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APOSTLES' FAST—SAINTS PETER AND PAUL FAST

ON THE MEND: Please keep the following parishioners and others in your prayers for recovery from their illnesses and injuries: Metropolitan Theodosius [OCA], Archbishop Jovan, Bishop Robert, Father John Harvey, Father Jakiw Norton, Father Dragan Filipović, Father Paul Stoll, Father Igor Soroka, Father Joseph Kopchak, Father Elias Warnke, Father Nestor Kowal, Father George Yatsko, Father Paul Bigelow, Father Emilian Balan, Father John Nakonachny, Father Steve Repa, Protopresbyter William Diakiw, Archpriest Dionysi Vitali, Protodeacon Joseph Hotrovich, Father Adam Yonitch, Pani-Dobrodijka Sonia Diakiw, Father Paisius McGrath, Joshua Agosto and his family, Eva Malesnick, Stella Peanoske, Nick Behun, Grace Holupka, Virginia Bryan, Joseph Sliwinsky, Linda Mechtly, Mary Mochnick, Evelyn Misko, Jeanne Boehing, Alex Drobot, Rachelle, Jane Golofski, Doug Diller, Harry Krewsun, Mary Alice Babcock, Dorie Kunkle, Andrea, & Melissa [Betty O'Masta's relatives], Mary Evelyn King, Sam Wadrose, Isabella Olivia Lindgren, Ethel Thomas, Donna, Erin, Michael Miller, Grace & Owen Ostrasky, Patti Sinecki, David Genshi, Sue Segeleon, Mike Gallagher, Liz Stumpf, Theodore Nixon, Michelle Corba Kapeluck, Linda Hippert & family, Margaret Vladimir, Luke Emmerling, John Sheliga, George Rocknage, Robert McKivitz, Liz Obradovich, Halyna Zelinska [Bishop Daniel's mother], Charlotte, Andrew Mark Olynyk, Deborah Finley, Claire Senita, Eleanor Kelly, Bryan, Nancy Barylak, Patrick Keenan, Khrystyna Chorniy, Anthony Cormier, Nathan Forbeck, Sarah Doyle, Samuel Peters, Jean Stutchell, Esther Holupka, Wanda Mefford, David Vallor, Henry Faraly, Betty O'Masta, Julie Eiler, Dorothy Lednovich, Bob C., Allie—young girl with leukemia, Heather Kramer, Jane Wartinbee, Matthew—21-year-old with cancer, Nicholas Orlando, Mary Ann Kuznik, Michael Woloschak, Michael Pryhodzenko, Sonia Luciw, Theresa Ditto, Mary Ann Musial, Mary Pelino, Yvonne Christy, Myron & Barbara Spak, Pete Niederberger, Julia Duda, Lisa Pandle, Kris & Julie Hanczar, John Kennedy, Loretta, Nancy, Carol, & Michael Sheliga, Gaele Kelly, Irma McDivitt, Robin Young, Mckayla, Rachel,

