



Fire & Light

St. Symeon Orthodox Church

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✠ **October 25, 2015** ✠

**Martyrs Marcian & Martyrius the Notaries
of Constantinople (355)**

St. Tabitha, raised from the dead by the Apostle Paul

St. Matrona the Confessor of Diveyevo Monastery (1963)



Looking Ahead:

Marriage: Sophia Ritchey & David Rutledge – Next Sunday, November 1, 4:00pm

Note: The Rutledge / Ritchey Wedding reception next Sunday, November 1, is a smaller family affair in the new Hall, *by written invitation only*. Reader Christopher and Dunia invite the community to congratulate Keith and Sophia during coffee hour on November 15th as they return from the honeymoon! Thank you for your understanding!

Sunday, November 8 – 2:00pm: Spence Marriage Blessing with pig roast reception

Saturday, November 14 – 3:00pm: Holy Baptism – Baby Elizabeth Murphree

Sunday, November 15 – Nativity Fast begins

- **The temple iconography is to be completed tomorrow and the scaffolding will be removed. Help is needed with re-positioning church furniture and cleaning of the temple - from Wednesday forward. Many Years to Alin and Smaranda Trifa for their extraordinary effort!**
- **Our Choir: Alex Fecanin recently received an email from Hierodeacon Herman Majkrzak, the Chapel Choir Director at St. Vladimir's Seminary. In his email, he congratulated us for our previous choir recordings: *"I wanted to write and congratulate you for such an excellent work! It's so encouraging to come across such high quality work in the Church, especially when it comes as a surprise."* Our latest recording was cut this past week.**

Holy Martyrs Marcian and Martyrius

These Saints of God were clergymen under Paul, the Patriarch of Constantinople, during the reign of Emperor Constantius. With the death of the great Emperor Constantine, the Arian heresy, which until then had been suppressed, revived and gained momentum. Even Emperor Constantius himself leaned toward this heresy. There were two influential noblemen at the emperor's court, Eusebius and Philip, both of whom were ardent Arians. Under their influence, Patriarch Paul was ousted from the patriarchal throne and banished to Armenia, where the Arians strangled him. Then the dishonorable Macedonius seized the patriarchal throne. At that time Orthodoxy had two bitter struggles: against the pagans and against the heretics. Marcian and Martyrius interceded with all their strength and determination on the side of Orthodoxy. Marcian was a reader and Martyrius was a subdeacon at the Cathedral Church of Hagia Sophia. Under Patriarch Paul they had been patriarchal notaries (secretaries). The Arians at first tried to bribe them, but when these holy men rejected this with scorn, the heretics condemned them to death. When they were brought to the executioner, they raised their hands and prayed to God, giving Him thanks for a Martyr's end to their lives: "Lord, we rejoice that we depart from this life by such a death. Make us worthy to be partakers of eternal life. Thou art our life!" They placed their necks beneath the sword and were beheaded in the year 355. Later, St. John Chrysostom built a church in their name over their miracle-working relics.

~ From the Prologue

On the Providence of God ~ St. John Chrysostom

“It is not that God came to know that the created things were good after they had come to be — certainly not. For if a human artist, having learned his craft, knows what he will create will be good, even before he creates it, so much more did the ineffable Wisdom, Who brings all things into existence by His will alone, know that they would be good before they came to be. For He would not have brought them into existence if He had not known this. Why, then, is this said? For the reason that I mentioned. Therefore, listen to the Prophet telling you that God saw the things He had made and praised them, and do not look for another touchstone or proof of their goodness; neither say, ‘How are they good?’ For the declaration of the reckoning and judgment of the Creator is more sure than the proof that comes from the creation itself.”

“The mind of men is so weak that it often goes around in opposite directions, and many men are opposed to each other in their appraisal of creation. The Greeks - admiring it more than is proper, and transcending due measure - considered it to be divine. On the other hand, among the Manichaeans and other heretics, some said that it was not the work of a good god; while others, cutting off one part of it, designated it as spontaneous matter, and deemed it to be unworthy of the creative work of God. Thus, as I have said before, if someone uses his ill-judging mind, he will find even fault with much of what is considered to be good.”

