



## **Holy Ghost Orthodox Church**

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### **APOSTLES' FAST/SAINTS PETER & PAUL FAST**

**ON THE MEND:** Please keep the following parishioners and others in your prayers for recovery from their illnesses and injuries: Metropolitan Constantine, Patriarch Pavle, Archimandrite Raphael, Father Peter Natishan, Father Gerald Olszewski, Father Jakiw Norton, Father Dragan Filipović, Father Elias Katras, Father Stevo Rocknage, Father Paul Stoll, Father Igor Soroka, Father Deacon Joseph Bulkanowa, Ollie Pendylshok, Walt & Evelyn Burlack, Joshua Agosto and his family, Harley Katarina Rahuba, Joe Karas, Mike and Hilda Holupka, Eva Malesnick, Helen Likar, Angela Wesolosky, Stella Peanoske, Joe Nezolyk, Nick Behun, Terry Reinhart, Bernie O'Masta, Grace Holupka, Virginia Bryan, Joseph Sliwinsky, Maria Balo, Linda Mechtly, Mary Mochnick, Mary Pekich, Mildred Manolovich, Evelyn Misko, Amy, Nigel Daniel, & Daniel Pocura, Jeanne Boehing, Alex Drobot, Rachelle, Jane Golofski, Doug Diller, Harry Krewsun, Sandy Gamble, Glen Lucas Burlack, Bernie Vangrin, Mary Alice Babcock, Dorie Kunkle, Andrea, & Melissa [Betty O'Masta's relatives], Mary Evelyn King, Stella Cherepko, Sam Wadrose, Khoruia Joanne Abdalah, Cameron [a boy in Matt's class], Faith—a 3-year-old girl with rheumatoid arthritis, Isabella Olivia Lindgren—a 10-month old with a brain tumor, Dillon, Ethel Thomas, Donna, Jeff, Nick Malec [Maxine's brother], Bill, Erin, Jimmy Fennel [6<sup>th</sup> Grader], Jim Markovich, Jeff Walewski [thyroid cancer], Carol [Lotinski] Rose, Michael Miller, Dave May, Peter Paul & Louise May Sprock, Grace & Owen Ostrasky, Claudia [Horvath] Gradicheck, Alberta, Margaret Mueller, Gary Zurasky, Michael Horvath, Tony Notaro, Patti Sinecki, David Genshi, Pete Special, Rita Very & family, Sue Segeleon, Mike Gallagher, Mildred Walters, Michael Miller, Betsy Mallison, Mike Pelchar [Liz's brother], Jim Logue—throat cancer, Michael, Amy, Luke Brunermer—broken arm, Liz Stumpf, Aubrie—3-month-old with Cystic Fibrosis, Kathy Ciranni, Ester Tylavsky, Ed Jamison, Sam Wamsun, and Daria Masur. **ARNOLD:** Stefania Lucci, Kay Tomson, Ann Ostaffy, Steve Sakal, Elisabeth Arasin, and Homer Paul Kline. We pray that God will grant them all a speedy recovery.

Please remember ALL American servicemen and women in the Middle East in your prayers. May God watch over them and all American servicemen and women—and bring them all home safely!

PLEASE REMEMBER TO BRING YOUR “BOXTOPS FOR EDUCATION” AND CAMPBELL’S SOUP LABELS TO CHURCH. There is a shoebox in the basement for Alex’s Fourth Grade and Matt’s Second Grade collections. THANK YOU ALL FOR YOUR HELP! *Alex and Matt*

**REMEMBER—PRAYERS ARE ALWAYS FREE!**

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Communion Fasting: nothing to eat or drink after midnight, EXCEPT in cases where your doctor tells you to eat or drink something for medical reasons: medication, diabetes, etc. If you have a question, please call Father Bob.