Carl & Margaret Reed, Lydia Wilson, Robert Pointon, Walter Cecelia, John Persico, Jeff Miller, Mary Kernick, Glenn Miller, Jean Marie, Donna & Walter McCrackin, Bonnie & Eugene Blair [Pani Gina's parents], Mel & Charlotte Malik, David Hoenshell, Barbara Macino, Shelley Hill, Mikaela Kapeluck, Linda Cawley, Gerald Cogley, Helen Bozo, Corey Guich, Robert Vangrin, Susan "Billie" Mason, Pauline Witkowsky, Sera White, Donald Griffey, Deborah Smith, Nancy & Eric Dunik, Julian Stroz [child with cerebral palsy], Dr. Kirsten Ream, Patricia Corey, Michelle, Katie Swarm, Richard Dunst, Michelle, Patrick, Linda Morris, Howard Simpson, Chris, Pastor Ed Bowen, David Hiles, Karen Johnson, Jennifer, Jerry Quinn, Cher Mount, Frank & Janet Horrell, Jim Wandling, Gail, Sirena Sharp, Ron Paulovich, Fred DeNorscia, Sandi Anderson, Donald Uebing, Sabrina, Shirley, Denny Mader, Ella Campbell, Tom Hyatt, Bill Janiro, Jean Symanko-Andy's sister, William Lemonakis, Barbara McDougall, Alma Wyke, Lindsay Romanczak & family, Virginia Catherine Pynch, Susan Lucas, Neil Carter & family, James Paluh, Mickie Weikel, Evelyn Krempasky, Tammy Strunk, Loida Esbry, Darlene Chicka Deskins, Drew, Alice & Keith Philipa, Kateryna Kocelko, Nancy Heinbaugh, Mira Filipovic, Lynn, Jacqueline, Irma Opacic, Sharon, Zan Cheng, Jeff Jones, Kristy, Elaine Ellenberger, Donna Cacioppo [Evelyn's niece], Brandon, Anna Tranchine, Demetra, Blase Urban, Catherine Hogel & children, Jennifer & Dylan, Ron Schwartz, Lydia Wilson, Flora Tomlin, Stella Rossi, Howell Swarm, Jane Bielewicz Allred, Manny "Lazarus" Lopez, Glenn & Lucas Burlack, Katie Elizabeth, Mileva, & Michael, Deirdré Straughan, Terri Paluh, Lori & Steve Lucier, Kyranna Cherpas, Pastor Bruce Nordeen, Millie Koss Good, Heather Ried, Carla Perry, Linda Elliot, Dennis McDaniel, Mike Mangan, Luke Tinsley, Brent, Tricia, Katherine Gorman, Pamela Jaquette, Michael Pawlyshyn, Sherri Walewski, Marika Zeliszcuk, Donna Davis, Jackie Crimbchin, and Ian Brick. ARNOLD: Homer Paul Kline. We pray that God will grant them all a speedy recovery.

If someone laughs at your faith we pray for him.
The Day of Judgment will not be a laughing matter.

Please remember in your prayers—our dear 'Little Father' Emilian, who returned to Romania to undergo surgery for back pain. This particular procedure is not offered here in the United States. He asked for our prayers and expressed his thanks for the love and fellowship he has shared with the Holy Ghost Parish Family. He said he looks forward to returning to us pain-free at some time in the future...may God watch over him and heal him...Fr. Bob

PLEASE REMEMBER IN YOUR PRAYERS: All Christians and the others in the Middle East who are suffering during this time of great tragedy and unrest. May God watch over and keep them safe! Lord have mercy!

Please remember ALL American service men and women in your prayers. May God watch over them and all American service men and women—and bring them all home safely!

REMEMBER—PRAYERS ARE ALWAYS FREE!

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 ask 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

**SUNDAY, JULY 03 DIVINE LITURGY OF SAINT JOHN CHRYSOSTOM 10:30 AM
2ND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST; ALL SAINTS OF NORTH AMERICA; ALL SAINTS OF HOLY MOUNT ATHOS; ALL SAINTS OF UKRAINE; HIEROMARTYR METHODIUS-BISHOP OF PATARA; MARTYRS INNA, PINNA, & RIMMA-DISCIPLES OF APOSTLE ANDREW IN SCYTHIA; MARTYRS ARISTOCLEUS-PRESBYTER, DEMETRIAN-DEACON, & ATHANASIOS-READER OF CYPRUS; SAINT LAUCIUS THE CONFESSOR-BISHOP OF BRINDISI; SAINT MINAS-BISHOP OF POLOTSK**

Tone 1

Romans 2:10-16; Hebrews 11:33-12:2

Matthew 4:18-23; Matthew 4:25-5:12

Litany in Blessed Memory of Olga Stock, Anna Kitch, Sophie Carrera, Susan Justina Sredich, Stella E. Cherepko, Joseph Paouncic, Igumen George [Owen], & Claudia Horvath—Fr. Bob

