



HOLY TRINITY

ROMANIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH



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CHURCH BULLETIN

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The 10th Sunday after Pentecost

Gospel Reading Matthew 17: 14 - 23

At that time, when they had come to the multitude, a man came to Him, kneeling down to Him and saying, "Lord, have mercy on my son, for he is an epileptic and suffers severely; for he often falls into the fire and often into the water. So I brought him to Your disciples, but they could not cure him." Then Jesus answered and said, "O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I bear with you? Bring him here to Me." And Jesus rebuked the demon, and it came out of him; and the child was cured from that very hour. Then the disciples

came to Jesus privately and said, "Why could we not cast it out?" So Jesus said to them, "Because of your unbelief; for assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith as a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you. However, this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting." Now while they were staying in Galilee, Jesus said to them, "The Son of Man is about to be betrayed into the hands of men, and they will kill Him, and the third day He will be raised up." And they were exceedingly sorrowful.

Apostle Reading 1 Corinthians 4: 9 - 16

Brethren, God has exhibited us apostles as last of all, like men sentenced to death; because we have become a spectacle to the world, to angels and to men. We are fools for Christ's sake, but you are wise in Christ. We are weak, but you are strong. You are held in honor, but we in disrepute. To the present hour we hunger and thirst, we are ill-clad and buffeted and homeless, and we labor, working with our own hands. When reviled, we bless; when persecuted,

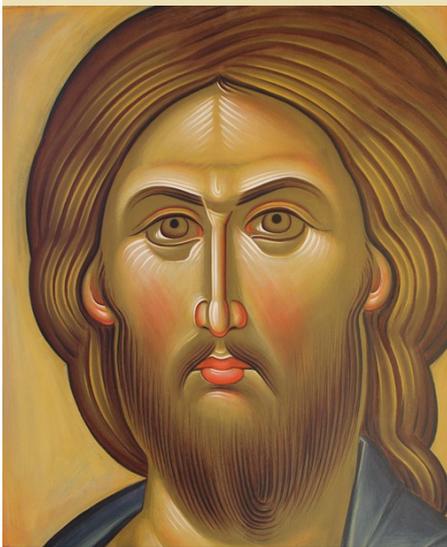
we endure; when slandered, we try to conciliate; we have become, and are now, as the refuse of the world, the off-scouring of all things. I do not write this to make you ashamed, but to admonish you as my beloved children. For though you have countless guides in Christ, you do not have many fathers. For I became your father in Christ Jesus through the gospel. Therefore, I urge you, imitate me as I imitate Christ.

Synaxarion. Saturday August 15: Dormition of the Most Holy Thotokos Sunday August 16, 2020 (The Tenth Sunday after Pentecost): Translation of the Image of Our Lord and God and Savior, Jesus Christ; Holy Brancoveanu Martyrs; Holy Venerable Joseph of Văratec; Holy Martyr Diomedes

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Sermon on Tenth Sunday after Pentecost

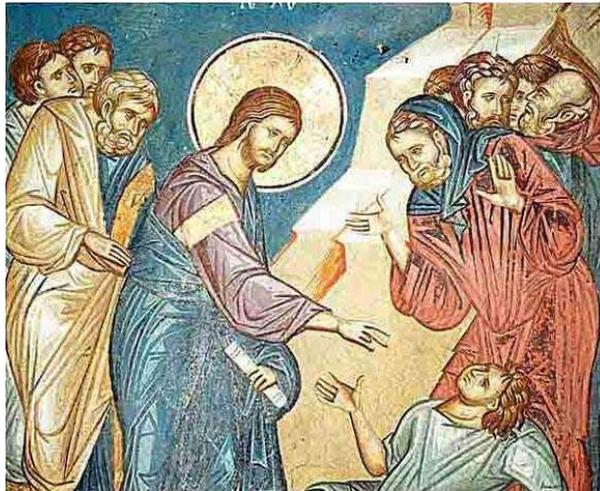
The events of today's Gospel occurred just after the descent of Our Lord from Mt Tabor where He had been transfigured. They are described to us in the three Gospels of St Matthew, St Mark and St Luke. These events raise a number of questions which we are called on to answer.

The first question is: What was the precise nature of the illness of this man's son?

This was no ordinary illness or medical condition, for our Lord cast a demon out of the son; the man's son was possessed. It was not therefore 'epilepsy' as some modernistic translations have it. Indeed in liturgical English, the child is described as 'lunatick'. This word refers to the concept that our mental condition can change according to the phases of the moon. I do not wish to express an opinion about the truth or untruth of that concept, I would leave that to experts, to physicians. However, I do believe that this word 'lunatick' does reveal a deeper truth. Just as the moon changes, so there are a number of illnesses which cause a great changeability or instability in character and modern psychiatry has various names for those illnesses. And we can see this changeability or instability in the sick son. Sometimes he would fall into the fire, at other times he would fall into the water. In other words the demon, who lived inside the son, was trying to destroy him by burning him to death or drowning him, in order to occupy that soul to all eternity.

The falling into fire and water also show us how the demons abuse God's creation. Fire is not a tool with which to burn and destroy, but a gift of God for heating, cooking and other useful activities. Water is not a tool with which to drown, but a gift of God for drinking and washing and other useful activities. Moreover, we can see how fire is also a symbol of the fire of passion and anger which can possess those who are attacked by demons, and water is a symbol of the waves of melancholy which can also possess those who are attacked by demons.

The second question is: How did the demon get inside the man's son and possess him?



