which have not profited those who have been occupied with them. We have an altar from which those who serve the tabernacle have no right to eat. For the bodies of those animals, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned outside the camp. Therefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered outside the gate. Therefore let us go forth to Him, outside the camp, bearing His reproach. For here we have no continuing city, but we seek the one to come. Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of *our* lips, giving thanks to His name. But do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.

Today's Gospel Lesson – Saint John 17:1-13

At that time, Jesus spoke these words, lifted up His eyes to heaven, and said: "Father, the hour has come. Glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You, as You have given Him authority over all flesh, that He shall give eternal life to as many as You have given Him. And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent. I have glorified

You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do. And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was.

I have manifested Your name to the men whom You have given Me out of the world. They were Yours, You gave them to Me, and they have kept Your word. Now they have known that all things which You have given Me are from You. For I have given to them the words which You have given Me; and they have received *them*, and have known surely that I came forth from You; and they have believed that You sent Me. I pray for them. I do not pray for the world but for those whom You have given Me, for they are Yours. And all Mine are Yours, and Yours are Mine, and I am glorified in them. Now I am no longer in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to You. Holy Father, keep them through Your name which You have given Me, that they may be one as We *are*. While I was with them in the world, I kept them in Your name. Those whom You gave Me I have kept; and none of them is lost except the son of perdition, that the Scripture might be fulfilled. But now I come to You, and these things I speak in the world, that they may have My joy fulfilled in themselves."

A Word From the Holy Fathers

To the lady, his sister, dearer to him than his eyes and life, Ambrose Bishop. As I do not wish anything which takes place here in your absence to escape the knowledge of your holiness, you must know that we have found some bodies of holy martyrs. For after I had dedicated the basilica, many, as it were, with one mouth began to address me, and said: "Consecrate this as you did the Roman basilica." And I answered: "Certainly I will if I find any relics of martyrs." And at once a kind of prophetic ardor seemed to enter my heart.

Why should I use many words? God favored us, for even the clergy were afraid who were bidden to clear away the earth from the spot before the chancel screen of SS. Felix and Nabor. I found the fitting signs, and on bringing in some on whom hands were to be laid, the power of the holy martyrs became so manifest, that even while I was still silent, one was seized and thrown prostrate at the holy burial-place. We found two men of marvelous stature, such as those of ancient days. All the bones were perfect, and there was much blood. During the whole of those two days there was an enormous concourse of people. Briefly we arranged the whole in order, and as evening was now coming on transferred them to the basilica of Fausta, where watch was kept during the night, and some received the laying on of hands. On the following day we translated the relics to the basilica called

Ambrosian. During the translation a blind man was healed. I addressed the people then as follows:

When I considered the immense and unprecedented numbers of you who are here gathered together, and the gifts of divine grace which have shone forth in the holy martyrs, I must confess that I felt myself unequal to this task, and that I could not express in words what we can scarcely conceive in our minds or take in with our eyes. But when the course of holy Scripture began to be read, the Holy Spirit Who spoke in the prophets granted me to utter something worthy of so great a gathering, of your expectations, and of the merits of the holy martyrs.

"The heavens," it is said, "declare the glory of God." When this Psalm is read, it occurs to one that not so much the material elements as the heavenly merits seem to offer praise worthy of God. And by the chance of this day's lessons it is made clear what "heavens" declare the glory of God. Look at the holy relics at my right hand and at my left, see men of heavenly conversation, behold the trophies of a heavenly mind. These are the heavens which declare the glory of God, these are His handiwork which the firmament proclaims. For not worldly enticements, but the grace of the divine working, raised them to the firmament of the most sacred Passion, and long before by the testimony of their character and virtues bore witness of them, that they continued steadfast against the dangers of this world.

Paul was a heaven, when he said: "Our conversation is in heaven." James and John were heavens, and then were called "sons of thunder"; and John, being as it were a heaven, saw the Word with God. The Lord Jesus Himself was a heaven of perpetual light, when He was declaring the glory of God, that glory which no man had seen before. And therefore He said: "No man has seen God at any time, except the only-begotten Son, Who is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him." If you seek for the handiwork of God, listen to Job when he says: "The Spirit of God Who hath made me." And so strengthened against the temptations of the devil, he kept his footsteps constantly without offence. But let us go on to what follows.

"Day," it is said, "unto day utters speech." Behold the true days, where no darkness of night intervenes. Behold the days full of life and eternal brightness, which uttered the word of God, not in speech which passes away, but in their inmost heart, by constancy in confession, and perseverance in their witness.