**AT ANY TIME—if there is an emergency, if you have questions, or if you just need to talk, please CALL FATHER BOB at [412] 279-5640.**

**Schedule of Services**

<b>Sunday, June 17</b>	<b>DIVINE LITURGY</b>	<b>10:30 AM</b>
<b>3<sup>RD</sup> SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST—SAINT METROPHANES-1<sup>ST</sup> PATRIARCH OF CONSTANTINOPLE, HIEROMARTYR ASTIUS-BISHOP OF DYRRACHIUM, MARTYR CONCORDIUS OF SPOLETO, MARTYRS FRONTASIUS, SEVERINUS, SEVERIAN, &amp; SILANUS OF GAUL, VENERABLE ZOSIMUS-BISHOP OF BABYLON IN EGYPT, VENERABLE METHODIUS-ABBOT OF PEHNOSHA, SYNAXIS OF ALL SAINTS OF HALYCHYNA/GALICIA, HIEROMARTYR NICEPHORUS—EXARCH OF THE PATRIARCH OF CONSTANTINOPLE IN UKRAINE, SAINT SOPHIA OF THRACE, SAINT JOHN-ABBOT OF MONAGRIA, SAINT ALONIUS OF SCETE IN EGYPT, SAINTS MARY AND MARTHA-SISTERS OF LAZARUS, SAINTS ELEAZAR &amp; NAZARIUS-WONDERWORKERS OF OLONETS</b>		
<i>Tone 2</i>		
Romans 5:1-10		
Matthew 6:22-33		
<b><i>Litany in Blessed Memory of All Deceased Fathers, Grandfathers, etc.—Fr. Bob</i></b>		
<b><i>Parastas in Blessed Memory of Catherine Yakim—Ollie</i></b>		
<b>Sunday, June 24</b>	<b>DIVINE LITURGY</b>	<b>10:30 AM</b>
<b>4<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST—HOLY APOSTLES BARTHOLOMEW &amp; BARNABAS, UNCOVERING RELICS OF VENERABLE EPHRAIM, VENERABLE BARNABAS OF VETLUGA, TRANSLATION OF RELICS OF SAINT ARCADIUS, COMMEMORATION OF THE APPEARANCE OF ARCHANGEL GABRIEL TO A MONK ON MOUNT ATHOS—REVEALING THE HYMN “IT IS TRULY MEET...”</b>		
<i>Tone 3</i>		
Romans 6:18-23		
Matthew 8:5-13		
<b><i>Parastas in Blessed Memory of Riznow Sisters &amp; Brothers—Sonja Riznow Edwards</i></b>		
<b>Sunday, July 1</b>	<b>DIVINE LITURGY</b>	<b>10:30 AM</b>
<b>5<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST—MARTYRS LEONTIUS &amp; WITH HIM MARTYRS HYPATIUS &amp; THEODULUS, MARTYR AETHERUS OF NICOMEDIA, VENERABLE LEONTIUS-CANONARCH OF PERCHEVSKY LAVRA</b>		
<i>Tone 4</i>		

Romans 10:1-10  
Matthew 8:28-9:1

*Litany in Blessed Memory of Anna Kitch, Olga Stock, Susan Justina Sredich, Igumen George [owen],  
& Claudia Horvath—Fr. Bob*

## **BULLETIN INSERT FOR 17 JUNE 2007**

**3<sup>RD</sup> SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST—SAINT METROPHANES-1<sup>ST</sup>  
PATRIARCH OF CONSTANTINOPLE, HIEROMARTYR ASTIUS-BISHOP  
OF DYRRACHIUM, MARTYR CONCORDIUS OF SPOLETO, MARTYRS  
FRONTASIUS, SEVERINUS, SEVERIAN, & SILANUS OF GAUL,  
VENERABLE ZOSIMUS-BISHOP OF BABYLON IN EGYPT,  
VENERABLE METHODIUS-ABBOT OF PEHNOSHA, SYNAXIS OF ALL  
SAINTS OF HALYCHYNA/GALICIA, HIEROMARTYR NICEPHORUS—  
EXARCH OF THE PATRIARCH OF CONSTANTINOPLE IN UKRAINE,  
SAINT SOPHIA OF THRACE, SAINT JOHN-ABBOT OF MONAGRIA,  
SAINT ALONIUS OF SCETE IN EGYPT, SAINTS MARY AND MARTHA-  
SISTERS OF LAZARUS, SAINTS ELEAZAR & NAZARIUS-  
WONDERWORKERS OF OLONETS**

### **TROPARION—TONE 2**

When Thou didst descend to death, O Life Immortal,  
Thou didst slay hell with the splendor of Thy Godhead!  
And when from the depths Thou didst raise the dead,  
All the powers of heaven cried out:  
O Giver of Life! Christ our God! Glory to Thee!

