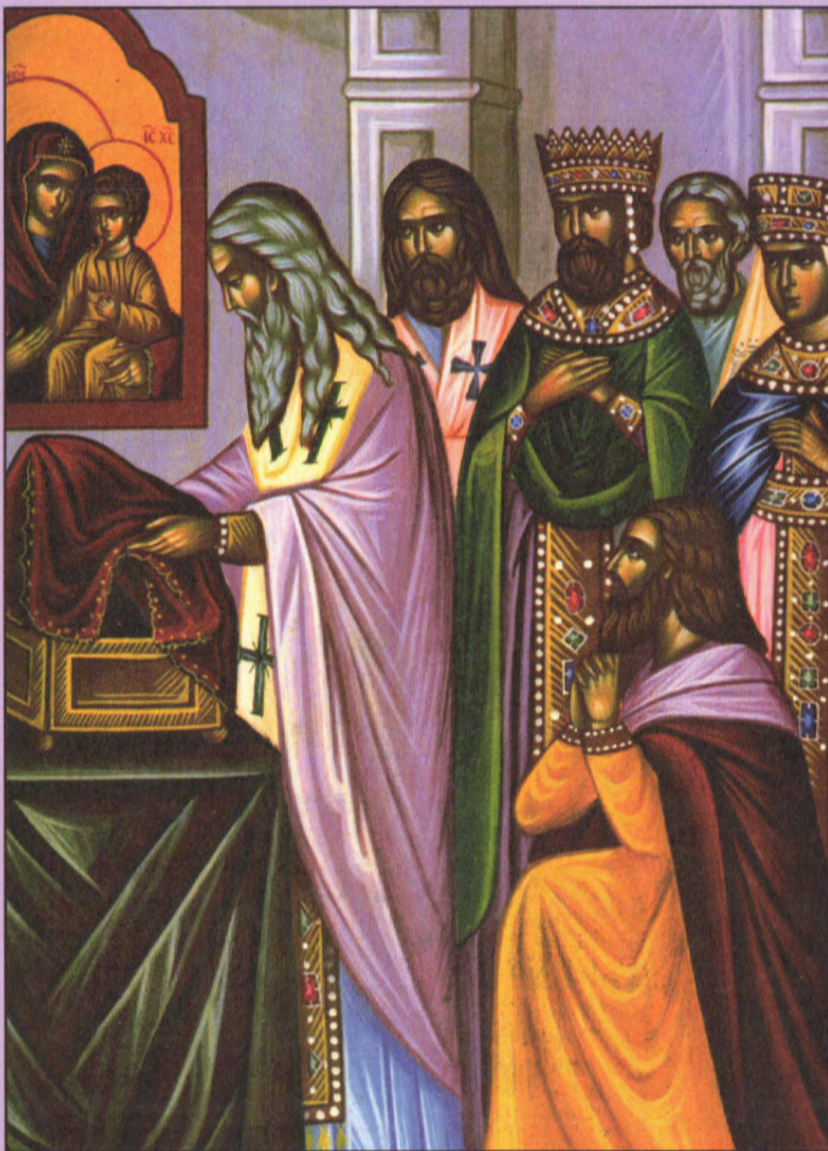


FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST
FOURTH SUNDAY OF MATTHEW



Icon of the Robe of the Theotokos



July 2, 2017

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

TONE 3

ALL SAINT OF RUS'-UKRAINE;

DEPOSITION OF THE PRECIOUS ROBE OF THE MOST HOLY THEOTOKOS IN THE CHURCH OF BLACHERNAE;
VERKHRATS'KA WEeping ICON OF THE MOTHER OF GOD (1688)

SCHEDULE OF SERVICES FOR JUNE 19 – JUNE 25

PLEASE NOTE: THERE WILL BE NO VESPERS DURING THE SUMMER MONTHS UNLESS NOTED IN THE BULLETIN.