**SUNDAY, JULY 10 DIVINE LITURGY OF SAINT JOHN CHRYSOSTOM 10:30 AM
3RD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST; SYNAXIS OF HALYCH/GALICIAN SAINTS; SYNAXIS OF ODESSA SAINTS; VENERABLE SAMPSON THE HOSPITABLE; SAINT JOANNA THE MYRRH-BEARER; VENERABLE SEVERUS-PRESBYTER OF INTEROCREA IN ITALY**

Tone 2

Romans 5:1-10

Matthew 6:22-33

SUNDAY, JULY 17

NO SERVICE IN SLICKVILLE

**4TH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST; SAINT ANDREW-ARCHBISHOP OF CRETE;
VENERABLE MARTHA-MOTHER OF SAINT SYMEON STYLITES THE YOUNGER;
MARTYRS THEODOTUS & THEODOTA; HIEROMARTYR THEODORE-BISHOP OF
CYRENE**

Tone 3

Romans 6:18-23

Matthew 8:5-13

BULLETIN INSERT FOR 03 JULY 2016

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ALL SAINTS OF HOLY MOUNT ATHOS; ALL SAINTS OF UKRAINE;
HIEROMARTYR METHODIUS-BISHOP OF PATARA; MARTYRS INNA,
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ATHANASIUS-READER OF CYPRUS; SAINT LAUCIUS THE
CONFESSOR-BISHOP OF BRINDISI; SAINT MINAS-BISHOP OF
POLOTSK**

TROPARION—TONE 1

When the stone had been sealed by the Jews;
While the soldiers were guarding Thy most pure Body;
Thou didst rise on the third day, O Savior,
Granting life to the world.
The powers of heaven therefore cried to Thee, O Giver of life:
Glory to Thy Resurrection, O Christ!
Glory to Thy Kingdom!
Glory to Thy Dispensation, O Thou who lovest mankind.

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

KONTAKION—TONE 1

As God, Thou didst rise from the tomb in glory, raising the world with
Thyself.
Human nature praises Thee as God, for death has vanished!
Adam exults, O Master!
Eve rejoices, for she is freed from bondage and cries to Thee:

Thou are the Giver of Resurrection to all, O Christ!

PROKEIMENON—TONE 1

READER: Let Thy mercy, O Lord, be upon us as we have set our hope on Thee.

PEOPLE: Let Thy mercy, O Lord, be upon us as we have set our hope on Thee.

READER: Rejoice in the Lord, O you righteous! Praise befits the just!

PEOPLE: Let Thy mercy, O Lord, be upon us as we have set our hope on Thee.

READER: Let Thy mercy, O Lord, be upon us.

PEOPLE: As we have set our hope on Thee.

ALLELUIA VERSES

God gives vengeance to me, and subdues people under me.

He magnifies the salvation of the king, and deals mercifully with His Christ, with David and his seed forever!

My poor soul! Sigh, pray and strive to take upon you the blessed yoke of Christ, and you will live on earth in a heavenly manner. Lord, grant that I may carry the light and goodly yoke, and I shall be always at rest, peaceful, glad and joyous; and I shall taste on earth of crumbs which fall from the celestial feast, like a dog that feeds upon the crumbs which fall from the master's table. *St. Tikhon of Voronezh*

On Taking Up the Cross and Confessing Christ in Contemporary Culture: Homily for the Sunday of All Saints in the Orthodox Church

Priest Philip LeMasters | 07 June 2015

Source: Eastern Christian Insight

We live in a time of great confusion. Our contemporary culture forms many people who cannot imagine any purpose in life higher than the pursuit of self-centered pleasure on their own terms. For example, patient care for the dying and disabled, sacrifice to welcome and rear children conceived in inconvenient circumstances, and even basic sexual morality in singleness and marriage are often rejected today in ways that keep people from growing in God's image and likeness. Our society produces too many

people who love and fantasize about violence, worship money and what it can buy, disregard their needy neighbors, hate those who disagree with them, and recognize no standard higher than fulfilling their own immediate desires.

