



ANNUNCIATION GREEK ORTHODOX CATHEDRAL

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July 10, 2022

My Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

I pray this message finds you all well and healthy.

On July 11th we celebrate the feast day of St. Euphemia the Great Martyr and the miracle which took place at the Fourth Ecumenical Council in Chalcedon in 451 A.D. At that time there was a theological conflict on Christ's nature. The Monophysites believed that Christ had one nature; they believed that Christ's Divine nature absorbed His human nature, and so He was not human but only God. The Orthodox Holy Fathers believed that Christ had two natures; they believed that Christ was fully man and fully God and that His two natures coexisted without one absorbing the other. At the end of the Fourth Ecumenical Council representatives of each of the two differing theological stances wrote their beliefs on a scroll and placed each of them into Saint Euphemia's reliquary. They sealed her tomb and prayed for three days and nights for the Holy Spirit, through God's servant St. Euphemia, to reveal the truth about Christ's nature. When they opened St. Euphemia's tomb, the scroll with the views of the Monophysites was found at the feet of St. Euphemia while the scroll describing the two natures of Christ was found resting in the right hand of the Saint. It was such a wondrous miracle (and one that had such Christological significance and theological impact on the hearts of Christians pertaining to the right worship of our Trinitarian God) that this miracle is still remembered and commemorated today by the Orthodox faithful, for the Glory of God.

On July 11th we celebrate the feast day of St. Olga, Equal to the Apostles, who was a servant of God for the Russian Kingdom. St. Olga was the Princess of Kiev who lived during the 10th century. Despite her husband and her son being pagans, she discovered Orthodox Christianity and was comforted by Christ's Gospel and Heavenly message of salvation through repentance and baptism in the name of the Holy Trinity. She went to Constantinople to be baptized and asked the Emperor to become her godfather. She, then, returned back to Russia as Helen, and her main purpose in life was to spread Christianity and establish Churches throughout her entire Russian Kingdom. As Princess of Kiev, her beauty, wisdom, piety, ruling ability and justice towards her Russian people, as well as her loyalty and dedication towards our Trinitarian God, is still honored and praised today, over one thousand years later.

On July 12th, we celebrate the feast day of St. Proklos and St. Hilarios the Martyrs of Ancyra. St. Proklos was the uncle of St. Hilarios, and they lived at the end of the 1st century and beginning of the 2nd century in Ancyra, which was located in one of the most northeastern borders of the Roman Empire. Both uncle and nephew were arrested for being Christians. St. Proklos and St. Hilarios were tortured and martyrically gave up their lives for Christ without hesitation.

On July 14th we celebrate the feast day of St. Athenogenes the Holy Martyr of Heracleopolis and Bishop of Pidachthoa. St. Athenogenes was a Cappadocian from the city of Sebastia and lived during the end of the 3rd century and the beginning of the 4th century. He was a very enlightened Holy Shepherd of the Lord who spiritually nourished his Christian flock with faith, patience, love, compassion, philanthropy, prayer and fasting. During the reign of Diocletian, when Christians were forced to become pagans or face a martyric death, St. Athenogenes chose death rather than betray his love for Christ. Prior to his martyrdom, ten of his disciples were arrested and beheaded, and their names were Peter, Antioch, Ammon, Theophrastus, Kleonikus, Isichious, Filimarchus, Riginus, Maximus and Patroclitus. With their sacrifice, each Saint gained entry into the Heavenly Kingdom of God.

Let us all become in our lives like St. Euphemia the Great Martyr, who was a living image and likeness of God, so that our bodies, hearts, souls and spirits may become sanctified through the Sacramental Life of Christ's Holy Church. Let us honor and respect the beautiful, Christian soul of St. Olga, Princess of Kiev (who, like St. Helen, became Equal to the Apostles for her missionary work to spread Christianity in Russia) by becoming ambassadors, disciples, apostles and missionaries of His Holy Church. Let us always remember the blood of martyrdom that was shed for Christ on the holy grounds of the far east of Asia, such as that of St. Proklos and St. Hilarios, and let us respect, remember and honor their Holy sacrifices for the benefit of our souls. And let us all become like St. Athenogenes and his disciples, the 10 Holy Martyrs, who gave up their lives for Christ, by experiencing unceasingly the Heavenly, Holy Flames of God's Grace and Beauty, now and forever and to the ages of ages. Amen.

Yours in Christ,



+Rev. Ekonomos Fr. Georgios Manias