SUNDAY, JULY 9 – FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST; THE HOLY HIEROMARTYR PANKRATIUS, BISHOP OF TAORMINA
9:30 AM – Divine Liturgy For All Parishioners

QUICK FACTS

What do the two snakes on a bishop's staff mean?

The episcopal staff has the cross of Christ with two snakes and this may seem disconcerting. There are actual two explanations for this symbolism.

The staff reminds us to the brass serpent erected by Moses in the desert (Numbers 21). When the Israelites were bitten by poisonous snakes (being the sign of sin and earthly / demonic wisdom) the brass serpent that was lifted up was a type of the cross. Jesus Christ “became sin” (2 Corinthians 5:21) for us and triumphed over the poisonous and lethal power of sin. Hence, the snakes on the staff recall this story and the words of the



Lord in John 3:14: “As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up.”

Another way to consider the snakes is to see them not as symbols of false wisdom (James 3:15) but of true and holy wisdom, as in Lord’s saying (Matthew 10:16): “Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves; so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves.”

Source: <https://www.orthodoxanswers.org/orthodox-bishops-have-a-strange-staff-with-two-snakes-around-a-cross-what-does-it-mean-is-is-not-an-evil-symbol/>

July Birthdays

Bill Loznycky	–	July 1
Rabah Tooma	–	July 2
Robbie Dukes	–	July 5
Michael Boyko	–	July 10
Martha McMurtry	–	July 15
Natalia Loznycky	–	July 18
Volodymyr Fedunyak	–	July 22
Joseph Hirniak	–	July 29
Marguerite Hartman	–	July 29

PARISHIONERS THAT ARE HOME BOUND



If you or a loved one cannot make it to Church, Fr. James would be more than pleased visit at your home, in the hospital, at a nursing home, or any other place. It is no inconvenience at all. Please be sure to schedule a visit.

Неділя оздоровлення слуги сотника

Я недостойний, щоб Ти ввійшов під мою покрівлю

Матей 8, 5 – 13

Ми розуміємо, що Євангеліє оповідає нам про те прохання сотника, яке викликало зачудування Ісуса, щоб і ми чинили так само сьогодні, адже через нашу віру, в усій її простоті, ми можемо принести трохи радості Ісусові і тим, кого Він спасає через нас. До нас особливим способом промовляє постава серця, з якою діє сотник у тій ситуації. Звичайно, кожен з нас може перейняти її у своїх стосунках з близькими людьми. Але ми можемо також через приклад сотника глибше зрозуміти та пережити у своєму житті те, чим є місія Церкви, до якої належимо, і молитва якої надихає та підтримує нашу молитву.

Коли ми приступаємо до Ісуса, «благаючи Його» (Мт. 8, 5), яка турбота підштовхує нас до цього? Так, ми слабкі, грішні, страждаємо, але коли сотник підходить до Ісуса з молитвою, Він просить не за себе, а за свого слугу. То ж хто для нас є тим слугою, що «мучиться тяжко» (Мт. 8, 6)? Всі ті люди, які страждають, імена яких нам не відомі і яких ми не знаємо, мають перебувати в нашому серці та спонукати нас іти до Ісуса. І тоді наша душа справді стає частиною Церкви, але в покорі, не уявляючи себе спасителем світу, бо її горизонт відкривається до горизонту серця нашого Отця.

Ісус завжди відповідає нам: «Я прийду й оздоровлю тебе» (див. Мт. 8, 7), і в цьому нема сумніву, адже на наше благання Христос зсилає свого Духа Святого, Який є зціленням, життям, примиренням, яке шириться у цілому світі, якого кожна людина приймає або відкидає, навіть, якщо вона не знає Його.

Важливою для нас є реакція сотника: «Я недостойний, щоб Ти ввійшов під мою покрівлю» (Мт. 8, 8). Саме з цього для нас починається молитва серця. Якщо ми не починаємо з визнання своєї недостойності,

ми не є у правді. Найперше в поставі нашого серця – бути смиренними, визнаючи в радісній щирості, що ми нічого самі не здатні вдіяти у цій драмі життя, де найважливіше – любов. Усе в нашому житті – благодать, усе – «дар ласки Божої» (Рим. 6, 23), і чим покірніше серце, тим очевидніше для нього, що Ісус може все: покора є тією землею, на якій розквітає віра.