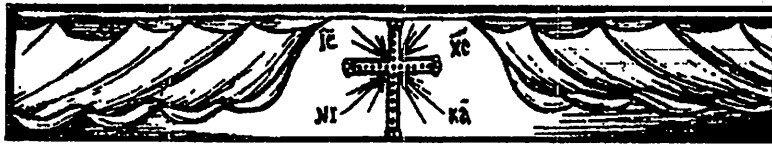
“But is living in luxury and laughter, and abiding in pleasure, good? Listen to Solomon, who says, having gone through every sort of pleasure: ‘It is better to go to a house of mourning than to go to the banquet house’ (Eccles. 7:2). But (since we must deal with the thinking of our opponents [in this instance, the Manichaeans]) is night bad? Indeed, it is a rest from toil, a relief from cares, an abatement of sicknesses, and not a little respite from fears and dangers. It renews the body, it invigorates the intelligence, and gives rest to exhausted flesh. But is sickness a bad thing? For what, then, was Lazarus crowned? And poverty? For what was Job held in high esteem? And continual afflictions one after another? For what were the Apostles extolled? What sort of road is it that leads to life? Is it not strait and narrow (Cf. Matthew 7:13-14)? Therefore, do not say: ‘Why is this? What is the purpose of this?’ Rather - regarding that which God has created, and God’s economy - before the God Who made you, keep the silence that is kept by the clay before the potter.”

“What then, they say, do you want me to know clearly, and believe that God provides for all things? Certainly, I want it and pray for it and desire it exceedingly, but not that you pry and inquire curiously into His providence. If you know and are persuaded, then do not make inquiry. But if you doubt, then ask the earth, the sky, the sun, the moon; ask the various classes of animals, the seeds, the plants, the voiceless fish, the rocks, the mountains, the wooded valleys, the hills, the night and the day.”

“The providence of God is more evident than the sun and its rays. At every time and in every place, you will perceive clear and sufficient reminders, both old and new, of this providence: in the wilderness, in the inhabited land and in uninhabited places, on the land and on the sea, and wherever you go. From every side come voices that are more distinct than our reason-endowed voices, and that teach God’s care — to him who is willing to hear. Therefore, the Prophet [King David] made known the extraordinary quality of these voices, saying: ‘There are no tongues nor words in which their voices are not heard’ (Psalm 18[19]:3). For our language is known only to those who speak the same one, and is not known at all to those of another tongue. But the voice of the creation is heard by all the nations throughout the world.”

In Acts 8, Philip, the deacon and evangelist, preached in Samaria (Acts 8:5-8). Many believed and were baptized (Acts 8:12). The apostles came and later confirmed these new believers with the gift of the Holy Spirit through the laying on of hands (Acts 8:14-17). Here is the sacrament of chrismation following Holy Baptism. Later, the Apostle Paul met some disciples of John the Baptist who had not been present when Peter spoke at Pentecost (Acts 19:1-7). They believed in Christ, "were baptized" (Acts 19:5) and "the Holy Spirit came upon them" (Acts 19:6), again through the hands of an apostle.

The promise of God includes both our union with Christ in Holy Baptism and the gift of the Holy Spirit at chrismation.



SAINT DIMITRI OF ROSTOV

Saint Demetrius was born in 1651 at Makarovo, twenty-five miles from Kiev, and was called Daniel in holy Baptism. His father was a soldier and often away from home, so it was his mother who had most care of her son's education and who planted in him the seeds of the virtues. When he was eleven, Daniel entered the Ecclesiastical Academy of Kiev, whose Rector was a brilliant preacher and ardent defender of Orthodoxy. Through him, the future Bishop discovered his talent for expounding the word of God to the people and he learnt to be solicitous for their instruction. At the age of seventeen, he entered the Monastery of Saint Cyril and received the name of Demetrius when he was professed as a monk. Besides fulfilling all his monastic duties with exemplary obedience, the young man found time to complete his studies and to begin his literary work. He was ordained priest on May 23rd, 1675, and at the same time, appointed Preacher to Archbishop Lazarus Baranovich. He was subsequently put in charge of various monasteries, contrary to his constant desire to live in asceticism and solitude. Twice he tried to retire, but his plans fell through, and his friends, including Saint Theodosius of Chernigov (5 Feb.), finally persuaded him to give up any such idea.

