

# ST. NEKTARIOS ORTHODOX CHURCH

A mission of the Orthodox Church in America  
208 W. Franklin St. Waxahachie, TX 75165

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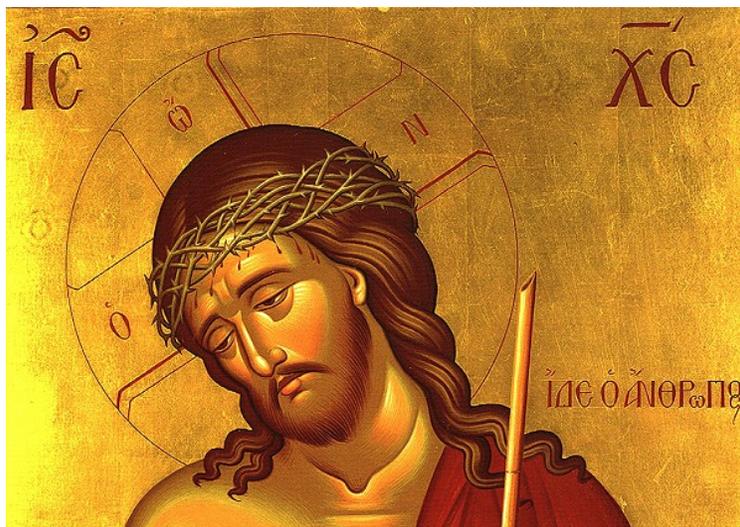


## What Is Important And What Is Not

Fr. Alexander Schmemmann

When controversies are ignited and flare up in the Church, which happens and has happened often, alas, we inevitably hear appeals from Church circles to cease these controversies in the name of peace and love. Now, this would be cause for great joy, if only in these appeals there were no unmistakably different overtones: "Your controversy is not important. It is of interest to no one: only 'specialists' and 'scholars' can understand it, so all this argument leads only to seduction and harm."

And here we must point out to these accusers something very important which they have apparently forgotten. They have forgotten that peace and concord in the Church are inseparable from the Truth. An outsider who does not believe and is not part of the Church would smile and shrug his shoulders, "What is truth?" That is precisely Pilate's question to the Savior who stood before him. And the Savior did not respond, because an "outsider" does not believe in the possibility of Truth. For him the truth is always relative and measured according to advantage, improvement or expedience. But for us who know and believe that the Church is founded on the Truth made flesh, that all her life is in Him who said, "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life," for us there is nothing in the Church which is unimportant, because everything is measured by this Truth and is subordinate to it.



Yes, there have been many controversies in the Church, and its earthly history is replete with them. They occurred not only in times of trouble, like ours, but also when Church life flowered, in the golden ages of the Ecumenical Councils and the Fathers of the Church. Only then no one would have dared to acknowledge anything in the Church as unimportant. So for this cause they debated and for this cause they were persecuted and exiled for one word, for one "iota" (an accurate assessment of the Aryan controversy at the time of St. Athanasius the Great), that above all on earth they placed the Truth and fidelity to the Truth. And in these controversies there was more true love for the Church and her people, whom the Lord Himself through His incarnation deemed worthy of the knowledge of the Truth — more ardor, more faith than in the lukewarm "latitude" and "tolerance" of our time, when so much in the Church has become the portion of the clergy alone and the "specialists". We should not be seduced by controversies about how to plan our Church life in accordance with the Truth, because in these controversies there burns a living anguish for the Church and its destiny, but rather by the sea of indifference among the Church populace itself which surrounds these controversies and by the skepticism with which even religious people treat these "unimportant" matters.

Of course in our controversies there is so much human passionateness, sinfulness and narrowness. They should and must be enlightened by prayer, love, and patience. No one person embodies the Truth in its fullness, but each one is required to aspire to it, to call upon his spiritual intellect, his will and his heart to come to "the knowledge of the Truth." "Put everything to the test; hold fast what is good," says Paul the Apostle. And if in humility we attempt always to obey the Truth, if we try unceasingly to overcome all which is sinful and narrow for the sake of the Truth, then our controversies born of human weakness may lead to the glory of the Church, "for the strength of Christ is made perfect in weakness."

- December 1949

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# JULY 2013

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
	1 One Year Anniversary	2	3 Daily Vespers 6:30	4	5	6 Confession 5:30 Great Vespers 6:30
7 Divine Liturgy 9:30	8	9	10 Daily Vespers 6:30	11	12	13 Confession 5:30 Great Vespers 6:30
14 Divine Liturgy 9:30 Sunday School	15 Great Prince Vladimir	16	17 Daily Vespers 6:30	18 Nun Martyrs Grand Duchess Elizabeth & Barbara	19	20 Confession 5:30 Great Vespers 6:30 Prophet Elijah
21 Divine Liturgy 9:30	22	23	24 Daily Vespers 6:30 Martyr Christina Martyrs Boris & Gleb	25	26	27 Confession 5:30 Great Vespers 6:30 Greatmartyr Panteleimon
28 Divine Liturgy 9:30	29	30	31 Daily Vespers 6:30			



## Grand Duchess Elizabeth

July 18

Saint Elizabeth was the older sister of Tsarina Alexandra, and was married to the Grand Duke Sergius, the governor of Moscow. She converted to Orthodoxy from Protestantism of her own free will, and organized women from all levels of society to help the soldiers at the front and in the

hospitals.

After her husband, the Grand Duke, was assassinated, she began to withdraw from her former social life. She devoted herself to the Convent of Sts. Martha and Mary, a community of nuns which focused on worshiping God and also helping the poor. She moved out of the palace into a building she purchased on Ordinka. St Elizabeth nursed sick and wounded soldiers in the hospitals and on the battle front. On Pascha of 1918, the Communists ordered her to leave Moscow, and join the royal family near Ekaterinburg. She left with a novice, Sister Barbara, and an escort of Latvian guards.

After arriving in Ekaterinburg, St Elizabeth was denied access to the Tsar's family. She was placed in a convent,

where she was warmly received by the sisters. At the end of May, St. Elizabeth was moved to nearby Alopevsk with the Grand Dukes Sergius, John, and Constantine, and the young Count Vladimir Paley. They were all housed in a schoolhouse on the edge of town. St Elizabeth was under guard, but was permitted to go to church and work in the garden.

On the night of July 5, they were all taken to a place twelve miles from Alopevsk, and executed. The Grand Duke Sergius was shot, but the others were thrown down a mineshaft, then grenades were tossed after them. St Elizabeth lived for several hours, and could be heard singing hymns. The bodies of St Elizabeth and St Barbara were taken to Jerusalem in 1920, and buried in the church of St Mary Magdalene.

## Virgin Martyr Christina

July 24

Christina lived in the third century. She was condemned for being a Christian by her father. After various torments, the governor Julian gave orders to throw her into a red-hot furnace and lock her in it. After five days they opened the furnace and found the martyr alive and unharmed. Seeing this miracle take place, many believed in Christ the Savior, and the torturers executed St Christina with a sword.

