

Saints Peter and Paul Orthodox Church

Albanian Archdiocese - OCA

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SUNDAY, MAY 21

6th Sunday of Pascha

Blind Man

Holy Equals-to-the-Apostles Emperor Constantine and his mother, Helen

Tone 5 Troparion (Resurrection)

*Let us, the faithful, praise and worship the Word,
co-eternal with the Father and the Spirit,
born for our salvation from the Virgin;
for He willed to be lifted up on the Cross in the
flesh,
to endure death,
and to raise the dead
by His glorious Resurrection.*

Tone 8 Troparion (Sts. Constantine and Helen)

*Thy servant Constantine, O Lord and only Lover
of man,
beheld the figure of the Cross in the heavens.
Like Paul, not having received his call from men,
but as an apostle among rulers set by Thy hand
over the royal city,
he preserved lasting peace through the prayers of
the Theotokos.*

Tone 3 Kontakion (Sts. Constantine and Helen)

*Today Constantine and his mother Helen reveal
the precious Cross,
the weapon of Orthodox Christians against their
enemies,
for it is manifest for us as a great and fearful sign
in struggle.*

Tone 4 Kontakion (Pentecostarion)

*I come to Thee, O Christ, blind from birth in my
spiritual eyes,
and call to Thee in repentance:
“Thou art the most radiant Light of those in
darkness.”*

Prokeimenon

Tone 8 (Pentecostarion)

Pray and make your vows / before the Lord, our God! (Ps. 75:10a)

V. In Judah God is known; His name is great in Israel. (Ps. 75:1)

Tone 8 (Sts. Constantine and Helen)

V. Their proclamation has gone out into all the earth, / and their words to the ends of the universe.
(Ps. 18:4)

✠ The Epistle Reading ✠

Acts 26:1-5, 12-20 (*Epistle, Saints*)

Then Agrippa said to Paul, "You are permitted to speak for yourself." So Paul stretched out his hand and answered for himself: "I think myself happy, King Agrippa, because today I shall answer for myself before you concerning all the things of which I am accused by the Jews, especially because you are expert in all customs and questions which have to do with the Jews. Therefore I beg you to hear me patiently. My manner of life from my youth, which was spent from the beginning among my own nation at Jerusalem, all the Jews know. They knew me from the first, if they were willing to testify, that according to the strictest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee. While thus occupied, as I journeyed to Damascus with authority and commission from the chief priests, at midday, O king, along the road I saw a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, shining around me and those who journeyed with me. And when we all had fallen to the ground, I heard a voice speaking to me and saying in the Hebrew language, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.' So I said, 'Who are You, Lord?' And He said, 'I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. But rise and stand on your feet; for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to make you a minister and a witness both of the things which you have seen and of the things which I will yet reveal to you. I will deliver you from the Jewish people, as well as from the Gentiles, to whom I now send you, to open their eyes, in order to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me.' Therefore, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, but declared first to those in Damascus and in Jerusalem, and throughout all the region of Judea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent, turn to God, and do works befitting repentance.

Veprat e Apostujve 26:1-5, 12-20

Edhe Agripa i tha Pavlit: Ke leje të flasësh për veten tënde. Atëherë Pavli, si shtriu dorën u mbrojti: O mbret Agripa, e quaj veten time të lumtur, sepse do të mbrohem përpara teje sot për gjithë sa akuzohem nga Judenjtë, po më tepër sepse ti i di gjithë zakonet dhe çështjet e Judenjve; prandaj të lutem të më dëgjosh me zemërgjerësi. Jetën time që prej djalërisë, të cilën e jetova që në fillim në mes të kombit tim në Jerusalem, e dinë të gjithë Judenjtë, sepse më njohin që herët, në qoftë se duan të dëshmojnë, se jetova Farise sipas sektit më të rreptë të fesë sonë. Edhe mbi këto e sipër, kur isha duke shkuar në Damask me pushtet e me porosi nga ana e kryepriftërinjve, në mes të ditës, rrugës pashë, o mbret, se prej qielli një dritë, që e kalonte ndriçimin e diellit, ndriti rreth meje dhe atyre që udhëtonin bashkë me mua. Edhe si ramë të gjithë përdhe, dëgjova një zë që më fliste mua e që thoshte në gjuhën hebraishte: Saul, Saul, pse më përndjek? Është keq për ty t'u biesh thumbave me shkelma. Edhe unë thashë: Cili je ti, o Zot? Edhe ai tha: Unë jam Jisui, të cilin ti po përndjek. Po ngrihu dhe qëndro në këmbët e tua; sepse për këtë u shfaqta te ti, që të vë ty shërbëtor dhe dëshmitar edhe të atyre që pe edhe të atyre me të cilat do të të shfaqem ty. Duke të zgjedhur ty nga populli e nga kombet, tek të cilët tani po të dërgoj, që të hapësh sytë e tyre, që të kthehen nga errësira në dritë, dhe nga pushteti i Satanait te Perëndia, që të marrin ndjesë mëkatesh, edhe trashëgim në mes të të shenjtëruarve me anë të besimit tek unë. Prandaj, o mbret Agripa, nuk u bëra i pabindur në këtë vegim nga qielli, por u predikojta më parë atyre në Damask e në Jerusalem, edhe nëpër gjithë dheun e Judesë, edhe pastaj në kombet, të pendohen dhe të kthehen tek Perëndia, duke bërë punë të denja për pendim.

