



St. Vladimir Orthodox Church

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7 Holy Youths “Seven Sleepers” of Ephesus August 4, 2019

Troparion – Tone 6

The Angelic Powers were at Thy tomb; the guards became as dead men. Mary stood by Thy grave, seeking Thy most pure body. Thou didst capture hell not being tempted by it. Thou didst come to the Virgin, granting life.//

Troparion – Tone 4

Thy seven holy martyrs, O Lord, through their sufferings have received incorruptible crowns from Thee, our God. For having Thy strength they laid low their adversaries, and shattered the powerless boldness of demons.// Through their intercessions, save our souls!

Kontakion – Tone 6

When Christ God the Giver of Life, raised all of the dead from the valleys of misery with His mighty hand, He bestowed resurrection on the human race.// He is the Savior of all, the Resurrection, the Life, and the God of all.

Kontakion – Tone 4

The Seven Holy Youths renounced the perishing comforts of this world, preferring the eternal things of Heaven. They were incorrupt after death and rose from the dead and buried the snares of the devils.// O Faithful, let us then honor them, singing a hymn of praise to Christ!

Prokeimenon – Tone 6

O Lord, save Thy people, and bless Thine inheritance!

v: To Thee, O Lord, will I call. O my God, be not silent to me!

7 Holy Youths “Seven Sleepers” of Ephesus

The Seven Youths of Ephesus: Maximilian, Iamblicus, Martinian, John, Dionysius, Exacustodianus (Constantine) and Antoninus, lived in the third century. Saint Maximilian was the son of the Ephesus city administrator, and the other six youths were sons of illustrious citizens of Ephesus. The youths were friends from childhood, and all were in military service together.

When the emperor Decius (249-251) arrived in Ephesus, he commanded all the citizens to offer sacrifice to the pagan gods. Torture and death awaited anyone who disobeyed. The seven youths were denounced by informants, and were summoned to reply to the charges. Appearing before the emperor, the young men confessed their faith in Christ.

Their military belts and insignia were quickly taken from them. Decius permitted them to go free, however, hoping that they would change their minds while he was off on a military campaign. The youths fled from the city and hid in a cave on Mount Ochlon, where they passed their time in prayer, preparing for martyrdom.

The youngest of them, Saint Iamblicus, dressed as a beggar and went into the city to buy bread. On one of his excursions into the city, he heard that the emperor had returned and was looking for them. Saint Maximilian urged his companions to come out of the cave and present themselves for trial.

Learning where the young men were hidden, the emperor ordered that the entrance of the cave be sealed with stones so that the saints would perish from hunger and thirst. Two of the dignitaries at the blocked entrance to the cave were secret Christians. Desiring to preserve the memory of the saints, they placed in the cave a sealed container containing two metal plaques. On them were inscribed the names of the seven youths and the details of their suffering and death.

The Lord placed the youths into a miraculous sleep lasting almost two centuries. In the meantime, the persecutions against Christians had ceased. During the reign of the holy emperor Theodosius the Younger (408-450) there were heretics who denied that there would be a general resurrection of the dead at the Second Coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Some of them said, "How can there be a resurrection of the dead when there will be neither soul nor body, since they are disintegrated?" Others affirmed, "The souls alone will have a restoration, since it would be impossible for bodies to arise and live after a thousand years, when even their dust would not remain." Therefore, the Lord revealed the mystery of the Resurrection of the Dead and of the future life through His seven saints.

The owner of the land on which Mount Ochlon was situated, discovered the stone construction, and his workers opened up the entrance to the cave. The Lord had kept the youths alive, and they awoke from their sleep, unaware that almost two hundred years had passed. Their bodies and clothing were completely undecayed.

Preparing to accept torture, the youths once again asked Saint Iamblicus to buy bread for them in the city. Going toward the city, the youth was astonished to see a cross on the gates. Hearing the name of Jesus Christ freely spoken, he began to doubt that he was approaching his own city.

When he paid for the bread, Iamblicus gave the merchant coins with the image of the emperor Decius on it. He was detained, as someone who might be concealing a horde of old money. They took Saint Iamblicus to the city administrator, who also happened to be the Bishop of Ephesus. Hearing the bewildering answers of the young man, the bishop perceived that God was revealing some sort of mystery through him, and went with other people to the cave.