Such ways of living simply diminish us and enslave us to our passions.

On this Sunday of All Saints, the Church reminds us that we are called to follow a very different and much better path. Last Sunday at Pentecost, we celebrated the descent of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit has been poured out richly upon all in the Body of Christ, showing that God intends to dwell in the hearts and souls of human beings such that we all become partakers of the divine nature by grace.

Today we remember all those who have been filled with the Holy Spirit, whose lives have borne witness to the holiness of God. The meaning of the word "saint" is holy, and surely most saints have not been officially canonized by the Church.

Nonetheless, they are known by God and glorified in the Kingdom because they embraced His transforming love and became beacons of light. They followed the true and blessed path for which God created us as His sons and daughters; consequently, they became truly human in the divine likeness.

In today's gospel text, Jesus Christ teaches that He will confess us to His Father in heaven if we confess Him before other people. But if we do not, He will not claim us before the Father. He says that we must love Him more than anyone or anything else. The persecuted Christians of the Middle East and elsewhere certainly follow His teaching when they become refugees, prisoners, and victims of torture, abuse, and execution for their faith in Him. But we may wonder what our Lord's words mean for those of us who live in places where we do not experience such obvious threats. Do we have any hope of Christ acknowledging us before His Father when we do not suffer that kind of persecution?

The good news of the gospel is that the Holy Spirit enables us all to become holy in whatever life circumstances we face. The divine breath gave us life in the first place in God's image and likeness and empowers us all to grow eternally in becoming more like Him, to become perfect as our Father in heaven is perfect. As hard as it is to believe, God calls us all to that kind of holiness. He intends to make our lives shine with the glory of His

Kingdom, right now and throughout all eternity. For that to happen, we must follow the path trod by all the saints, which is open to every human being in every generation.

Think about what Christ said concerning whether we confess Him before others. That is relevant not only for circumstances of persecution, but also for every day of our lives. Do we act and speak in ways that show we are united to Christ? Are we living witnesses of His victory over sin and death? Does the light of His resurrection shine through us by the power of Holy Spirit? The hard truth is that, whenever Christ is not evident in us, we deny Him. If we speak or act according to our own self-centered desires or the corrupt ways of the world, we indicate that we are not His. That is to veer from the path to the Kingdom followed by all the saints; it is to turn away from what it means to be a human being in God's image and likeness. When we recognize we have done that, we must repent, reorienting our thoughts, words, and deeds toward Christ in humility.

The Savior gives us an exacting standard to determine whether we are truly united with Him. Namely, He says that those who love even family members more than Him are not worthy of Him. Instead, we must take up our crosses and follow Him in order to be His. As much as we do not like to hear it, even our deepest and most profound relationships in this life must be transformed by an even deeper and more profound allegiance to Christ if they are to become icons of the blessedness of the Kingdom. Otherwise, they will become idols that diminish all concerned and keep us from fulfilling our high calling.

Family life by itself is not the salvation of the world. The relationship between man and woman so easily becomes distorted and brings misery on them both, which is why there is so much divorce today. Parents and children have it no easier, as witness child abuse, abortion, and the neglect of the elderly. When it comes to siblings, just remember Cain and Abel. Even the best human inclinations so easily fall prey to the worst when they are not healed by sacrificial offering to the Lord.

Christ went to the cross for us, bearing the consequences of all human corruption to the point of death, burial, and Hades in order to conquer them and bring us into eternal life through His resurrection. The Father gave the Son and the Son offered Himself up on the cross for salvation. That is the ultimate act of love. If—together with our family members and loved ones—

we want to share in the new life that Christ has brought to the world, we must not make idols of any human being or relationship. We must not pretend that they come before God or are fine just as they are. No, we must offer our families and relationships to the Lord and bear the cross of sacrificing the idolatry even of our spouses, children, and parents. For like us, they are simply human beings and not God. And if we make false gods of them, we will bring sorrow to them and ourselves. We will bend everyone concerned out of shape, putting more weight on them than anyone can bear. Instead, we must take up the cross of loving others according to God's will for them and us.