Деяния 26:1-5, 12-20

Агриппа сказал Павлу: позволяется тебе говорить за себя. Тогда Павел, простерши руку, стал говорить в свою защиту: царь Агриппа! почитаю себя счастливым, что сегодня могу защищаться перед тобою во всем, в чем обвиняют меня Иудеи, тем более, что ты знаешь все обычаи и спорные мнения Иудеев. Посему прошу тебя выслушать меня великодушно. Жизнь мою от юности [моей], которую сначала проводил я среди народа моего в Иерусалиме, знают все Иудеи; они издавна знают обо мне, если захотят свидетельствовать, что я жил фарисеем по строжайшему в нашем вероисповедании учению. Для сего, идя в Дамаск со властью и поручением от первосвященников, среди дня на дороге я увидел, государь, с неба свет, превосходящий солнечное сияние, осиявший меня и шедших со мною. Все мы упали на землю, и я услышал голос, говоривший мне на еврейском языке: Савл, Савл! что ты гонишь Меня? Трудно тебе идти против рожна. Я сказал: кто Ты, Господи? Он сказал: 'Я Иисус, Которого ты гонишь. Но встань и стань на ноги твои; ибо Я для того и явился тебе, чтобы поставить тебя служителем и

свидетелем того, что ты видел и что Я открою тебе, избавляя тебя от народа Иудейского и от язычников, к которым Я теперь посылаю тебя открыть глаза им, чтобы они обратились от тьмы к свету и от власти сатаны к Богу, и верую в Меня получили прощение грехов и жребий с освященными'. Поэтому, царь Агриппа, я не воспротивился небесному видению, но сперва жителям Дамаска и Иерусалима, потом всей земле Иудейской и язычникам проповедывал, чтобы они покаяться и обратились к Богу, делая дела, достойные покаяния.

Tone 8

Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia!

V. Look upon me and have mercy on me! *(Ps. 118:132a)*

V. Guide my steps according to Thy word! *(Ps. 118:133a)*

Tone 1

V. I have exalted one chosen out of My people. *(Ps. 88:18b)*

Equal of the Apostles and Emperor Constantine with his Mother Helen

The Church calls Saint Constantine (306-337) “the Equal of the Apostles,” and historians call him “the Great.” He was the son of the Caesar Constantius Chlorus (305-306), who governed the lands of Gaul and Britain. His mother was Saint Helen, a Christian of humble birth.

At this time the immense Roman Empire was divided into Western and Eastern halves, governed by two independent emperors and their corulers called “Caesars.” Constantius Chlorus was Caesar in the Western Roman Empire. Saint Constantine was born in 274, possibly at Nish in Serbia. In 294, Constantius divorced Helen in order to further his political ambition by marrying a woman of noble rank. After he became emperor, Constantine showed his mother great honor and respect, granting her the imperial title “Augusta.”

Constantine, the future ruler of all the whole Roman Empire, was raised to respect Christianity. His father did not persecute Christians in the lands he governed. This was at a time when Christians were persecuted throughout the Roman Empire by the emperors Diocletian (284-305) and his corulers Maximian Galerius (305-311) in the East, and the emperor Maximian Hercules (284-305) in the West.

After the death of Constantius Chlorus in 306, Constantine was acclaimed by the army at York as emperor of Gaul and Britain. The first act of the new emperor was to grant the freedom to practice Christianity in the lands subject to him. The pagan Maximian Galerius in the East and the fierce tyrant Maxentius in the West hated Constantine and they plotted to overthrow and kill him, but Constantine bested them in a series of battles, defeating his opponents with the help of God. He prayed to God to give him a sign which would inspire his army to fight valiantly, and the Lord showed him a radiant Sign of the Cross in the heavens with the inscription “In this Sign, conquer.”

After Constantine became the sole ruler of the Western Roman Empire, he issued the Edict of Milan in 313 which guaranteed religious tolerance for Christians. Saint Helen, who was a Christian, may have influenced him in this decision. In 323, when he became the sole ruler of the entire Roman Empire, he extended the provisions of the Edict of Milan to the Eastern half of the Empire. After three hundred years of persecution, Christians could finally practice their faith without fear.

Renouncing paganism, the Emperor did not let his capital remain in ancient Rome, the former center of the pagan realm. He transferred his capital to the East, to the city of Byzantium, which was renamed Constantinople, the city of Constantine (May 11). Constantine was deeply convinced that only Christianity could unify the immense Roman Empire with its diverse peoples. He supported the Church in every way. He recalled Christian confessors from banishment, he built churches, and he showed concern for the clergy.