A great deal of spiritual literature, including Lives of the Saints, was destroyed during the Tatar, Lithuanian and Polish invasions. Demetrius' zeal for writings profitable to the soul was already well-known when Varlaam, the Abbot of the Lavra of the Kiev Caves, approached him as the man capable of undertaking the mighty labor of compiling the Lives of the Saints. The humble ascetic was alarmed at the extent of the proposed task and did his best to decline it but, aware of the needs of the Church, and fearful of sinning by disobedience, he yielded to the pressing requests of his superiors and went to live in the Lavra of Kiev.

For twenty-five years, Saint Demetrius gave his whole strength to this holy work, spending all his time upon it, save that devoted to prayer in the church or in the depth

of his heart. He lived with the Saints, feeling what they felt, suffering with them and giving minute attention to every detail recorded of them in the sources. In recompense for his love of the Saints, God often granted him visions. So it was that the holy Martyr Barbara, whom he specially venerated, appeared to him on 10 August 1685 as he slept. He asked her to intercede for him with the Lord, but she refused and blamed him for praying "in the Latin way," that is to say, with short prayers. But, seeing his distress, she smiled at him and said, "Don't be afraid!" On 10 November of the same year, the holy Martyr Orestes appeared to Demetrius, who had just finished writing his Life and told him, "I endured greater sufferings for Christ than you have mentioned." And, showing him a great wound on his left side, he said, "This was done with iron." Then he extended his right arm and showed the gashed veins at his elbow and added, "This has been slashed." He showed similar wounds on his left arm and repeated the same words. Then he showed him the wounds he had at the bend of his knees and said, "And this has been cut across." As he stood up, he concluded, "Do you see? I suffered more than you described!" When Demetrius wondered whether this Saint could be the one who is commemorated with his four companions on 13 December, the Martyr answered, "No, I am not the Orestes who is one of the Five Martyrs, but the one who is commemorated today and whose life you have just written."

Saint Demetrius was raised to the episcopate in 1701 as Metropolitan of Tobolsk and of Siberia; but he asked to be transferred because of weak health and the need to be in a place where he could find the documents he needed to carry on with his hagiographical work. He was appointed to the diocese of Rostov in 1702 and learnt by revelation that it was there, in the Monastery of Saint James, that he was to enter into eternal rest. He completed the compilation of his monumental *Lives of the Saints* in 1705,¹ and from then on, devoted himself to caring for his spiritual flock. He struggled hard to correct abuses in the Church and the prevalent immorality. Frequent illness did not prevent his keeping to a strict pattern of life, nor did he ever slacken in his constant prayer. He wrote a great many spiritual books, and established, near his house, an Institute for training clergy, where he took a large share of the teaching. He also addressed some of his writings to the "Old Believers" in the attempt to bring those schismatics back into the bosom of the Church by showing them that the spirit and deep meaning of tradition are more significant than the external forms. By the example of his own life, he taught his flock love of prayer and fasting, as well as compassion and mercy towards the good and the ungodly alike.

Having predicted his death three days beforehand, the holy Bishop fell at the feet of his servants and his chanters, and asked for their forgiveness. Then, with an ardent prayer on his lips, he shut himself in his cell. The next morning, 28 October 1709, they discovered him dead upon his knees. The relics of Saint Demetrius were found incorrupt in 1752 and they wrought many healings. He was formally glorified by the Church in 1757.

¹ English translation: *The Great Collection of the Lives of the Saints* (tr. Marretta, House Springs Missouri, 12 vols., 1994sq.)