То ж ми розуміємо, чому сотник каже вкінці: «Скажи лише слово» (Мт. 8, 8). Тепер ми, християни, знаємо яке це слово. Це те Слово, в Якому Отець відкриває нам себе і дає себе, промовляє до нас і дає нам життя: це Ісус, – те надзвичайне Слово, яке містить у собі все. Це і є молитва серця. Вона зовсім проста: треба лише бути зверненим до Отця, благодати Його і приймати Ісуса – Його Слово – у своєму серці.

Один великий святий нашого століття, що був на Сході сучасником св. Терези від Дитятка Ісус, – св. Силуан (1866 – 1938 рр.) каже: «Я хотів би лише здобути покору та любов Христову, нікого не кривдити і молитися за всіх, як за себе самого». До покірного серця Святий Дух сходить і перебуває в ньому. Він навчає нас про Ісуса і спонукає благодати Його за всіх людей, найближчих та найнезнаніших, тих, біля кого ми проходимо, не будучи знайомими з ними, але яких Церква, як мама, всіх несе у своїх молитвах, ще не знаючи їх облич. То ж ми певні, що сам Святий Дух входить до нашого серця та зціляє багатьох. І ми зможемо також любити, як любить Ісус – «єдиний приятель усіх людей» (пор. Мт. 11, 19; Лк. 7, 34).

Жан Корбон, *Це називається світанком*,
Львів, Свічадо 2007

THE UNKNOWABLE GOD

July 8, 2011 · Fr. Stephen Freeman

You cannot know God – but you have to know Him to know that. – Fr. Thomas Hopko

Fr. Hopko's small aphorism is among my favorites in contemporary Orthodoxy. Besides the fact that it sounds humorous – it states one of the most profound paradoxes within the Orthodox faith. This fundamental truth is stated in a variety of ways: we say that God cannot be known in His Divine Essence while affirming that we may know Him in His Divine Energies. We cannot know Him, yet we must know Him.

The deepest proclamation of the Church is that the God who cannot be known has made Himself known to us in the Incarnation of Jesus Christ, the God/Man. What could not be known has now been given to us.

There are a number of existential realities that flow from these simple statements – and they are worth considering:

- What do I know *of* God rather than *about* God?
- Is the God I know more than my own personal projections?
- Is anything required of me in order to know God?
- Is there anything beyond myself and my own efforts required to know God?
- What relationship does this have with the story of Jesus Christ?

The difference between knowing *about* God and actually knowing God should be obvious. The child of a famous man may not know much "about" his father – but unlike people who know "all about" his father – he is one of the few who actually *know* him. The difference is far more than a matter of degree. One kind of knowledge is utterly derivative – it can be obtained without any contact with the person involved. I noticed the strangeness of this when some 15 or 20 years back, Bugs Bunny, the cartoon character, celebrated his fiftieth "birthday," accompanied with major magazine articles and analysis. Of course, all of the learned discourse was *about* someone who does not *exist* (at least in the usual meaning of the word). Thus there is a form

of theology and religious thought that does not require belief in God (of course, both are false forms of theology). Theology that begins with an assumed point of revealed knowledge and then proceeds to build upon that purely through the efforts of human reason is little better than theology without belief in God. God is not an axiom to be assumed as though He were a mathematical formula.

Of course when I say, "I know God," the question remains, "Am I in delusion?" How do I know whether my experience is anything other than my own inner projections? St. Peter wrote, "Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation" 2 Peter 1:20. The same applies generally to our experience of God. Does what I know of God agree with the experience of the Church throughout the ages? Though such knowledge of God cannot be described as "objective," it is, nonetheless, an intuitive perception that is communal. It is not simply that *I know God*, but that *we know God* – and we bear witness that we know the *same* God.