The emperor deeply revered the victory-bearing Sign of the Cross of the Lord, and also wanted to find the actual Cross upon which our Lord Jesus Christ was crucified. For this purpose he sent his own mother, the holy Empress Helen, to Jerusalem, granting her both power and money. Patriarch Macarius of Jerusalem and Saint Helen began the search, and through the will of God, the Life-Creating Cross was miraculously discovered in 326. (The account of the finding of the Cross of the Lord is found under the Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross, September 14). The Orthodox Church commemorates the Uncovering of the Precious Cross and the Precious Nails by the Holy Empress Helen on March 6.

While in Palestine, the holy empress did much of benefit for the Church. She ordered that all places connected with the earthly life of the Lord and His All-Pure Mother, should be freed of all traces of paganism, and she commanded that churches should be built at these places.

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John 9:1-38 (*Gospel*)

Now as Jesus passed by, He saw a man who was blind from birth. And His disciples asked Him, saying, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" Jesus answered, "Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but that the works of God should be revealed in him. I must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day; the night is coming when no one can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world." When He had said these things, He spat on the ground and made clay with the saliva; and He anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay. And He said to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (which is translated, Sent). So he went and washed, and came back seeing. Therefore the neighbors and those who previously had seen that he was blind said, "Is not this he who sat and begged?" Some said, "This is he." Others said, "He is like him." He said, "I am he." Therefore they said to him, "How were your eyes opened?" He answered and said, "A Man called Jesus made clay and anointed my eyes and said to me, 'Go to the pool of Siloam and wash.' So I went and washed, and I received sight." Then they said to him, "Where is He?" He said, "I do not know." They brought him who formerly was blind to the Pharisees. Now it was a Sabbath when Jesus made the clay and opened his eyes. Then the Pharisees also asked him again how he had received his sight. He said to them, "He put clay on my eyes, and I washed, and I see." Therefore some of the Pharisees said, "This Man is not from God, because He does not keep the Sabbath." Others said, "How can a man who is a sinner do such signs?" And there was a division among them. They said to the blind man again, "What do you say about Him because He opened your eyes?" He said, "He is a prophet." But the Jews did not believe concerning him, that he had been blind and received his sight, until they called the parents of him who had received his sight. And they asked them, saying, "Is this your son, who you say was born blind? How then does he now see?" His parents answered them and said, "We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind; but by what means he now sees we do not know, or who opened his eyes we do not know. He is of age; ask him. He will speak for himself." His parents said these things because they feared the Jews, for the Jews had agreed already that if anyone confessed that He was Christ, he would be put out of the synagogue. Therefore his parents said, "He is of age; ask him." So they again called the man who was blind, and said to him, "Give God the glory! We know that this Man is a sinner." He answered and said, "Whether He is a sinner or not I do not know. One thing I know: that though I was blind, now I see." Then they said to him again, "What did He do to you? How did He open your eyes?" He answered them, "I told you already, and you did not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you also want to become His disciples?" Then they reviled him and said, "You are His disciple, but we are Moses' disciples. We know that God spoke to Moses; as for this fellow, we do not know where He is from." The man answered and said to them, "Why, this is a marvelous thing, that you do not know where He is from; yet He has opened my eyes! Now we know that God does not hear sinners; but if anyone is a worshiper of God and does His will, He hears him. Since the world began it has been unheard of that anyone opened the eyes of one who was born blind. If this Man were not from God, He could do nothing." They answered and said to him, "You were completely born in sins, and are you teaching us?" And they cast him out. Jesus heard that they had cast him out; and when He had found him, He said to him, "Do you believe in the Son of God?" He answered and said, "Who is He, Lord, that I may believe in Him?" And Jesus said to him, "You have both seen Him and it is He who is talking with you." Then he said, "Lord, I believe!" And he worshiped Him.

Joanit 9:1-38

Edhe duke kaluar andej, pa një njeri të verbër që prej lindjes. Edhe nxënësit e tij e pyetën, duke thënë: Rabbi, cili mëkatoi, ky apo prindërit e tij, që të lindë i verbër? Jisui u përgjigj: As ky mëkatoi, as prindërit e tij, po që të tregohen punët e Perëndisë tek ai. Unë duhet të bëj punët e atij që më dërgoi, deri sa është ditë; vjen nata, kur asnjë s'mund të punojë. Sa të jem në botë, jam drita e botës. Pasi tha këto, pështyu përdhe dhe bëri baltë prej pështymës, edhe leu sytë e të verbërit me baltën. Edhe i tha atij: Shko e lahu në pellgun e Siloamit, që e përkthyer do me thënë i Dërguar. Shkoi pra e u la, edhe erdhi duke parë. Fqinjët pra, edhe ata që e kishin parë më përpara se ishte i verbër, thoshin: A nuk është ky ai që rrinte e lypte? Të tjerë thoshin se ky është; edhe të tjerë se i shëmbëllen. Ai u thoshte se unë jam. I thoshin, pra: Si t'u hapën sytë? Ai u përgjigj e tha: Një njeri që quhet Jisu bëri baltë dhe më leu sytë e më tha: Shko në pellgun e Siloamit dhe lahu. Edhe si shkova e u lava, hapa sytë. I thanë, pra: Ku është ai? Thotë: Nuk e di. E sjellin te Farisenjtë atë që ishte njëherë i verbër. Edhe ishte e shtunë, kur bëri baltën Jisui dhe i hapi