Purely out of love, the Son went to the cross for the salvation of the world. That is sacrifice beyond what we can understand.

And if we share in that love, we must sacrifice the ultimately self-centered illusion that we will find or give other people true fulfillment and happiness apart from Him. And if we put ourselves or others before faithfulness to the Lord, we will end up confessing some false god in place of Jesus Christ. It is not as dramatic as worshiping an idol, but the spiritual significance is the same. It is not the way of the saints, and it must not be our way if we want to open our lives to His glorious blessing and fulfillment.

If we really love others, we will bear the cross for them and offer them to the Lord as best we can. For example, when man and woman join in marriage in the Orthodox Church, they wear the crowns of the Kingdom, which are crowns of martyrdom.

Each dies to self in loving and serving Christ in the other. We must not look for unrealistic romantic, financial, or social bliss in marriage, for that leads only to dissatisfaction and divorce. The true calling of husband and wife is to make their life together an icon, a living image of the Kingdom of God. Mutual forgiveness, patience, self-sacrifice, self-control, humility, and steadfast commitment are the signs of a holy marriage. Faithful husbands and wives pray for and with one another.

Faithful fathers and mothers do the same with their children. When families worship together and use their financial and other resources to serve God's purposes in the world, they offer their common life to the Lord. They confess Jesus Christ to one another and the world. They open their lives to the holiness of God and follow in the way of the saints.

Yes, this kind of family life is a cross to bear, and it requires forgoing much that we may well desire. In our age of internet pornography, promiscuity, and routine divorce, there is not much today that supports the holiness of marriage and family. We face great struggles in fulfilling our calling to confess Jesus Christ as Lord with integrity each day in a world that worships pleasure, wealth, and selfishness. Fortunately, the Holy Spirit strengthens us all to take up our crosses, which means confessing our Lord each day of our lives in all we say and do. If we will do so, then we will open ourselves to His mercy and know already the peace and joy of a Kingdom not of this world together with all the saints who have gone before us.

The Bishop June 20, 2016 by Abbot Tryphon

The unity and continuity of the Church is found in Her bishops

Gathering together for the celebration of the Church's Divine Services is that great moment in the life of the People of God that brings together both heaven and earth. In these services we are mystically taken to a place where time and space cease to exist as we know it, and we are transported into the Heavenly Realm. In these services we are mystically standing with the saints and all the Heavenly Powers before the Throne of God.

These services bring us all together, from the smallest chapel, to the largest cathedral. Patriarchs, metropolitans, archbishops, bishops, and clergy of every rank, stand as one before the Noetic Altar, worshipping the Holy Trinity.

The Unity of the Church is nowhere more defined than during her services, and the unity of the people of God around their bishop is clearly that defining moment. Whether the Divine Services are celebrated in the tiny monastic cave chapel of hermits, or in the bishop's own cathedral, all are united together as if in one liturgical celebration.

It is important to note that in Orthodoxy, Christ is the only priest, pastor, and teacher. Christ is the living Head of His Church, and alone guides and rules his people. He alone offers communion with God, His Father. He, alone, forgives sins. Christ remains with His Church as its living and unique Head, and is present and active in the Church through the Holy Spirit.

The Mystery of Holy Orders is the sacrament by which the bishop brings order to the Church, guaranteeing the continuity and unity of the Church from age to age and from place to place. It is the bishop who keeps the continuity of worship and doctrine, from the time of Christ and the Apostles until the establishment of God's Kingdom in eternity.

Bishops receive the gift of the Holy Spirit to manifest Christ in the Holy Spirit to men and women everywhere.

Bishops are neither vicars, substitutes, nor representatives of Christ. It is Christ, through his chosen ministers, Who acts as teacher, good shepherd, forgiver, and healer. It is Christ remitting sins, and curing the physical, mental, and spiritual ills of humanity. There is reluctance to try to explain it in Orthodoxy, for it remains a great mystery of the Church.