Another Psalm which was read says: "Who is like the Lord our God, Who dwells on high, and regards lowly things in heaven and in the earth?" The Lord regarded indeed lowly things when He revealed to His Church the relics of the holy martyrs lying hidden under the unnoted turf, whose souls were in heaven, their bodies in the earth: "raising the poor out of the dust, and lifting the needy from the mire,"

and you see how He has "set them with the princes of His people." Whom are we to esteem as the princes of the people but the holy martyrs, amongst whose number Protasius and Gervasius long unknown are now enrolled, who have caused the Church of Milan, barren of martyrs hitherto, now as the mother of many children, to rejoice in the distinctions and instances of her own sufferings.

....You know – nay, you have yourselves seen – that many are cleansed from evil spirits, that very many also, having touched with their hands the robe of the saints, are freed from those ailments which oppressed them; you see that the miracles of old time are renewed, when through the coming of the Lord Jesus grace was more largely shed forth upon the earth, and that many bodies are healed as it were by the shadow of the holy bodies. How many napkins are passed about! How many garments, laid upon the holy relics and endowed with healing power, are claimed! All are glad to touch even the outside thread, and whosoever touches will be made whole.

Thanks be to You, Lord Jesus, that at this time You have stirred up for us the spirits of the holy martyrs, when Your Church needs greater protection. Let all know what sort of champions I desire, who are able to defend, but desire not to attack. These have I gained for you, O holy people, such as may help all and injure none. Such defenders do I desire, such are the soldiers I have, that is, not soldiers of this world, but soldiers of Christ. I fear no ill-will on account of them, the more powerful their patronage is the greater safety is there in it. And I wish for their protection for those very persons who grudge them to me. Let them come, then, and see my attendants. I do not deny that I am surrounded by such arms: "Some trust in chariots, and some in horses, but we will boast in the Name of the Lord our God."

The course of divine Scripture relates that Elisha, when surrounded by the army of the Syrians, told his servant, who was afraid, not to fear; "for," said he, "they that be for us are more than those against us;" and in order to prove this, he prayed that the eyes of Gehazi might be opened, and when they were opened, he saw that numberless hosts of angels were present. And we, though we cannot see them, yet feel their presence. Our eyes were shut, so long as the bodies of the saints lay hidden. The Lord opened our eyes, and we saw the aids wherewith we have been often protected. We used not to see them, but yet we had them. And so, as though the Lord had said to us when trembling, "See what great martyrs I have given you," so we with opened eyes behold the glory of the Lord, which is passed in the passion of the martyrs, and present in their working. We have escaped, brethren, no slight lead of shame; we had patrons and knew it not. We have found this one thing, in which we seem to excel those who have gone before us. That knowledge of the martyrs, which they lost, we have regained.

The glorious relics are taken out of an ignoble burying-place, the trophies are displayed under heaven. The tomb is wet with blood. The marks of the bloody triumph are present, the relics are found undisturbed in their order, the head separated from the body. Old men now repeat that they once heard the names of these martyrs and read their titles.... Though this be the gift of God, yet I cannot deny the favor which the Lord Jesus has granted to the time of my priesthood, and since I myself am not worthy to be a martyr, I have obtained these martyrs for you.

Let these triumphant victims be brought to the place where Christ is the victim. But He upon the altar, Who suffered for all; they beneath the altar, who were redeemed by His Passion. I had destined this place for myself, for it is fitting that the priest should rest there where he has been wont to offer, but I yield the right hand portion to the sacred victims; that place was due to the martyrs. Let us, then, deposit the sacred relics, and lay them up in a worthy resting-place, and let us celebrate the whole day with faithful devotion.

The people called out and demanded that the deposition of the martyrs should be postponed until the Lord's Day, but at length it was agreed that it should take place the following day. On the following day again I preached to the people on this sort.... What else but the Word of God have you during these two days uttered with inmost affection, and have proved yourselves to have the knowledge of the faith?

And they who usually do so have a grudge against this solemnity of yours; and since because of their envious disposition they cannot endure this solemnity, they hate the cause of it, and go so far in their madness as to deny the merits of the martyrs, whose deeds even the evil spirits confess. But this is not to be wondered at since such is the faithlessness of unbelievers that the confession of the devil is often more easy to endure. For the devil said: "Jesus, Son of the living God, why are You come to torment us before the time?" And the Jews hearing this, even themselves denied Him to be the Son of God. And at this time you have heard the devils crying out, and confessing to the martyrs that they cannot bear their sufferings, and saying, "Why are ye come to torment us so severely?"

The Arians deny that the blind man received sight, but he denies not that he is healed. He says: I who could not see now see. He says: I ceased to be blind, and proves it by the fact. They deny the benefit, who are unable to deny the fact. The man is known: so long as he was well he was employed in the public service; his name is Severus, a butcher by trade. He had given up his occupation when this hindrance befell him. He calls for evidence those persons by whose kindness he was supported; he adduces those as able to affirm the truth of his visitation whom he had as witnesses of his blindness. He declares that when he touched the hem of

the robe of the martyrs, wherewith the sacred relics were covered, his sight was restored.