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto  
ages of ages. Amen.

### **KONTAKION—TONE 2**

Hell became afraid, O Almighty Savior,  
Seeing the miracle of Thy Resurrection from the tomb!  
The dead arose! Creation, with Adam,  
Beheld this and rejoiced with Thee!  
And the world, O my Savior, praises Thee forever!

### **PROKEIMENON—TONE 2**

**READER:** The Lord is my strength and my song. He has become my salvation.

**PEOPLE: The Lord is my strength and my song. He has become my salvation.**

**READER:** The Lord has chastened me sorely, but he has not given me over to death.

**PEOPLE: The Lord is my strength and my song. He has become my salvation.**

**READER:** The Lord is my strength and my song.

**PEOPLE: He has become my salvation.**

## **ALLELUIA VERSES—TONE 2**

The Lord answer you in the day of trouble! The name of the God of Jacob protect you!

Save the king, O Lord, and hear us on the day we call!

### **Why Not "Open Communion"?** **Written by the Very Rev. John Breck**

Especially at the feast of Pascha (Easter) non-Orthodox Christians ask why they may not receive Holy Communion in Orthodox parishes. As painful as this refusal is, it is based on our understanding of the true meaning of the sacrament as revealed in Scripture and ecclesial experience.

A few months ago someone sent me a posting from an Internet site that spoke to the issue of communion among various Christian confessions. In answer to the question why a Protestant believer was refused the sacrament at Easter in her boyfriend's Catholic parish, the writer declared that non-Catholics do not believe in "the presence of God's body in the transubstantiated host." Therefore, "they cannot take communion."

Then the writer added: "There is just one exception to this rule. Orthodox Christians (such as Greek Orthodox Christians) may take communion in all Roman Catholic Churches. The reason for this is that Orthodox Christianity also teaches the actual presence of God in the host."

This widespread understanding of the matter is not accurate and needs to be corrected on several counts, theological as well as pastoral. An entire tome could be written by way of explanation, but here are a few of the most important elements. In the next two columns we'll explore some others.

In the first place, we need to acknowledge that many Protestant Christians (including many Anglicans) do believe that Holy Communion offers them a true participation in

Christ's Body and Blood. They may not articulate that belief as Catholics or Orthodox would like; but their faith in Christ's "real presence in the Eucharist" is genuine and should not be disparaged or denied.

Then again, Orthodox Eucharistic theology does not explain the change of bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ as a result of "transubstantiation," the teaching that the "accidents" (visible properties) of the elements remain unaltered, while their "substance" or inner essence becomes the actual Body and Blood. Orthodox tradition speaks of "change" or "transformation," (metamorphôsis; in the Eucharistic Divine Liturgy metabalôn, "making the change") but always with a concern to preserve the mystery from the probings of human reason. It also speaks of the Body and Blood of the glorified Christ, making the point that our communion is in the personal being of the Resurrected and Exalted Lord, and not in the flesh and blood of the incarnate Jesus, torn and shed on the Cross. The incarnate Jesus and the risen Christ are certainly one and the same Person ("Jesus Christ is Lord," the apostle Paul declares in Philippians 2:11). But our communion is in the radically transformed reality of the risen Christ, who ascended into heaven and makes Himself accessible to us through the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit within the Church.