On Halloween

by Archpriest Victor Potapov

Because most of us are either newly Orthodox or newly aware of our Orthodoxy, we must carefully examine every aspect of our involvement in the world--its activities, festivals, associations, and societies--to be certain whether or not these involvements are compatible with our Holy Orthodox Faith. This difficult task can lead to some pain when we realize that we cannot take part in some popular organizations and activities.

Most of our schools, local community organizations, and entertainments in television, radio and the press will share in and capitalize upon the festival of Halloween. But Orthodox Christians cannot participate in this event at any level. The simple issue Fidelity to God and the Holy Orthodox Christian Faith. Halloween has its roots in paganism, and it continues as a form of idolatry to worship Satan, the angel of death.

As we know, the very foundation of our Holy Church is build upon the blood of martyrs who refused despite painful penalties to worship, venerate, or pay obeisance in any way to the idols who are Satan's angels. Because of the faithfulness, obedience, and self-sacrifice of the Holy Martyrs, God poured out abundant Grace upon His Holy Church, whose numbers increased daily. The persecution did not stem the spread of faith. Differing from the world's values, humble faithfulness and obedience to God were the very strength of their life in Christ, Who gave them true spiritual peace, love and joy, and participation in the miraculous workings of His Holy Spirit. Therefore, the Holy Church calls us to faithfulness by our turning away from falsehood toward Truth and eternal life. We can stay away from the pagan festival of Halloween if we gain an understanding of the spiritual danger and history of this anti-Christian feast.

The feast of Halloween began in pre-Christian times among the Celtic peoples of Britain, Ireland, and northern France. These pagan peoples believed that physical life was born from death. Therefore, they celebrated the beginning of the "new year" in the fall (on the eve of October 31 and into the day of November 1), when, as they believed, the season of cold, darkness, decay and death began. The Celts believed that a certain deity, whom they called Samhain, was the Lord of Death. To him they gave honor at their New Year's festival.

From an Orthodox Christian point of view, many diabolical beliefs and practices were associated with this feast, which have endured to this current time. On the eve of the New Year's festival, the Druids, who were the priests of the Celtic cult, instructed their people to extinguish all hearth fires and lights. On the evening of the festival they ignited a huge bonfire built from oak branches, which they believed to be sacred. Upon this fire, they offered burnt sacrifices of crops, animals, and even human beings to appease and cajole Samhain, the lord of Death. They also believed that Samhain, being pleased by their faithful offerings, allowed the souls of the dead to return to homes for a festal visit on this day.

This belief led to the ritual practice of wandering about in the dark dressed in costumes indicating ghosts, witches, hobgoblins, fairies and demons. The living entered into fellowship and communion with their dead by this ritual act of imitation, through costume and the wandering about in the darkness, even as the souls of the dead were believed to wander.

The dialogue of "trick or treat" is integral to Halloween beliefs and practices. The souls of the dead had--by Celtic tradition--entered into the world of darkness, decay, and death, and made total communion with and submission to Samhain the Lord of Death. They bore the affliction of great hunger on their festal visit. This belief brought about the practice of begging as another Celtic ritual imitation of the activities of the souls of the dead on their festal visit. The implication was that any souls of the dead and their imitators who are not appeased with "treats", i.e. offerings, will provoke the wrath of Samhain, whose angels and servants (the souls and human imitators) could retaliate through a system of "tricks" or curses.

The Orthodox Christian must understand that taking part in these practices at any level is an idolatrous betrayal of our God and our Holy Faith. For if we imitate the dead by dressing up in or wandering about in the dark, or by begging with them, then we have willfully sought fellowship with the dead, whose Lord is not a Celtic Samhain, but is Satan the Evil One, who stands against God. Further, if we submit to the dialogue of "trick or treat," our offering goes not to innocent children, but rather to Samhain, the Lord of Death whom they have come to serve as imitators of the dead, wandering in the darkness.