Is not this like that which we read in the Gospel? For we praise the power of the same Author in each case, nor does it be a work or a gift, since He confers a gift in His works, and works in His gift. For that which He gave to others to be done, this His Name effects in the work of others. So we read in the Gospel, that the Jews, when they saw the gift of healing in the blind man, called for the testimony of his parents, and asked: "How does your son see?" when he said: "Whereas I was blind, now I see." And in this case the man says, "I was blind and now I see." Ask others if you do not believe me; ask strangers if you think his parents are in collusion with me.

The obstinacy of these men is more hateful than that of the Jews, for the latter, when they doubted, at least asked his parents; the others enquire in secret and deny in public, incredulous not as to the work, but as to its Author. But I ask what it is that they do not believe; is it whether anyone can be aided by the martyrs? This is the same thing as not to believe Christ, for He Himself said: "You shall do greater things than these." How? By those martyrs whose merits have been long efficacious, whose bodies were long since found? Here I ask, do they bear a grudge against me, or against the holy martyrs? If against me, are any miracles wrought by me? By my means or in my name? Why, then, grudge me what is not mine? If it be against the martyrs (for if they bear no grudge against me, it can only be against them), they show that the martyrs were of another faith than that which they believe. For otherwise they would not have any feeling against their works, did they not judge that they have not the faith which was in them, that faith established by the tradition of our forefathers, which the devils themselves cannot deny, but the Arians do.

We have to-day heard those on whom hands were laid say, that no one can be saved unless he believe in the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit; that he is dead and buried who denies the Holy Spirit, and believes not the almighty power of the Trinity. The devil confesses this, but the Arians refuse to do so.... The holy sufferings of the martyrs are proved by the benefits they confer. These have persons to judge of them, namely, those who are cleansed, and witnesses, namely, those who are set free. That voice, which the soundness of those utters who came infirm; better is the voice which blood sends forth, for blood has a loud voice reaching from earth to heaven. You have read how God said: "Your brother's blood cries out to Me." This blood cries by its color, the blood cries by the voice of its effects, the blood cries by the triumph of its passion. We have acceded to your request, and have postponed till to-day the deposition of the relics which was to have taken place yesterday.

— St. Ambrose of Milan, *Letter 22*

Also Commemorated Today: Martyrs Nazarius, Gervasius, Protasius and Celsus of Milan

The Holy Martyrs Nazarius, Gervasius, Protasius and Celsus of Milan suffered during the reign of the emperor Nero (54-68). Saint Nazarius (son of the Christian Perpetua and the Jew Africanus) was born at Rome and was baptized by Bishop Linus. From his youth Nazarius decided to devote his life to preaching Christ and to aid wandering Christians. With this intent he left Rome and arrived in Mediolanum (Milan).

Saint Nazarius met Protasius and Gervasius when he was visiting Christians in the Mediolanum prison. He so loved the twins that he wanted to suffer and die with them. The ruler heard that he was visiting the prisoners, so he had Saint Nazarius beaten with rods, then driven from the city. Saint Nazarius proceeded to Gaul (modern France), and there he successfully preached Christianity and converted many pagans. In the city of Kimel he baptized Celsus, the son of a Christian woman who entrusted her child to the saint. Nazarius raised the boy in piety, and acquired a faithful disciple and coworker in his missionary labors. The pagans threw the saints to wild animals to be eaten, but the beasts would not touch them. Afterwards, they tried to drown the martyrs in the sea, but they walked upon the water as if on dry land. The soldiers who carried out the orders were so amazed that they themselves accepted Christianity and released the holy martyrs.

Saints Nazarius and Celsus went to Milan and visited Gervasius and Protasius in prison. For this, they were brought before Nero, who ordered that Saints Nazarius and Celsus be beheaded. Soon after this the holy brothers Gervasius and Protasius were also executed. The relics of all four martyrs were stolen by a Christian named Philip, and were buried in his house.

Many years later, during the reign of the holy Emperor Theodosius (408-450), Saint Ambrose, Bishop of Milan (December 7), discovered the relics of Saints Gervasius and Protasius through a revelation from God. In the reign of Arcadius and Honorius, Saint Ambrose also discovered the relics of Saints Nazarius and Celsus. The holy relics, glorified by many healings, were solemnly transferred to the Milan cathedral. (*from oca.org*)

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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, Presbytera Katie Baker and family, Santiago Alzugaray, 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 Meinholt, 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, the newly reposed handmaiden of God Alicia Barosio, and all those in need of our prayers. (Please advise Fr. Joseph of changes.)