Another point needs to be stressed. It is true that Orthodox Christians are considered by some Catholic priests to be eligible to receive communion in their parishes; but this practice is not formally sanctioned by the Catholic Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (the Holy Office or Magisterium). On the other hand, the Orthodox Churches, united above all by their Eucharistic faith and practice, accept to communion only baptized Orthodox Christians, and then, theoretically, only when they have prepared themselves by prayer, by appropriate fasting, and—in most traditions—by confession of sins. In addition, Orthodox bishops and other teachers make clear to their faithful that they can only properly receive communion from a canonically ordained priest or bishop within the context of the traditional Orthodox Divine Liturgy (which includes communion taken to the sick).

It is hardly enough, though, simply to state that the Orthodox do not teach "transubstantiation" (despite the term's appearance in some of our liturgical books) and, if they are faithful to their tradition, do not receive communion outside of their own Church. There is also the crucial matter of "ecclesial identity." No Orthodox Christian receives Holy Communion in isolation. We are incorporated into a universal community of persons, both living and departed, whose common faith and practice unite them in the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church. Our existence in the Body of Christ, our ecclesial identity as Orthodox Christians, is such that we represent the Church in all that we are and do. If I defy the ordinances of my ecclesial tradition and receive communion in another Church, or as a priest welcome a non-Orthodox believer to receive the Eucharist in my parish, I am acting in violation of my own tradition, to

which I have committed myself before God. And because of my solidarity with all other members of the Orthodox Church, I am implicitly involving them in my act of disobedience.

The real issue, however, is not one of obedience or disobedience to rules and regulations. If the Orthodox preserve the sanctity of the Eucharist as a supreme obligation, it is because of the often stated truth that communion in the Body and Blood of Christ is the very end or fulfillment of Christian existence. It can not, for example, be reduced to a means by which to achieve "Christian unity." (In any case, Church history has made it clear that sharing of Communion among Churches of conflicting theological teachings never results in lasting unity.)

The Eucharist is life itself. It is the life of Christ that enables us to live our life in Christ. To participate in the Eucharist as we are called to do requires our acceptance of a doctrinal attitude and commitment that is specifically "orthodox," grounded in the Scriptures and transmitted through the ages under the guidance and inspiration of the Holy Spirit. It requires as well acceptance of an ascetic discipline, which includes personal prayer, liturgical celebration, fasting, confession of sins, and acts of charity: the ingredients of a life of repentance and of an ongoing quest for holiness. And it requires that we honor our particular "ecclesial identity," together with submission to ecclesial authority represented above all by our bishops: persons canonically ordained and established, who are called by their actions and teachings to preserve and transmit the truth of the Orthodox faith while maintaining a bond of unity within the Body of Christ. A unity grounded not in power but in mutual respect and fraternal love, shared by all members of the Church.

From this perspective, "open communion" -- the welcoming of non-Orthodox to share in the Eucharistic celebration -- is simply not possible without undermining the very meaning of the sacrament. This implies no particular judgment on the Eucharistic services of other Churches. It acknowledges rather that for the Orthodox, the Divine Liturgy is what the name implies. It is both the means and the end of Christian existence, an existence which arises from Orthodox faith, ongoing repentance, ascetic discipline, ecclesial identity and works of love. To those who accept this "Orthodox Way," the Eucharist offers a true participation in the very Life of the risen and glorified Christ, just as it offers the forgiveness of sins, the healing of soul and body, and a foretaste of the heavenly Banquet in the eternal presence of God.

**Of strong constitution and called "the Faster," Andreas the ascetic from St. Anne (on Mt. Athos) had come originally from Epiros. He was robust and rugged. Full of love, he was always eager to help and comfort those who were climbing up the hill carrying a heavy load from the shore to the monastery's church. He lacked formal education, but he has God's wisdom;**

for he was granted the gift of pure, ceaseless prayer. He prayed continually to the Theotokos, shedding rivers of compunctionate tears, full of heavenly love. *from An Athonite Georontikon*

SCOBA

The Standing Conference of the Canonical Orthodox Bishops in the Americas  
8 East 79th Street, New York, NY 10021

June 2007

### **Congratulatory Letter of SCOBA Hierarchs on the Occasion of the 15<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of International Orthodox Christian Charities**

To the Most Reverend Clergy, Venerable Monastics and  
The Devout Faithful of the Holy Orthodox Churches in the Americas.