We must stay away from other practices associated with Halloween, the eve of the Celtic New Year festival. The Druid priests used to instruct their faithful to extinguish their hearth fires and lights and to gather around the fire of sacrifice to make their offerings and to pay homage to the Lord of Death. This sacred fire was the fire of the new year, to be taken home to rekindle lights and hearth fires. The sacred New Years fire developed into the practice of the Jack O' Lantern (in the U.S.A.; a pumpkin, in older days other vegetables were used), which was carved in imitation of the dead and used to convey the new light and fire to the home, where the lantern was left burning throughout the night. Even the use and display of the Jack O' Lantern honors the Samhain, the Celtic god of death. Orthodox Christians cannot share in this Celtic activity, but must counter the secular customs by instead burning candles to the Savior, the Most Holy Mother of God, and to all the Holy Saints.

Divination was also part of this ancient Celtic festival. After the fire had died out the Druids examined the remains of the main sacrifices, hoping to foretell the coming years events. The Halloween festival was the proper night for sorcery, fortune telling, divination, games of chance, and Satan worship and witchcraft in the later Middle Ages.

In the strictly Orthodox early Celtic Church, the holy Fathers tried to counteract this pagan new year festival that honored the Lord of Death, by establishing the Feast of All Saints on November 1. (It differs in the East, where the Feast of All Saints is celebrated on the Sunday following Pentecost). The custom of the Celtic Church was for the faithful Christians to attend a vigil service on October 31 and a morning celebration of the Holy Eucharist on November 1. This custom created the term Halloween. The Old English of "All Hallow E'en", i.e., the eve commemorating all those who were hallowed (sanctified) became Halloween.

The remaining pagan and therefore anti-Christian people, whose paganism had become deeply intertwined with the Occult, Satanism and Magic, reacted to the Church's attempt to supplant their festival by increased fervor on this evening. The early medieval Halloween became the supreme feast of the Occult, a night and day witchcraft, demonism, sorcery and Satanism of all kinds. Many practices involved desecration and mockery of Christian practices and beliefs. Costumes of skeletons developed as a mockery of the Church's

reverence for Holy Relics; Holy things were stolen, such as crosses and the Reserved Sacrament, and used perversely in sacrilegious ways. The practice of begging became a system of persecution to harass Christians who were, by their beliefs, unable to participate with offerings to those who served the Lord of Death. The Western Church's attempt failed to supplant this pagan festival with the Feast of All Saints.

The ancient Slavic counterpart to Halloween in ancient Russia was Navy Dien' (Old Slavonic for the dead "nav"), which was also called Radunitsa and celebrated in the spring. To supplant it, the Russian Church attached this feast to Pascha, for celebration on Tuesday of Saint Thomas' Week (second week after Pascha). The Church also changed the name of the feast into Radonitsa, from Russian "radost" - joy, of Pascha and of the Resurrection from the dead of Jesus Christ. Gradually Radunitsa yielded to Pascha's greater importance and became less popular. And many dark practices from old Russian pagan feasts (Semik, Kupalo, Rusalia and some aspects of the Maslennitsa) still survived till the beginning of our century. Now they are gone, but the atheist authorities used to try to reanimate them.

Another "harmless" feast--May 1, proclaimed "the international worker's day" is a simple renaming the old satanic feast of Walpurgis Night (night of April 30 into the day of May 1), the yearly demonic Sabbath during which all participants united in "a fellowship of Satan".

Paganism, idolatry and Satan worship--How then did things so contradictory to the Holy Orthodox Faith gain acceptance among Christian people? The answers are spiritual apathy and listlessness, which are the spiritual roots of atheism and turning away from God. In society today, one is urged to disregard the spiritual roots and origins of secular practices when the outward practices or forms seem ordinary, entertaining, and harmless. The dogma of atheism underlies many of these practices and forms, denying the existence of both God and Satan. **Practices and forms of obvious pagan and idolatrous origin are neither harmless nor of little consequence. The Holy Church stands against them because we are taught by Christ that God stands in judgment over everything we do and believe, and that our actions are either for God or against God. Therefore, the customs of Halloween are not innocent, but are demonic, precisely as their origins prove.**

There are evil spirits. Demons do exist. Christ came into the world so that, through death, He might destroy him that had the dominion of death, that is, the Devil (Hebrews 2:12). Christians must see that our greatest foe is the Evil One who inspires nations and individuals to sin, and who keeps them from coming to the truth. Until we know that Satan is our real enemy, we can make little spiritual progress. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the world rulers of the darkness of this age, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places (Ephesians 6:12).