atij sytë. Përsëri pra e pyesnin edhe Farisenjtë se si pa përsëri. Edhe ai u tha atyre: Vuri baltë mbi sytë e mi, edhe u lava, edhe shoh. Disa, pra, prej Farisenjve thoshin: Ky njeri nuk është nga Perëndia, se nuk ruan të shtunën. Të tjerë thoshin: Si mund të bëjë të tilla çudira një njeri mëkatar? Edhe kishte një përçarje në mes tyre. I thonë përsëri të verbërit: Ti ç' thua për atë, se të hapi sytë? Edhe ai tha se është profet. Judenjtë pra nuk besuan për atë se ishte i verbër dhe pa përsëri, deri sa thirrën prindërit e atij që iu hapën sytë. Edhe i pyetën duke thënë: Ky është biri juaj, për të cilin ju thoni se ka lindur i verbër? Si sheh pra tani? Prindërit e atij iu përgjigjën atyre, e thanë: E dimë se ky është biri ynë, edhe se ka lindur i verbër. Po si sheh tani nuk e dimë; ose cili i hapi sytë, ne nuk e dimë; ai moshën e ka, pyeteni. Ai do të flasë për veten e tij. Këto thanë prindërit e tij, sepse kishin frikë nga judenjtë; se judenjtë tani kishin lidhur fjalë, që ai që ta rrëfejë për Krisht të nxirret jashtë sinagogës. Prandaj prindërit e tij thanë se moshën e ka, pyeteni. Thirrën pra për së dyti njeriun që kishte qenë i verbër, edhe i thanë: Jepi lavdi Perëndisë; ne e dimë se ky njeri është mëkatar. Ai pra u përgjigj e tha: Në është mëkatar, nuk e di; një gjë di, se qeshë i verbër, edhe tani shoh. Edhe i thanë përsëri: Ç'të bëri? Si t'i hapi sytë? Iu përgjigj atyre: Tashmë jua thashë juve, edhe nuk dëgjuat; ç'doni përsëri të dëgjoni? Mos edhe ju doni të bëheni nxënës të tij? E shanë pra, dhe thanë: Ti je nxënës i atij, po ne jemi nxënës të Moisiut. Ne dimë se Perëndia i foli Moisiut, po këtë nuk e dimë nga është. Njeriu u përgjigj e u tha atyre: Në këtë është me të vërtetë çudia, se ju s'ë dini nga është, edhe mua më hapi sytë. Edhe e dimë se Perëndia nuk dëgjon mëkatarë; po në pastë ndonjë frikë Perëndie dhe të bëjë dëshirën e tij, këtë e dëgjon. Që prej fillimit të jetës nuk është dëgjuar se hapi njeri sytë e ndonjërit që ka lindur i verbër. Po të mos ishte ky nga Perëndia, nuk do të mund të bënte asgjë. U përgjigjën e i thanë: Ti ke lindur i tëri në mëkate, edhe ti na mëson? Edhe e nxorën jashtë. Jisui dëgjoji se e nxorën jashtë; edhe si e gjeti, i tha: Ti i beson Birit të Perëndisë? Ai u përgjigj e tha: Po cili është ai, o Zot, që t'i besoj? Edhe Jisui i tha: Edhe e ke parë, dhe ai që flet me ty, ai është. Edhe ai tha: Besoj, o Zot, dhe iu fal.