Dearly Beloved in Christ,

The history of IOCC is a history of compassionate love for all people. As this SCOBA Agency celebrates its 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary, we congratulate IOCC, the faithful steward who multiplied the talents given by our Lord Jesus Christ. IOCC first received the SCOBA blessing and mandate in 1992. In the Name of Christ and in the spirit of Orthodoxy IOCC has gone forth to 33 countries and delivered more than \$250 million in emergency aid and development programs. Like the Good Samaritan who brought the wounded man to the inn, IOCC delivers the blankets, the food, the hygiene, and other materials needed in emergency situations, and then returns to provide the assistance that will enable the poor and the dispossessed to become truly self-sufficient.

Responding to the call of the Gospel, IOCC manifested the love of God to all peoples suffering from civil war during the tragically violent dissolution of Yugoslavia. The refugees and displaced peoples of Bosnia who received blankets and food from IOCC, now receive micro-financing loans for small businesses. IOCC has brought home construction and repair assistance, youth education and training programs, and civil society development so that they might regain their self-sufficiency.

With God's help and the support of Orthodox Faithful, IOCC built on this record of faithful service by its response to the 2004 tsunami, delivering millions of dollars in emergency aid to Indonesia. It assisted islanders off the coast of Sumatra to rebuild their destroyed villages. It provided for the reconstruction of homes, a water supply system, trauma counseling, nutrition programs and livelihood recovery assistance. In our own country, following the devastation of Hurricane Katrina that ravaged the Gulf Coast region, IOCC provided emergency assistance, and continues to send work teams

to help re-build homes.

In Russia and Georgia, IOCC has manifested God's mercy by providing loans for small businesses, tractors and seeds for farmers, empowering communities in partnership with local organizations. In the Holy Land, Lebanon, Iraq, and Jordan, IOCC continues to provide job skills training and job creation, school building and repair, child nutrition programs, and educational training, while not neglecting the needs caused by the recent wave of violence. In Romania and Ethiopia, IOCC is engaged in extensive HIV/AIDS awareness and prevention programs in cooperation with the local Orthodox Church that are reaching millions of people.

Over the past 15 years, IOCC has fulfilled the yearning of the Orthodox Churches in America to manifest the spiritual power of the Gospel and the compassion of Christ by bringing God's deliverance to *all* peoples suffering from disasters, whether made by nature or made by man. In this fifteenth anniversary year we bestow our hierarchical blessings upon IOCC and encourage all those under our episcopal care, clergy and lay alike, to support this unified and critically important humanitarian ministry of our Orthodox Churches in the Americas.

**+Archbishop DEMETRIOS, Chairman**

Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America

**+Metropolitan PHILIP, Vice Chairman**

Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America

**+Metropolitan CHRISTOPHER, Secretary**

Serbian Orthodox Church in the USA and Canada

**+Metropolitan NICHOLAS of Amissos, Treasurer**

American Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Diocese in the USA

**+Metropolitan HERMAN**

Orthodox Church in America

**+Archbishop NICOLAE**

Romanian Orthodox Archdiocese in America and Canada

**+Metropolitan JOSEPH**

Bulgarian Eastern Orthodox Church

**+Metropolitan CONSTANTINE**

Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the USA



## +Bishop ILIA of Philomelion

Albanian Orthodox Diocese of America

There was a small monastery about two miles to the south of Tabennesi. The father of that monastery would often come to see our father Pachomius because he was a friend whom he loved very much; and the words of God he heard from his mouth he would repeat to his own monks so that they too might hear God's commandments. It happened that a brother of his monastery asked for a certain rank, and he replied to the brother, "Our father, Abba Pachomius, warned me not to do this because you are not yet worthy of that thing." The brother grew angry and dragged him along, saying, "Come, let us go to him, and he shall have to prove that to me." The other followed him in amazement and sorrow wondering what was going to happen.