Today we witness a revival of satanist cults and special satanic ceremonies on Halloween night. Everywhere Satan reaches out to ensnare more innocent people with spiritualism, supernatural phenomena, seances, prophecies and all sorts of demonically inspired works.

Divine Providence ensured that Sts. Cosmas & Damian, these physicians of our souls and bodies, should have their feast day on November 1. God has provided us with this powerful counterpoise and weapon against the snares of Satan, and we should take full advantage of this gift, for truly God is wonderful in His Saints!

26 Monk-Martyrs of Zographou on Mt. Athos

In July of 1274, the Byzantine Emperor Michael VIII accepted a union with the Roman Church at Lyons, France. Faced with dangers from Charles of Anjou, the Ottoman Turks, and other enemies, the Emperor found such an alliance with Rome expedient. The Union of Lyons required the Orthodox to recognize the authority of the Pope, the use of the filioque in the Creed, and the use of azymes (unleavened bread) in the Liturgy. Patriarch Joseph was deposed because he would not agree to these conditions. The monastic clergy and many of the laity, both at home and in other Orthodox countries, vigorously opposed the Union, denouncing the Emperor for his political schemes and for his betrayal of Orthodoxy.

On January 9, 1275, a Liturgy was celebrated in Constantinople in which the Pope was commemorated as "Gregory, the chief pontiff of the Apostolic Church, and Ecuñmenical Pope." The Emperor's sister remarked, "It is better that my brother's empire should perish, rather than the purity of the Orthodox Faith." Recalling the infamous Crusade of 1204 when Latin crusaders sacked Constantinople, many of the people also preferred to submit to the infidels than to abandon the Orthodox Faith.

Twenty-six martyrs of Zographou Monastery on Mt. Athos were among those who were persecuted by Emperor Michael VIII Paleologos (1261-1282) and Patriarch John Bekkos (1275-1282) because they would not obey the imperial command to recognize the Union of Lyons. They steadfastly kept the teachings of the Fathers of the Church, and fearlessly censured those who accepted Catholic doctrines.

In October, when Roman authorities came to Mt. Athos to enforce the imperial policy, the monks of Zographou shut themselves up in their monastery. From the tower they rebuked those in favor of the Union, calling them lawless men and heretics. The attackers set the monastery on fire and the twenty-six monk-martyrs were burned alive.

The names of the martyrs are: Igumen Thomas, the monks Barsanuphius, Cyril, Micah, Simon, Hilarion, James, Job, Cyprian, Sava, James, Martinian, Cosmas, Sergius, Menas, Joasaph, Joannicius, Paul, Anthony, Euthymius, Dometian, Parthenius, and four laymen who died with them. *Through their holy prayers, Lord Jesus Christ our God, have mercy on us!*

The sign that you love God, is this, that you love your fellow man; and if you hate another human being, your hatred is towards God. For it is blasphemy, if you pray before God while you are angry. For your heart also convicts you, that in vain you multiply words: your conscience rightly judges that in your prayers you profit nothing. **-St. Ephraim the Syrian**

"No one on earth can give us unshakable, inner peace. Money cannot give us peace; neither can fame, honor, a high ranking position, nor even our closest friends and family. The only Giver of peace and life is the Lord. He gives peace, stillness and joy --- to the angels and the saints, to us and to every created being. Therefore, we must repent and turn to the Lord."
-Elder Thaddeus

"At the beginning of the human race the woman was made of a rib taken from the side of the man while he slept; for it seemed fit that even then Christ and His Church should be foreshadowed in this event. For that sleep of the man was the death of Christ, whose side, as He hung lifeless upon the Cross, was pierced with a spear, and there flowed from it blood and water, and these we know to be the Sacraments by which the Church is built up." St. Augustine