От Иоанна 9:1-38

И, проходя, увидел человека, слепого от рождения. Ученики Его спросили у Него: Равви! кто согрешил, он или родители его, что родился слепым? Иисус отвечал: не согрешил ни он, ни родители его, но [это для] [того], чтобы на нем явились дела Божии. Мне должно делать дела Пославшего Меня, доколе есть день; приходит ночь, когда никто не может делать. Доколе Я в мире, Я свет миру. Сказав это, Он плюнул на землю, сделал брение из плюновения и помазал брением глаза слепому, и сказал ему: пойдй, умойся в купальне Силоам, что значит: посланный. Он пошел и умылся, и пришел зрячим. Тут соседи и видевшие прежде, что он был слеп, говорили: не тот ли это, который сидел и просил милостыни? Иные говорили: это он, а иные: похож на него. Он же говорил: это я. Тогда спрашивали у него: как открылись у тебя глаза? Он сказал в ответ: Человек, называемый Иисус, сделал брение, помазал глаза мои и сказал мне: пойдй на купальню Силоам и умойся. Я пошел, умылся и прозрел. Тогда сказали ему: где Он? Он отвечал: не знаю. Повели сего бывшего слепца к фарисеям. А была суббота, когда Иисус сделал брение и отверз ему очи. Спросили его также и фарисеи, как он прозрел. Он сказал им: брение положил Он на мои глаза, и я умылся, и вижу. Тогда некоторые из фарисеев говорили: не от Бога Этот Человек, потому что не хранит субботы. Другие говорили: как может человек грешный творить такие чудеса? И была между ними распря. Опять говорят слепому: ты что скажешь о Нем, потому что Он отверз тебе очи? Он сказал: это пророк. Тогда Иудеи не поверили, что он был слеп и прозрел, доколе не призвали родителей сего прозревшего и спросили их: это ли сын ваш, о котором вы говорите, что родился слепым? как же он теперь видит? Родители его сказали им в ответ: мы знаем, что это сын наш и что он родился слепым, а как теперь видит, не знаем, или кто отверз ему очи, мы не знаем. Сам в совершенных летах; самого спросите; пусть сам о себе скажет. Так отвечали родители его, потому что боялись Иудеев; ибо Иудеи сговорились уже, чтобы, кто признает Его за Христа, того отлучать от синагоги. Посему-то родители его и сказали: он в совершенных летах; самого спросите. Итак, вторично призвали человека, который был слеп, и сказали ему: воздай славу Богу; мы знаем, что Человек Тот грешник. Он сказал им в ответ: грешник ли Он, не знаю; одно знаю, что я был слеп, а теперь вижу. Снова спросили его: что сделал Он с тобою? как отверз твои очи? Отвечал им: я уже сказал вам, и вы не слушали; что еще хотите слышать? или и вы хотите сделаться Его учениками? Они же укорили его и сказали: ты ученик Его, а мы Моисеевы ученики. Мы

знаем, что с Моисеем говорил Бог; Сего же не знаем, откуда Он. Человек [прозревший] сказал им в ответ: это и удивительно, что вы не знаете, откуда Он, а Он отверз мне очи. Но мы знаем, что грешников Бог не слушает; но кто чтит Бога и творит волю Его, того слушает. От века не слыхано, чтобы кто отверз очи слепорожденному. Если бы Он не был от Бога, не мог бы творить ничего. Сказали ему в ответ: во грехах ты весь родился, и ты ли нас учишь? И выгнали его вон. Иисус, услышав, что выгнали его вон, и найдя его, сказал ему: ты веруешь ли в Сына Божия? Он отвечал и сказал: а кто Он, Господи, чтобы мне веровать в Него? Иисус сказал ему: и видел ты Его, и Он говорит с тобою. Он же сказал: верую, Господи! И поклонился Ему.

(Instead of "It is truly meet...", we sing the following)

The Angel cried to the Lady, full of grace:
"Rejoice, O pure Virgin! Again, I say: Rejoice,
thy Son is risen from His three days in the tomb!
With Himself He has raised all the dead."
Rejoice, O ye people!

Shine, shine, O new Jerusalem!
The glory of the Lord has shone on thee.
Exult now, and be glad, O Zion!
Be radiant, O pure Theotokos,
in the Resurrection of thy Son!

Communion Hymn

Receive the Body of Christ; taste the fountain of immortality!
Their proclamation has gone out into all the earth, and their words to the ends of the universe.
(Ps. 18:4)
Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia!

Continued from page 3

The emperor Constantine ordered a magnificent church in honor of Christ's Resurrection to be built over His tomb. Saint Helen gave the Life-Creating Cross to the Patriarch for safe-keeping, and took part of the Cross with her for the emperor. After distributing generous alms at Jerusalem and feeding the needy (at times she even served them herself), the holy Empress Helen returned to Constantinople, where she died in the year 327.

Because of her great services to the Church and her efforts in finding the Life-Creating Cross, the empress Helen is called "the Equal of the Apostles."

The peaceful state of the Christian Church was disturbed by quarrels, dissensions and heresies which had appeared within the Church. Already at the beginning of Saint Constantine's reign the heresies of the Donatists and the Novatians had arisen in the West. They demanded a second baptism for those who lapsed during the persecutions against Christians. These heresies, repudiated by two local Church councils, were finally condemned at the Council of Milan in 316.

Particularly ruinous for the Church was the rise of the Arian heresy in the East, which denied the Divine Nature of the Son of God, and taught that Jesus Christ was a mere creature. By order of the emperor, the First Ecumenical Council was convened in the city of Nicea in 325.

318 bishops attended this Council. Among its participants were confessor-bishops from the period of the persecutions and many other luminaries of the Church, among whom was Saint Nicholas of Myra in Lycia. (The account about the Council is found under May 29). The emperor was present at the sessions of the Council. The heresy of Arius was condemned and a Symbol of Faith (Creed) composed, in which was included the term "consubstantial with the Father," at the insistence of the Emperor, confirming the truth of the divinity of Jesus Christ, Who assumed human nature for the redemption of all the human race.

After the Council of Nicea, Saint Constantine continued with his active role in the welfare of the Church. He accepted holy Baptism on his deathbed, having prepared for it all his whole life. Saint Constantine died on the day of Pentecost in the year 337 and was buried in the church of the Holy Apostles, in a crypt he had prepared for himself.