When the two of them and one other came to Abba Pachomius at Tabennesi, they found him busy building a part of the monastery wall. The brother approached our father Pachomius and said to him very angrily, "Come down and give me proof of my sin, O liar Pachomius!" The man of God, Pachomius, thanks to his long suffering, gave him no word whatever in reply. The other went on and said to him, "Who compelled you to lie, you who pride yourself on clear vision while your light is darkness?" The man of God, Abba Pachomius, understood the wiles of the devil who was in that man, and he said to him respectfully, "I have sinned, forgive me. Do you never sin yourself?" And at once the brother's wicked anger calmed down.

Then our father Pachomius took the father of that monastery aside and questioned him, "What happened to this brother?" He answered him, "Forgive me, my lord father. The fact is that this man asked me for a thing that he does not deserve. I knew that he would not obey me, so I quoted you to him by name so he might perhaps have nothing to say. For I know that nothing is hidden from you. And behold, he has added an evil deed to his wickedness." Then our father Abba Pachomius said to him, "Listen to me; give him that office so that by this means we may snatch his soul out of the enemy's hands. For if we do good to a bad man, he comes thereby to have a perception of the good. This is God's love, to take pains for one another." When they heard this teaching of our holy father Pachomius, they went away very comforted and giving thanks to God.

When they arrived at their monastery, the father of the monastery gave the rank to the brother as he had asked, in accordance with our father Abba Pachomius' instruction. A few days later, that brother came to regret his fault. Then he went back to our holy father Abba Pachomius, kissed his hands and feet, and said to him, "Truly, O man of God, you are much greater than what we hear of you every day. For the Lord knows that if you had not been patient with me the day I insulted you, sinner that I am, and if you had

spoken some harsh word to me, I would have rejected the monastic life and gone back to the world. Blessed are you, O man of God, my lord father, for thanks to your patience and graciousness, the Lord has brought me back to life."

Bohairic Life of St. Pachomius 42

Saint Pachomius (c.292 347) commemorated 15/28 May

March 23, 2007, 6:36PM

Huffington Institute hopes to bridge differences between Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy

By TAMI ABDOLLAH  
Los Angeles Times

LOS ANGELES — An institute established at Loyola Marymount University will try to heal centuries-old wounds between the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox churches.

The Huffington Ecumenical Institute, officially launched in February, was boosted by a \$5 million pledge from philanthropist Michael Huffington.

The endowment will be matched by the university over several years.

Huffington, 59, who is a member of an Orthodox Church, said he wanted to "bring orthodoxy and Catholicism closer together" so they ultimately would be able to share Communion together in a church.

"What they believe in is so very similar, in many respects, that the differences ought to be bridged, and that's what we're going to try to do," Huffington said, calling himself an optimist.

The official split between the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox churches traditionally dates to 1054 because of political and ecclesiastical differences.

Differences span a range of theological issues.

For example, the Catholic Church sees the pope as its supreme authority on earth. The autonomous churches that constitute Eastern Orthodoxy, such as the Greek, Serbian and Romanian Orthodox churches, consider themselves both one church and a family of churches.

None is under the jurisdiction of another. Also, within the Orthodox tradition, priests can marry.

Do not search about for the words to show people you love them. Instead, ask God to show them your love without your having to talk about it. Otherwise you will never have time enough both for loving gestures and for compunction.

St. John Climacus, The Spiritual Ladder, 6

The Church Year—Chapter: Ascension  
"The Orthodox Faith"--By Protopresbyter Thomas Hopko

Jesus did not live with his disciples after his resurrection as he had before his death. Filled with the glory of his divinity, he appeared at different times and places to his people, assuring them that it was he, truly alive in his risen and glorified body.

***To them he presented himself alive after his passion by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days, and speaking of the Kingdom of God (Acts 1:3).***

It should be noted that the time span of forty days is used many times in the Bible and signifies a temporal period of completeness and sufficiency (Gen 7:17; Ex 16:35, 24:18; Judg 3:11; 1 Sam 17:16; 1 Kg 19:8; Jon 3:4; Mt 4:2). On the fortieth day after his passover, Jesus ascended into heaven to be glorified on the right hand of God (Acts 1:9-11; Mk 16:19; Lk 24:51). The ascension of Christ is his final physical departure from this world after the resurrection. It is the formal completion of his mission in this world as the Messianic Saviour. It is his glorious return to the Father who had sent him into the world to accomplish the work that he had given him to do (Jn 17:4-5).