The Hebrew verb *yada* (forgive my lack of a Hebrew font) means "to know," but is frequently used in passages such as "Adam *knew* his wife and she conceived..." It is a deeply intimate word that implies *union* as well as knowledge. It is not a passive form of knowledge. English does not have a verb to allow us to distinguish between passive and active knowledge. We have a verb, *to ignore*, that implies an active form of ignorance. Knowledge of God, however, assumes activity on our part – it is not a passive revelation, but a cooperative knowing. Thus Christ, in making Himself known to the rebellious Saul (soon-to-be the Apostle Paul), says to him, "It is hard for you to kick against the goads." He indicates that Saul has been repeatedly confronting Christ, but also repeatedly ignoring these efforts on God's part. Paul's response to the light that he sees and the voice that he hears is straightforward, "Who are you Lord?" There is a ready recognition of the power of the revelation, and by naming it "Lord," a recognition that he is ready to surrender. Our own

participation in the knowledge of God presumes that we are actively giving our hearts to Him.

The kind of knowledge we seek of God, is not only active on our own side of things, but is active on God's side as well. The perfection of such knowledge is described by St. Paul with the words, "Then we shall know even as we are known" (1 Cor. 13). God is active, living and free. He is not an inert object forced by His own existence to be available to our will. God makes Himself known to us as *gift*. Thus an open heart, a willingness to be patient, and a respect for the Gift and the Giver are required of us.

There is another important action that is inherent in knowing such a God. It is the essential part of an *apophatic* life. The Church refers to its theology primarily as *apophatic*, meaning "that which cannot be spoken." We *know*, but we cannot always put into words what we know. In the same manner, there are many things we think we know (including things about God) that simply are not true. We believe them because we've heard them and assume them to be true. There is a vast amount of Christian teaching that is based on *hearsay* (and *heresy*) than on true and living knowledge of God.

Thus there is sometimes the necessity of a form of Christian *agnosticism* (admitting what we do not know) trusting the good God to make known to us what we *need* to know. I have seen a great deal of inner healing when people admit that false images that have haunted their life in Christ are indeed just that – *false* images. What you learned in Sunday School or Freshman Philosophy (or Seminary for that matter) may not always be correct (or may have been misunderstood).

God is a good God, who desires to make Himself known to us. He offers us Himself in the God/Man, Jesus Christ. The heart of the Christian gospel is that the God who cannot be known has made Himself known in the incarnation of Jesus Christ. Thus we do not know a God before Christ, or beside Christ. St. John says, "The only Son who is in the bosom of the Father – He has made Him known (in the Greek – "He has *exegeted* the Father"). Thus we begin with Christ, incarnate, crucified and risen. The claim of the Apostolic witness is that Christ is the *only* exegesis of the Father.

We cannot know God – but we have to know Him in order to know that. Glory to God for His infinite mercy!

WORDS FROM PATRIARCH LUBOMYR (HUSAR)

Spirituality:

"... we need religious re-education ... it means - to make faith in the Lord active in our lives"

"Today, once again, there is a call to live according to God in every aspect of our lives: personal, familial, community, state. In order that our faith (I mean believers) really became the way which we want to follow to approach the Lord. Being close to God has never been easy. It requires effort and desire to be with Him. But the circumstances are just circumstances." - LUBOMYR (Husar): "There is a problem: from Monday to Saturday to live the things the people get filled with in the church on Sunday"

"It is not enough to go to church and know the catechism. People must know their faith and live it. Sometimes being a Christian – is a very complicated matter, which can lead to martyrdom ... In a warm room after breakfast it is easy to say that we, of course, choose what is God's. In a circle of like-minded people, it is easy to be a hero"

"One must seriously prepare for an important choice... I do not want martyrdom for anyone, but when there is a difficult situation when you have to make a choice, to be hardened ... We need to deepen their understanding of Christianity, practice prayer, fasting and charity."We must be able to tell the truth,"- LUBOMYR (Husar) said to Catholic journalists.