PRAYERS	Birthdays, Names-days, & Anniversaries	SCRIPTURE THIS WEEK
<p style="text-align: center;"><i>For Those Who Have Fallen Asleep</i></p>		
<p>Newly Departed Margaret, Newly Departed David, Newly departed Miles, Newly Departed child Luke</p> <p><i>[To be inserted after the petition for the departed]</i> Again we pray for those who have lost their lives because of the war in Ukraine: that the Lord our God may look upon them with mercy, and give them rest where there is neither sickness, or sorrow, but life everlasting.</p>	<p>May 7 - 13 Elaina Desloges (B) Issak Rubis (B)</p> <p><u>Seven-Day Vigil Candles</u></p> <p>Michael – Prayers for health Llukan – Prayers for healing</p>	<p><u>Church Lectionary</u></p> <p><i>Today</i> Acts 26:1-5, 12-20 John 10:1-9 Acts 16:16-34 John 9:1-38</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><i>For Those Who Are Sick And Home-bound</i></p>		
<p>Virginia, Denise, Olvian, Marie, James, Alexandra, Andrew, Christina, Louise, Porter, Alvin, Tracy, Kathy, Andrew, Maria, Helen, John, Tom, Nina, Sophia, Jim, Spresha, Kristin, Niko, Spiro, Angjeliki, Melod, Olgay, Ruth, Fr. Milorad, Naomi, Terry, Naomi, Annette, Tatiana, Aleena, Lester Jr., Natalia, Otari, Lasha</p>	<p>Seven-Day Vigil Candles are used for the Eternal Light that hangs above the Royal Doors and are often placed in front of the icons of Christ or the Birth-giver of God. If you would like to donate a Seven-Day Vigil Candle, Please include the name or names of those for whom the candle is donated, and we will place them in this section for special prayers.</p>	<p><i>Monday</i> Acts 17:1-15 John 11:47-57</p> <p><i>Tuesday</i> Acts 17:19-28 John 12:19-36</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Prayers In General</i></p>		
<p>Fr. Dennis and his family, Fr. Ioan, Christian, Michael, Erica, Kaida, DuDash family, Michael, Robert, Ally, Steve, Jake and Amanda and their children, Katherine, Ron, Anthony, Volodymyr, Nick, Sophia, Michael, Rafael, Bob, Barbara, Juliya and the child born of her, Ansley and the child to be born of her, Sandra, Enoch, John, Victoria, Melenie, Grace, Michael, Barbara, Giorgi, Molly, Jim, Chloe</p>		<p><i>Wednesday</i> Acts 18:22-28 John 12:36-47</p> <p><i>Thursday</i> Acts 1:1-12 Luke 24:36-53</p>
<p><i>[To be inserted after the petition for the living]</i> Again we pray for mercy, life, peace, health, salvation, for those who are suffering, wounded, grieving, or displaced because of the war in Ukraine.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">COFFEE HOUR</p>	<p><i>Friday</i> Acts 19:1-8 John 14:1-11</p>
<p><i>[Petitions at Augmented Litany]</i> Again we pray for a cessation of the hostilities against Ukraine, and that reconciliation and peace will flourish there, we pray thee, hearken and have mercy.</p>	<p><u>May</u> 21 – 28 – Pat Lane</p>	<p><i>Saturday</i> Acts 20:7-12 John 14:10-21</p>
<p>We give thanks to You, O Lord our God, Who in Your mercy and providential care, has called forth Archimandrite NIKODHIM to become a shepherd of wisdom and strength for our Albanian Archdiocese. We ask that You Bless Father NIKODHIM as he readies himself to become our future archpastor so he may:</p>	<p><u>June</u> 04 11 – Dellermann Family 18 25</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • care for our spiritual well-being, • unite us in a zealous confession of our holy faith, • commit us in loving service to one another in bright witness to the glory of Your holy Name. 	<p>Coffee Hour is a wonderful chance for us to get together to break bread and spend time with each other, to celebrate those whom we have held memorials for, and to come together as the family of God outside of worship. To sign up, to host a coffee hour, contact Fr. Nicholas or Donna Bacon.</p>	
<p>Hear us and have mercy.</p>		<p><u>Reading the Bible in a Year</u></p>
		<p>May 21: Psalms 89-92 May 22: Psalms 93-96 May 23: Psalms 97-100 May 24: Psalms 101-104 May 25: Psalms 105-108 May 26: Psalms 109-112 May 27: Psalms 113-116</p>

What About People Who are not Orthodox?

It is always a pity when people who claim to be Orthodox make judgements against fellow Christians. In the tradition of Orthodoxy, wherever we find beauty and truth, it is of God, and it is our calling, as Orthodox Christians, to rejoice when we see others have at least some portion of the Truth. Slamming others for what they do not have, does nothing to further their journey into Orthodoxy, and in fact may delay or sideline their journey towards the fullness of Truth.