According to Saint John of Kronstadt, the bishop is the source of sanctification for all the Christians of his flock, after God and the Holy Virgin. Thus, the great esteem and love shown to the bishop reflects in the faithful the view that the bishop is, by his office, the most perfect celebrant of the Holy Mysteries. Every priest, regardless of rank, shares in his bishop's priesthood, and represents his bishop among the people.

The bishop, as the Father of the Diocese, is father to all of us. We must therefore include our bishop in our daily prayers, and show him the respect and love that is due his office. The unity and well-being of the diocese requires that we never judge our bishop, but only love and respect him. He is the icon of Christ in our midst, is pivotal to the whole of our Orthodox Faith, and is central to what it means to be an Orthodox Christian. Without the office of bishop, the Catholic and Apostolic Church would cease to exist. <http://blogs.ancientfaith.com/morningoffering/2016/06/the-bishop/>

Orthodox Council in Crete will not consider Ukrainian parliament's message

Source: TASS: Russian News Agency admin | 20 June 2016

The Ukrainian parliament asked Patriarch Bartholomew to grant autocephaly to the Orthodox Church in Ukraine

ATHENS, June 20. /TASS/. The Ukrainian parliament's message to Patriarch Bartholomew I, of Constantinople, containing a request for recognizing the Ukrainian Orthodox Church as autocephalous will not be considered by Orthodox Council in Crete, opening today, Archbishop Job, of Telmessos,

who represents the Patriarchate of Constantinople at the Council, told the press service of the Synodal Information and Enlightenment Department of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church under the Moscow Patriarchate in an interview.

“The Ukrainian issue is not on the Council’s agenda and the agenda cannot be changed,” Archbishop Job said, adding that the Ukrainian parliament’s message was being discussed at length on the sidelines of the Council.

He explained that the Ukrainian parliament’s message became known from mass media reports.

“When Patriarch Bartholomew I has an official request, it will be discussed on the basis of the proper official procedures – through the Holy Synod of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, just as any other major issue,” the website quotes Archbishop Job as saying.

Preparations for the Council, originally conceived as a pan-Orthodox, lasted (with certain pauses) for more than half a century. The heads of the 14 local churches meeting in Crete today represent a smaller part of the Orthodox world. The Bulgarian church, the Patriarchate of Antioch (Syria), and the Georgian and Russian Orthodox Churches have refused to participate in the Council on the conditions proposed by the Patriarchate of Constantinople. Daily meetings under the chairmanship of the Ecumenical Patriarch, Bartholomew I will be held till June 25.

On June 16, the Ukrainian parliament asked Patriarch Bartholomew to grant autocephaly to the Orthodox Church in Ukraine. The resolution was carried by a 238 majority vote (while the required minimum is 226 votes). The Ukrainian parliament wants the act of 1686 (on the transfer of the Kiev metropolitan to the Moscow Patriarchate) to be declared void for it allegedly violated the holy canons of the Orthodox Church. There has been no response from the Ecumenical Patriarch yet. *Source: TASS: Russian News Agency*

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Date: June 24, 2016

HOLY AND GREAT COUNCIL OF THE ORTHODOX CHURCH PROCEEDS IN THE SPIRIT OF UNITY, DESPITE ABSENCES

KOLYMBARI (Chania, Crete), Greece – The work of the Holy and Great Council of the Orthodox Church convened June 20, 2016, the Feast of the Holy Spirit, at the Orthodox Academy of Crete after almost a thousand years and despite the decision of four Churches not to participate.

His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew presides over the Council. The following nine Primates of the Orthodox Autocephalous Churches and their respective honorable delegations are participating: His Beatitude Patriarch **Theodoros II** of Alexandria and All Africa, His Beatitude Patriarch **Theophilos** of Jerusalem, His Beatitude Patriarch **Daniel** of Romania, His Beatitude Patriarch **Irinej** of Serbia, His Beatitude Archbishop **Chrysostomos** of Cyprus, His Beatitude Archbishop **Ieronymos** of Athens and all Greece, His Beatitude Archbishop **Anastasios** of Tirana and All Albania, His Beatitude Metropolitan **Sawa** of Warsaw and All Poland, His Beatitude Archbishop **Rastislav** of Czech Lands and Slovakia.