WHY DO ORTHODOX CHRISTIANS PRAY FACING EAST AND WHY DOES THE PRIEST NOT FACE THE PEOPLE WHEN HE PRAYS?

Fr. Seraphim Holland – May 2009

I have a pet saying that I like to tell to my parishioners:

“The priest prays for the people, and with the people, but not instead of the people”.

I usually admonish them with this saying when I am announcing one of the very rare occasions when I will be gone on a weekend, to teach them that they are responsible for prayer in the church; this is not something that is the sole responsibility of the clergy. I am trying to minimize any of the mice “playing” when the cat is away!

My little aphorism is not just an admonishment; it also shows the equality of the clergy and the people when we are addressing our prayers to God.

With rare exceptions, the priest (and deacon and bishop), with the people face toward the East when they pray. “East” is, liturgically, in the direction of the altar, whether it faces true East or not. In a traditional church, “built from scratch” the altar always is to the East; in our modern world, where there are many buildings that are modified to use in worship, sometimes it is not possible for the altar to face true East. If there is no altar present (such as when we have molebens in front of the cross on our land in McKinney, where God willing, we will have a new temple built by late summer 2009), everybody still faces in the same direction.

Facing East is an ancient tradition, grounded in sure knowledge about the Second Coming, first told us by the Lord, and then repeated by an angel after the disciples had just seen the Lord ascend into heaven:

“For as the lightning comes from the east and shines as far as the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man” (Matthew 24:27)

“...Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.” (Acts 1:11)

We believe that our Lord ascended on the Mount of Olives, and when He comes back, He will come on a cloud from the East. Therefore, we face East when we pray.

There are other important biblical references to the East. The following is a NON-comprehensive list.

The wise men saw signs of the imminent birth of Christ from the East:

“Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, Saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him.” (Mat 2:1-2)

Ezekiel saw the “glory of the Lord” when facing East:

“And the glory of the Lord came into the house, by the way of the gate looking eastward:” (Eze 43:4 Brenton)

The Jews faced Eastward during their worship:

“And if the prince should prepare as a thanksgiving a whole-burnt-peace-offering to the Lord, and should open for himself the gate looking eastward, and offer his whole-burnt-offering, and his peace-offerings, as he does on the sabbath-day; then shall he go out, and shall shut the doors after he has gone out.” (Eze 46:12 Brenton)

There are lots of references in the Fathers to prayer facing East (see the end of this essay for an excerpt from St John of Damascus concerning this.) It has been a uniform part of our tradition since BEFORE Apostolic times.

When the people pray, they all pray together. We are all God's children.

Does it make any sense for the people to face God, and the celebrant to turn his back to God during prayer? He cannot lead prayer when facing the people; he becomes a focal point for prayer; the people are facing him!

One can see how dangerous this practice of having the celebrant face the people by observing the excesses that have occurred in the sectarian churches (Full disclosure, please see the note at the end of this essay¹). Just driving down the road and looking at billboards shows that the "mega churches" do not share our "mind". Their billboards feature prominently the picture of the pastor, usually with his pretty wife and 2 pretty children, a boy and a girl, all smiling beatifically at the masses, or perhaps some other "beautiful person" gushing about how they have finally found a church they can believe in. So much of, (what shall we call it? "mainstream" or "sectarian" or "Protestant") worship has become about personality. At look at the "mega" and even small country churches shows a wholly different way of worship than the ancient Jewish/Orthodox way. The "altar" area is a stage, flanked with large TV screens, which show flattering close-ups of the pastor as he preaches, or the music minister as he performs.