***... and lifting his hands he blessed them. While blessing them, he parted from them and was carried up into heaven. And they returned to Jerusalem with great joy. ... (Lk 24:51-52).***

The Church's celebration of the ascension, as all such festal celebrations, is not merely the remembrance of an event in Christ's life. Indeed, the ascension itself is not to be understood as though it were simply the supernatural event of a man floating up and away into the skies. The holy scripture stresses Christ's physical departure and his glorification with God the Father, together with the great joy which his disciples had as they received the promise of the Holy Spirit who was to come to assure the Lord's presence with them, enabling them to be his witnesses to the ends of earth (Lk 24:48-53; Acts 1:8-11; Mt 28:20; Mk 16:16-14).

In the Church the believers in Christ celebrate these very same realities with the conviction that it is for them and for all men that Christ's departure from this world has taken place. The Lord leaves in order to be glorified with God the Father and to glorify us with himself. He goes in order to "prepare a place" for and to take us also into the blessedness of God's presence. He goes

to open the way for all flesh into the "heavenly sanctuary ... the Holy Place not made by hands" (see Hebrews 8-10). He goes in order send the Holy Spirit, who proceeds from the Father to bear witness to him and his gospel in the world, making him powerfully present in the lives of disciples.

The liturgical hymns of the feast of the Ascension sing of all of these things. The antiphonal verses of the Divine Liturgy are taken from Psalms 47, 48, and 49. The troparion of the feast which is sung at the small entrance is also used as the post-communion hymn.

***Thou hast ascended in glory O Christ our God, granting joy to Thy disciples by the promise of the Holy Spirit. Through the blessing they were assured that Thou art the Son of God, the Redeemer of the world! (Troparion).***

***When Thou didst fulfill the dispensation for our sake, and didst unite earth to heaven, Thou didst ascend in glory, O Christ our God, not being parted from those who love Thee, but remaining with them and crying: I am with you and no one will be against you! (Kontakion).***

(on St. Helena, pt. 2)

And when at length at the close of a long life, she was called to inherit a happier lot, having arrived at the eightieth year of her age, and being very near the time of her departure, she prepared and executed her last will in favor of her only son, the emperor and sole monarch of the world (Constantine), and her grandchildren, the Caesars his sons, to whom severally she bequeathed whatever property she possessed in any part of the world. Having thus made her will, this thrice blessed woman died in the presence of her illustrious son, who was in attendance at her side, caring for her and held her hands: so that, to those who rightly discerned the truth, the thrice blessed one seemed not to die, but to experience a real change and transition from an earthly to a heavenly existence, since her soul, remolded as it were into an incorruptible and angelic essence, was received up into her Savior's presence.

Her body, too, was honored with special tokens of respect, being escorted on its way to the imperial city by a vast train of guards, and there deposited in a royal tomb. Such were the last days of our emperor's mother, a person worthy of being had in perpetual remembrance, both for her own practical piety, and because she had given birth to so extraordinary and admirable an offspring. And well may his character be styled blessed, for his filial piety as well as on other grounds. He rendered her through his influence so devout a worshiper of God, (though she had not previously been such,) that she seemed to have been instructed from the first by the Savior of mankind: and besides this, he had honored her so fully with imperial dignities, that in every province, and in the very ranks of the soldiery, she was spoken of under the titles of Augusta

and empress, and her likeness was impressed on golden coins. He had even granted her authority over the imperial treasures, to use and dispense them according to her own will and discretion in every case for this enviable distinction also she received at the hands of her son. Hence it is that among the qualities which shed a luster on his memory, we may rightly include that surpassing degree of filial affection whereby he rendered full obedience to the Divine precepts which enjoin due honor from children to their parents. In this manner, then, the emperor executed in Palestine the noble works I have above described: and indeed in every province he raised new churches on a far more imposing scale than those which had existed before his time.