Absent from the Council are their Beatitudes, Patriarch John of Antioch, Patriarch Kirill of Moscow, Patriarch Neophyte of Bulgaria and Patriarch Ilia of Georgia, Primates of their respective autocephalous churches.

In his introductory address to the Council, His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew expressed his regret and pain for the absences of the sister Churches of Antioch, Russia, Bulgaria and Georgia, “an unpleasant surprise on the twelfth hour,” as he said. The Ecumenical Patriarch also said that even though they had sent the lists of their delegations and had fully participated in all the phases of preparation and therefore had every opportunity to put forth for discussion all the issues before they had agreed and signed, they are now using these issues as an excuse for their abstention. “This unprecedented attitude, he said, we are having trouble understanding.”

His All-Holiness noted that “by striking at our unity we are striking ourselves.” He emphasized that none of us, none of our Churches can exist in isolation from the rest of the Orthodox Churches. We, Orthodox Christians, are not and should not behave as a federation of Churches. We are one Church, one body and we should resolve all our possible differences

in the Synod. This is what we have received from our holy tradition and to that we should adhere to, said the Ecumenical Patriarch.

Speaking about the question of how the abstentions might affect the work of the Holy and Great Council, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew said, that in the long history of the Church, there were instances of intended or unintended absences of some members in convened local or ecumenical synods, but that did not at all impede the convening of those councils. The decision to convene the Holy and Great Council was Pan-Orthodox, said His All-Holiness, and it can and will go on with its work.

The Primates of the Local Orthodox Autocephalous Churches in their turn, addressed greetings to the Council, unanimously expressing their joy and support for being present at this historic event. They reaffirmed their commitment to work together in unity to address the questions facing the Church in the contemporary world and to deepen co-operation in the future.

His Beatitude Archbishop Chrysostomos of Cyprus acknowledged the need for regular councils bringing together Hierarchs from around the world in order to develop a common response to pressing issues, including bio-ethical and environmental dilemmas. Addressing the mission of the Church in the world, His Beatitude Archbishop Anastasios of Albania underlined the need for repentance, while His Beatitude Archbishop Rastislav of the Czech Lands and Slovakia underscored the fact that, in spite of their ethnic differences, Orthodox Christians are one people.

Sunday of Pentecost

The date of June 19 was the date of the First Ecumenical Council held in Nicaea in 325 AD. This fact was noted by His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, as on June 19, 2016 the Holy and Great Council of 2016 AD commenced with the Patriarchal Divine Liturgy concelebration of the Holy Feast of Pentecost - calling all in unity. His All-Holiness posed the question at some point: coincidence or divine providence?

His All-Holiness Bartholomew presided over a resplendent patriarchal concelebration of Pentecost with the Primates of the Orthodox Autocephalous Churches. His Excellency the President of the Hellenic Republic, Prokopis Pavlopoulos along with many other dignitaries and officials were in prayerful attendance.

“A joyful day has now dawned,” said the Ecumenical Patriarch, at the opening of his Homily and said that today is a day of unity, as we are all

united in the faith and the sacraments of our Church, adding, "The unity of the Orthodox Church and its faithful represents our mission. Our ecclesial unity does not take on the form of a federation, nor does it stem from the congregating around some mere human. It proceeds from and is made complete by our common faith, which is synonymous with salvation, with eternal life."

After the end of the Divine Liturgy and the Vespers of the Holy Spirit, His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, the Primate of the Local Orthodox Autocephalous Churches and the President of Hellenic Republic, Mr. Prokopis Pavlopoulos, attended a reception at the offices of the Archdiocese of Crete, hosted by His Eminence Archbishop Eirinaios of Crete.