There is the wonderful true story of Saint Silouan the Athonite who was traveling by train with an archimandrite, a zealot who was quick to correct others about the True Faith. Coming upon a group of traveling Roman Catholics, Saint Silouan's traveling companion proceeded to tell them that they must become Orthodox because their faith was without grace. The saint asked him if it were indeed a fact that the Roman Catholics believed that Christ was the true God, and that He was present in the Eucharist. The saint asked if it was not true that these Catholics believed in the Trinity, and venerated the Holy Virgin and the relics of the saints. The archimandrite answered yes to all the questions. Saint Silouan responded that of all humility's faiths we must know that we have perhaps more, but not to judge those who are not Orthodox. We must rejoice in the knowledge of what they do have. The saint told him that we should not be filled with such pride as to think we have the right to judge, correct or teach others.

This does not mean that we see the Church as divided, or that the Orthodox Church is anything less than the Church Christ founded. What it does mean is that we do not allow ourselves to think we have the right to correct or teach anyone. We must honor other people's beliefs and not give in to the prideful stand that we have the right to teach or correct them. The truth that is found within Orthodoxy must be shared by living our faith in love, not in judging or correcting others. Truth, wherever it is found, is Orthodox Truth. If other religions embrace some of these truths that are Orthodox, we must rejoice and give thanks for what they do have.

People who love God and are trying to live holy lives pleasing to Him, according to the knowledge they have been given, are to be respected. They may not have the fullness of Apostolic Truth, but if they are believers in God and are trying to live a life pleasing to God, we must give thanks to Christ for what they do have. They have God as their Father, just as do we. They can have the Church as their Mother only if they see in us the difference Orthodoxy has made in our lives. Being arrogant in our evangelism does nothing to express the truth of Orthodoxy, and makes us no different than the pushy salesman at the door.

That arrogant archimandrite would better have shared the beauty of Orthodoxy had he embraced those Roman Catholics as fellow disciples of Christ. Then they would have seen Christ in him and known that Orthodoxy was indeed a faith centered in Christ. They would have known the truth of Orthodoxy by seeing in him, the love of Christ.

All this having been said, it is important that we remember Our Lord Himself has charged us to speak the truth. We must never fail to share the truth of our Orthodox faith for fear we might offend someone, for by "Speaking the truth in love, let us grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head (of the Church), even Christ (Ephesians 4:15)."

Love in Christ,
Abbot Tryphon



May Events

May

- 21 – 10:00am Divine Liturgy
1:30pm Blessing of the Graves
(Forrest Hills)
24 – 6:30pm Vesperal Liturgy *Feast of Ascension*
28 – 10:00am Divine Liturgy
Education Sunday
29 – 10:00am Blessing of the Graves
(Fernwood)
31 – 7:15pm Bible Study via GoogleMeets

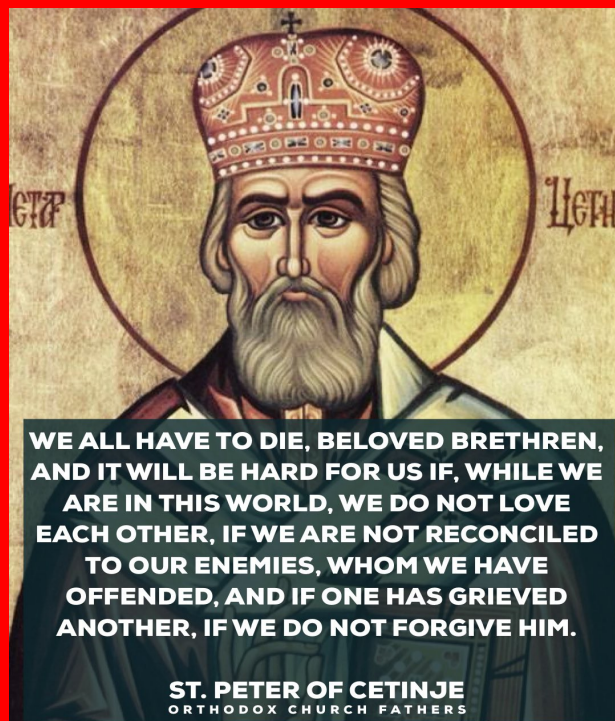
June

- 02 – 6:00pm Fun Night
04 – 10:00am Divine Liturgy
Feast of Pentecost
07 – 7:15pm Bible Study via GoogleMeets
11 – 10:00am Divine Liturgy
14 – 7:15pm Bible Study via GoogleMeets
18 – 10:00am Divine Liturgy
21 – 7:15pm Bible Study via GoogleMeets

Can't join us in person?

We stream our services on our YouTube Channel:

[https://www.youtube.com/@sspeterpaulortho
doxchurcho1810](https://www.youtube.com/@sspeterpaulortho
doxchurcho1810)



The Rulekeepers

May 19, 2023 · Fr. Barnabas Powell

Christ is risen!

It's so easy to be "one-sided!" You know what I mean – "That idea is so wrong and everyone who thinks that way and acts that way is misguided." And you may be right about that, BUT, there is also a danger on the other side as well. You can become just as misguided by insisting you're right as those who are stumbling on the other side. It's easy to fall into this trap. In fact, it is one of the most common stumbles we humans face. We end up trying to do the right thing for all the wrong reasons.