At the entrance to the cave the bishop found the sealed container and opened it. He read upon the metal plaques the names of the seven youths and the details of the sealing of the cave on the orders of the emperor Decius. Going into the cave and seeing the saints alive, everyone rejoiced and perceived that the Lord, by waking them from their long sleep, was demonstrating to the Church the mystery of the Resurrection of the Dead.

Soon the emperor himself arrived in Ephesus and spoke with the young men in the cave. Then the holy youths, in sight of everyone, lay their heads upon the ground and fell asleep again, this time until the General Resurrection.

The emperor wanted to place each of the youths into a jeweled coffin, but they appeared to him in a dream and said that their bodies were to be left upon the ground in the cave. In the twelfth century the Russian pilgrim Ighumen Daniel saw the holy relics of the seven youths in the cave.

There is a second commemoration of the seven youths on October 22. According to one tradition, which entered into the Russian *Prologue* (of Saints' Lives), the youths fell asleep for the second time on this day. The Greek *Menaion* of 1870 says that they first fell asleep on August 4, and woke up on October 22.

There is a prayer of the Seven Sleepers of Ephesus in the *Great Book of Needs* (Trebnik) for those who are ill and cannot sleep. The Seven Sleepers are also mentioned in the service for the Church New Year, September 1.

Epistle: Romans 15:1-7

We then who are strong ought to bear with the scruples of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, leading to edification. For even Christ did not please Himself; but as it is written, "The reproaches of those who reproached You fell on Me." For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope. Now may the God of patience and comfort grant you to be like-minded toward one another, according to Christ Jesus, that you may with one mind and one mouth glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore receive one another, just as Christ also received us, to the glory of God.

Gospel: Matthew 9:27-35

When Jesus departed from there, two blind men followed Him, crying out and saying, "Son of David, have mercy on us!" And when He had come into the house, the blind men came to Him. And Jesus said to them, "Do you believe that I am able to do this?" They said to Him, "Yes, Lord." Then He touched their eyes, saying, "According to your faith let it be to you." And their eyes were opened. And Jesus sternly warned them, saying, "See that no one knows it." But when they had departed, they spread the news about Him in all that country. As they went out, behold, they brought to Him a man, mute and demon-possessed. And when the demon was cast out, the mute spoke. And the multitudes marveled, saying, "It was never seen like this in Israel!" But the Pharisees said, "He casts out demons by the ruler of the demons." Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people.

Service Schedule for the week of August 4

Today – 9:45 AM Hours, 10:00 AM Divine Liturgy followed by Coffee Hour in Daria Hall

Monday August 5 – 7:00 PM Vespers with Litya and blessing of fruit TRANSFIGURATION

Tuesday August 6 – 9:30 AM Divine Liturgy and blessing of fruit TRANSFIGURATION

Saturday August 10 – 5:00 PM Vespers followed by Confession

Sunday August 11 – 9:45 AM Hours, 10:00 Divine Liturgy followed by Coffee Hour in Daria Hall

4:00 PM Paraklesis Service in conjunction with the Penna Brotherhood (like a Mission service)

Weekly Giving

July 28 – 31 adults, 10 youth, \$1,344

Parish Announcements

Bible Study classes will be held the 2nd and 4th Wednesdays of each month at 7:00 PM. The next classes are August 14 and August 28. All are welcome to attend.

We have received the joyous following announcement and invitation from Protodeacon Michael Sochka:

"By the Grace of God and through the laying on of hands by His Eminence the Most-Reverend Archbishop Melchisedek, Archbishop of Pittsburgh and the Archdiocese of Western Pennsylvania, Protodeacon Michael Sochka will be ordained to the holy priesthood on Saturday August 17 at 10:00 AM during Divine Liturgy at the Orthodox Monastery of the Transfiguration, 321 Monastery Lane, Ellwood City, Pennsylvania. Your prayers and your presence are requested.

Reception to follow. RSVP msochka@gmail.com, (267) 736-9454."

Congratulations and blessings to Protodeacon Michael and his family! If you are able to attend, please respond directly to Protodeacon Michael. As many of you know, Protodeacon Michael and his family attended our church services, rendered their services and help to our parish, and supported our events while living locally before the family relocated to the Pittsburgh area.

Remember when making purchases from Amazon to use the website www.smile.amazon.com and pick St. Vladimir Orthodox Church in Trenton, NJ as the charity to sponsor. The church will receive ½% of all sales!