This way of "worship" is really a form of entertainment. What can it teach the people? And what are all these ministers doing smiling so much at their audience, as if they

1 I am unashamed to be a believer in the "Domino theory" regarding liturgical and church order changes. This theory, which I first heard of as a boy when the war in Vietnam was being justified, is that small changes inevitably lead to bigger ones (if Vietnam falls, then other countries will also fall to communism). I have seen this theory in full operation on our modern times, and will say whenever given an opportunity that bad worship or bad church order leads to bad theology and vice-versa. The departure from the ancient Christian worship had had disastrous and unanticipated results. This is evident outside of the Orthodox church, and unfortunately, significant examples can be found in it as well.

are entertainers or salesmen? This type of worship is without significant substance, and often is directed to a passive audience, rooted in their theater chairs. Ironically, some of these churches which consider themselves to be "Apostolic" do not realize that their way of worship is far removed from that of the Apostles! And don't even get me started about the theological content of the songs being sung today! As the music minister smiles and performs, a stream of pabulum, to catchy melodies, with drum rolls and guitar riffs, is being fed to the seated masses (to be fair, not all "Protestant" worship is like this, (some is quite sober and dignified) but the TV stuff is very common in many local churches.)

Contrast this with true, traditional Orthodox worship. The celebrant stands, usually in front of the altar, with a serious and sober demeanor, and the people stand with him, all symbolically facing God, to the East. The people much about piety from the way the celebrant and deacons serve. All is done carefully, soberly, with thought and good order.

Even the Roman Catholics have begun to realize the excesses that can happen when the priest faces the people when he liturgizes. The current Pope (Benedict) is a strong advocate of ending this innovation and he celebrates the liturgy facing, with the people, in the direction of the altar.

When the pastor teaches, he faces the people. This was the Jewish way as well; Christian worship is inherently Jewish. For everything, there is a time and a season, and when the pastor teaches, he faces the people, so they can hear his exhortations. It makes no sense (and is rude) to speak to people with our back to them; in the same way, it makes no sense, and is rude, for us to pray to God while turning our back to Him.



**Українська Греко-Католицька Церква
Святого Йоана Хрестителя
St. John the Baptizer
Ukrainian Greco-Catholic Church**

4400 Palm Avenue
La Mesa, CA 91941
Parish Office: (619) 697-5085

Website: stjohnthebaptizer.org

Pastor: Fr. James Bankston
frjames@mac.com
Fr. James' cell phone: (619) 905-5278

The Holy Robe of the Theotokos

During the late fifth century, two brothers who were associates of Emperor Leo the Great, left Constantinople for Palestine to venerate the holy places. In Nazareth, they stayed in the home of an old Jewish woman. They noticed in the house a room where many lamps were lit, incense burned, and sick people were gathered. When they asked her what the room contained, the pious woman did not want to give an answer for a long time. After persistent requests, she said that she had a very precious sacred item: the robe of the Theotokos, through which many miracles and healings had occurred. It seems that before her Dormition the Theotokos had given one of her garments to a pious Jewish girl, an ancestor of the old woman, instructing her to leave it to another virgin after her death. And so, the robe of the Mother of God was preserved in this family from generation to generation.

The jeweled chest, containing the sacred robe, was brought to Constantinople. Saint Gennadius, Patriarch of Constantinople, and Leo the Emperor, hav-

ing learned of this sacred treasure, were convinced of the incorrupt state of the holy robe, and they certified its authenticity. On June 2, 458, Patriarch Gennadius transferred the sacred robe into the church at Blachernae, near the city gates at the seacoast, placing the relic within a new reliquary.

In the years following, the great veil or outer robe of the Theotokos, and part of her belt were also put into the reliquary with her robe. This event also influenced the iconography of the feast, in connecting the two events: the Placing of the Robe, the feast day of July 2nd, and the Placing of the Belt of the Mother of God, the feast day August 31st in Blachernae.

“O Pure One, full of the grace of God, you have given your sacred robe as a garment of incorruption to all the faithful, with it you covered your holy body, O divine protection of all mankind. We celebrate its enshrinement in Blachernae with love and we cry aloud with awe: ‘Rejoice, O Virgin, boast of Christians.’” (Kontakion)

Visit www.ecpubs.com for more publications.