And make no mistake, that pattern of thinking and doing is as destructive to your spiritual life as lawlessness. Because it is also a form of lawlessness. It puts me beyond the heart-softening disciplines of humility and repentance and it turns those who disagree with me into "enemies." We have to be attentive enough to our own weaknesses that we avoid falling into this weakness the Fathers called "prelest" or self-righteousness. When we reduce our love for God to mere rule-keeping, we run the risk of forgetting God altogether and focusing only on "following the rules."

And make no mistake, this is a tough balance to maintain in life. That's why we are called to be in communion with each other. That's why we have to regularly practice the spiritual discipline of confession, so we never forget our own spiritual weaknesses and our own desperate need for grace and mercy. When we forget that, we stop offering grace and mercy to others. This is one of the first symptoms of "just follow the rules!"

Look at our lesson today in Acts 15:5-12:

IN THOSE DAYS, some believers who belonged to the party of the Pharisees rose up, and said, "it is

necessary to circumcise them, and to charge them to keep the law of Moses.” The apostles and the elders were gathered together to consider this matter. And after there had been much debate, Peter rose and said to them, “Brethren, you know that in the early days God made choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe. And God who knows the heart bore witness to them, giving them the Holy Spirit just as he did to us; and he made no distinction between us and them, but cleansed their hearts by faith. Now therefore why do you make trial of God by putting a yoke upon the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear? But we believe that we shall be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they will.” And all the assembly kept silence; and they listened to Barnabas and Paul as they related what signs and wonders God had done through them among the Gentiles.

Here’s the first real crisis in the newly formed Church. And it’s a big one! In fact, this moment we are reading about today is the shift, the “tipping point,” that transfigures the early Church from just one more group of Jews who differ in theology to a Church that will spread through the whole world. In other words, this is a big deal! And it all has to do with identity.

Some said Jesus is a Jewish Messiah and anyone who follows Him has to keep the Jewish Law! Others said that this wasn’t necessary for Gentile converts. Peter has to set up some clear principles to deal with this conflict! After all, he witnessed the first Gentiles becoming Christians when he preached to the Roman Centurion Cornelius and his family. And make no mistake, this shift in thinking is going to change everything for the future of this small group of believers. St. Peter witnessing the conversion of St. Cornelius and his household to the Faith of Jesus is absolutely amazing!

Notice the principle St. Peter declares: “he (meaning the Holy Spirit) made no distinction between us and them, but cleansed their hearts by faith. St. Peter makes it clear: The Gentiles became believers and now you want them to follow the rules set up for us Jews even though we Jews were NEVER able to obey them ourselves! Peter makes it plain that the purpose of the Law of Moses wasn’t to make us follow rules as much as prove to us we will never be able to say to God “I’ve kept all your rules, now You have to let me into heaven.” We ALL need mercy. We ALL need to say moment by moment “Lord, have mercy.” AND we all need to constantly offer our lives, our daily lives, to God and ask for the strength to be Christian, and not just wear “Christian” like some label. After all, the Rules are Good, especially if they reveal to you how much you don’t live up to them and need to have God’s mercy. We should extend that mercy to everyone else as well. And the ability to keep mercy and grace at the center of our message is essential.

But be careful, as I said in the introduction, this balance is hard and that’s a feature, not a bug! It’s difficult because we must never try to escape the hard work of communion and relationship. And that takes patience, love, and mercy with ourselves and with others. That DOES NOT mean ignoring wickedness or “affirming” insanity. But it does mean lovingly directing others to true repentance by practicing true repentance ourselves!

St. Patrick, the hieromartyr, was the Bishop of Prusa. Sometime in the latter part of the 3rd century, he was brought before the Roman Consul of the area, a certain Julius, who desired to persuade Patrick to abandon Christ and worship the gods Julius worshipped. In the area was an area that had some hot springs and they provided great benefits to the community. Julius insisted that the pagan gods were to be thanked for the hot springs and insisted Patrick offer thanks to them. Patrick responded that it was Christ Who should be thanked for the springs because He is the creator of both fire and water, so Jesus was the One to be worshipped for providing the springs to the people. And he told Julius that there was another fire that awaited those who stubbornly refuse to worship Christ. On hearing this Julius had Patrick cast into the hot springs to kill him but the heat killed the soldiers taking Patrick and Patrick was unharmed. Then, Julius, had Patrick beheaded along with several other Christian priests.

Today, do you expect others to keep rules you, yourself, don’t keep? Do you expect that God expects you to make sure the rules are kept by others? Perhaps it’s time to realize I have more than enough to take care of in dealing with my own sins before I can ever judge someone else. It’s only by God’s grace I will ever be Orthodox on Purpose!

Prayer for the Week

Since the Church has your body as a sacred gem of Jesus Christ, she now rejoices, O blessed Patrick, and with joy, she cries unto you: Through your prayers, O wise Father, all the world is preserved in peace and tranquility, and it is kept unharmed and unconquered by any heresy.