Official Luncheon by the President of Greece

Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew offered a toast on behalf of the Primate of the Local Orthodox Autocephalous Churches, at a luncheon hosted in their honor by the President of the Hellenic Republic, Mr. Prokopis Pavlopoulos. His All-Holiness thanked the beloved people of Greece for their prayerful presence and support to the work of the Holy and Great Council, promising that Orthodoxy shall fulfill her historic duty and responsibility.

"Orthodoxy constitutes a real and permanent place of peaceful coexistence and stability in the modern – torn – world, a true source of peace for all the peoples. The word of the Orthodox Church is essential, because it proclaims the necessity of charity, love, and unity of mankind, as well as, the necessity of peaceful cooperation between the peoples of the earth, regardless of the religious faith of each," said His All-Holiness.

President Pavlopoulos, welcomed the convening of the Holy and Great Council in Crete, making references to the First Ecumenical Council, and the value of the Synodical System, "as the irreplaceable guarantee of the unity of the Orthodox Church." He also said that the mission of the Holy and Great Council acquires universal dimensions, "since Christianity, with Orthodoxy as its epicenter, is called to defend besides everything else, the principles and values of European culture and western civilization in general, with emphasis on those of peace, democracy, freedom and justice."

An open and honest discussion

In the ensuing days since its opening the Holy and Great Council considers and continues to discuss the six Pre-Conciliar Documents in the agenda: The Mission of the Orthodox Church in today's World, the Orthodox Diaspora, Autonomy and the means by which it is proclaimed, the importance of Fasting and its observance today, Relations of the Orthodox Church with the rest of the Christian World and the Sacrament of Marriage and its impediments.

Extensive discussion on the pre-conciliar texts was held and various suggestions and clarifications were proposed by the Primates and individual Hierarchs of the local Orthodox Autocephalous Churches.

"It is an experience of absolute freedom of expression of views and opinions without limits or hindrances of any kind. It is an honest and open discussion on very difficult and complex issues", said His Eminence Archbishop Demetrios of America about the work of the Synod. His Eminence also underlined the importance of the manner in which Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew presides at the Synod, saying it is "an exquisite, attentive and elegant way, which fosters an atmosphere of freedom and unity."

The Council will continue meeting through June 25, concluding with the Divine Liturgy on June 26.

Photos from Holy and Great Council: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/goarch/albums>

This same message of St. John, still applies to us today, over 2,000 years later. "Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire." It is not enough for us to say that we are Orthodox Christians, or that we follow the Old Calendar, or that we have a certain priest as our spiritual father, or that we belong to a special organization. We must bear good fruit, or we will be thrown into the fire. These words of St. John are very clear. He does not demand that we go to live in the desert as he did, or eat only honey and locusts, or wear clothes made of camel hair. Instead of going to the desert and avoiding all society, let us avoid evil society and impious gatherings, and seek out acquaintances who will help us draw closer to God. Instead of avoiding all wine and spirits, let us eat and drink in moderation, never over-indulging, striving to always keep the fasts. Perhaps we cannot be constantly in prayer like St. John, but let us make an effort to say our prayers in the morning and evening, before and after meals, and during all our daily activities as much as possible; and let us take every opportunity to attend church services, repenting of our sins and receiving the Holy Mysteries, the Body and Blood of our Saviour Just as St. John called the Jews to repentance so that they may receive the Saviour, he is also calling each of us to repentance, so that our hearts

may be cleansed and may become suitable dwelling places for our Saviour - Bishop George of Mayfield

REMINDER: There will be no service in Slickville on Sunday, July 17, as Father Bob will be out of town. Please plan to attend Divine Liturgy at one of our neighboring sister Orthodox parishes. In this way, we can experience the unity of our Orthodox Faith in the diversity of our beloved ethnic heritages. You can check with Father Bob if you have any questions. We will return to our normal schedule upstairs on July 24 and then downstairs on July 31st.