Sts. Constantine and Helena--commemorated 21 May/03 June  
icon and troparion at: <http://www.comeandseeicons.com/c/phn32.htm>  
contemporary coin portraits may be found at:  
<http://www.wildwinds.com/coins/ric/constantine/t.html>  
and  
<http://www.wildwinds.com/coins/ric/helena/t.html>  
(click on small coin portraits for enlarged versions)

The devil demonstrates simultaneously his weakness and his wickedness. He is unable to harm anyone who does not harm himself. In fact, anyone who denies heaven and chooses the earth is, as it were, rushing towards a precipice, even though running of his own accord.

The devil, however, starts working as soon as he sees someone living up to faith's commitments, someone who has a reputation for virtue, who does good works. He tries to worm vanity into him, to make it possible for him to be puffed up with pride, become presumptuous, lose trust in prayer and not attribute to God the good that he does but to take all the credit himself.

St. Ambrose of Milan, On the Gospel of Luke 4.25

Abba Ammoun of Rhaithou asked Abba Sisoës, "When I read the Scriptures, my mind is wholly concentrated on the words so that I may make elaborate comments and so to prepare myself to answer questions on it." The old man said to him, "That is not necessary; it is better to enrich yourself through purity of spirit and to be without anxiety and then to speak simply."

When you (the emperor Antoninus Pius) hear that we look for a kingdom, you rashly suppose that we mean something merely human. But we speak of a kingdom with God, as is clear from our confessing Christ when you bring us to trial, though we know that death is the penalty for this confession. For if we looked for a human kingdom we would deny it in order to save our lives, and would try to remain in hiding in order to obtain the things we look for.

But since we do not place our hopes on the present order, we are not troubled by being put to death, since we will have to die somehow in any case.

St. Justin Martyr, 1st Apology 11

St Justin Martyr, 2nd century, commemorated 01/14 June

Concerning a great old man, some of the Fathers used to relate that if one came to him to ask for a word, he would say, "Look, I am going to play the part of God and seat myself on the throne of judgment. What do you want me to do for you, then? If you say, 'Have mercy on me,' God says to you, 'If you want me to have mercy on you, do you also have mercy on your brother; if you want me to forgive you, do you also forgive your neighbor.' Can there be injustice in God? Certainly not; but it depends on us whether we wish to be saved."

Abba Isaiah said, "When someone wishes to render evil for evil, he can injure his brother's soul even by a single nod of the head."

-----archived at: <http://wordfromthedesert.squarespace.com/>

The blessed evangelist John, when he remained at Ephesus up to the highest old age and could scarcely be carried to church in the hands of disciples and was not able to put together a statement of several words, used to offer in different sayings nothing else but: "Little children, love one another." At last the disciples and brethren who were present, tired of the fact that they always heard the same thing, said, "Teacher, why do you always say this?" John made a worthy response: "Because it was the Lord's precept, and if this alone is done, it is enough."

Jerome, Commentary on Galatians 6.10 (PL 26:462)

St. John the Theologian, commemorated 08 May/21 & 26 September/09

October, icon and troparion at: <http://comeandseeicons.com/j/pdg04.htm>

If you cannot be merciful, at least speak as though you are a sinner. If you are not a peacemaker, at least do not be a troublemaker. If you cannot be assiduous, at least in your thought be unlike a sluggard. If you are not victorious, do not exalt yourself over the vanquished. If you cannot close the mouth of a man who disparages his companions, at least refrain from joining him in this.

St, Isaac of Syria

On the third day, He freely rose again from the dead. He appeared to His disciples as He had been ... He tarried for forty days, so that they might be

instructed by Him in the precepts of life and so that they might learn what they were to teach. Then, in a cloud spread around Him, He was lifted up into heaven – so that as a Conqueror, He might bring mankind to the Father. For Christ loved mankind, He became man, and He shielded mankind from death.

St. Cyprian of Carthage

Ascension icon and Troparion at:

<http://www.comeandseeicons.com/festal/cap43.htm>