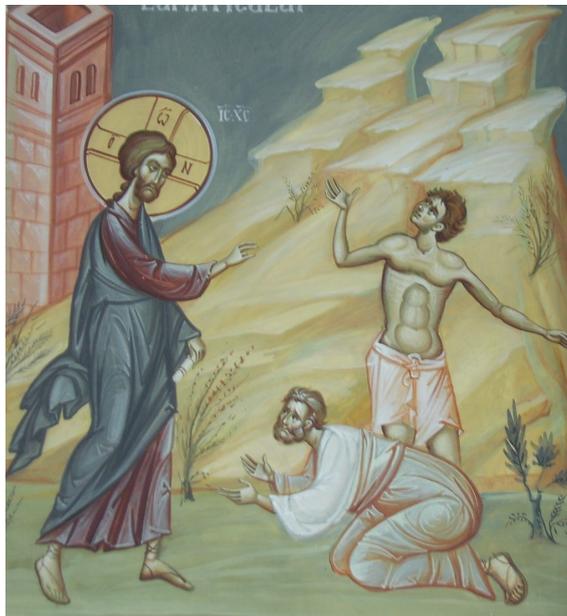
To this question we have the reply of Christ: 'O faithless and perverse generation'. The demon came into possession of the son through unbelief, faithlessness. Not only the son's unbelief, but also the unbelief of the father and others around the son who could have cared for him and given him faith. However, as with everything that God allows to happen, there is a positive, Providential aspect to this illness. It is clear that because of the illness of the

son, the father has been brought to know humility. Thus he calls Christ, 'Lord' and asks, 'Have mercy on my son'. This shows humility, not pride. The proud man does not address another as Lord, for he considers himself to be Lord. And the proud man does not ask for mercy, for he considers that he does not need mercy. In other words, the father has become realistic, for the very word humility in English comes from the word 'humus', which means 'earth' or 'ground'. In another words, to be humble is to have one's feet on the earth, to be realistic, and not to submit to the illusions of pride and self-reliance.

The third question is: What is the solution to the sickness of the son?

The answer is 'prayer and fasting', for this is how Christ casts the demon out of the son. For prayer is not talking about God, as some imagine, it is talking with God, as we know. And fasting is not some kind of secular dieting, it is abstaining from the things of the body in order to draw nearer to the things of the soul. Prayer and fasting are the deepening of faith. The Fathers of the Church call prayer and fasting a 'two-edged sword'. In other words, where there is prayer and fasting, there is faith. And as a Father of the nineteenth century, St Theophan the Recluse, wrote: 'Where there is no prayer and fasting, there are the demons'. Referring to the word of St Theophan, we could say therefore that much of the modern world has become the dwelling-place of demons, for the modern world mocks prayer and fasting. And referring to the instability of the demoniac son, that passes brings us news of some new instability, some new disaster and misfortune.

In this last month in this country we have heard of the case of two young girls, abducted and murdered in a town where, it had seemed, nothing ever happened. This case should be especially close to us, for the town of Soham is where one of our two main patrons, St Felix, founded an Orthodox monastery in the seventh century. Indeed the successor to St Felix as Bishop of East Anglia was a monk, called Thomas, who came from that very monastery. How is it that in such a small town this double murder of children occurred? Clearly, because that town has lost its monastery, lost the holy relics of St Felix which were once honoured there, and in that town today there is no or not enough prayer and fasting. Otherwise the demon who clearly impelled the murderer of those two girls to carry out his crime could not have acted. The demon who pushed him into this deed would have been prevented by the presence of prayer and fasting.



Internationally, we can say the same of many other terrible problems. 'Where there is no prayer and fasting, there are the demons'. We can take, for example, the case of AIDS. A disease that has killed tens of millions and destroyed the lives of millions of innocent children: 'Where there is no prayer and fasting, there are the demons'. The same can be said of the problems of the many wars that have erupted in all parts of the world. Here it is the demons of hatred who impel mankind to self-destruction. 'Where there is no prayer and fasting, there are the demons'. Or the case of the pollution of the environment, of God's Creation. Here it is the demons of greed who impel mankind to self-destruction. And the same is true even of so-called natural disasters. Would God allow earthquakes and hurricanes, floods and forest fires, to take place if there were pious people who were fasting and praying in those regions, impeding the demons from having the freedom to act in their quest to see man destroy himself?

The fact is that, whenever we our faithless and cease to pray and fast, then we lose the protection of the grace of

God and we are beseiged by demons and the world falls into fire or water. And we should not think like the inhabitants of the town of Soham that we are immune to any disaster. The words, 'It could not happen here', or 'Nothing ever happens here', are no longer true. In Russia before the Revolution people said the same thing, but holy men like St Theophan the Recluse, St Ignatius,

St John of Kronstadt and many others, all correctly prophesied that if people did not return to faithfulness, to prayer and fasting, then a great disaster would befall them. And so it happened and Russia became the favoured resort of the demons: 'Where there is no prayer and fasting, there are the demons'. As the Apostle says: 'God is not mocked' (Galatians 6, 7).

On the other hand, where there is faith, there is prayer and fasting, and there the demons cannot go. All is possible if there is faith. Faith moves mountains. We have the words of Christ which tell us this.

Moreover, where there is no faith, there is no hope but despair. And where there is no hope, there is no love but hatred. And where there is neither faith nor hope nor love, there you will not find the mother of these three virtues, Wisdom. Instead you will find foolishness.

For who is Wisdom? Wisdom is the Wisdom of God, the Wisdom of the Word of God: Wisdom is Christ. So where there is no Christ, there is no Wisdom and where there is no Wisdom, there is neither love, nor hope, nor faith. And the land of no faith, no hope, no love and no Wisdom is the destination of the contemporary world, if it does not change its direction. It is not too late. As today's Gospel has made clear, it is all a question of faith. Let us then be faithful. Amen.

Fr. Andrew Phillips

(Source: <http://orthodoxengland.org.uk>)

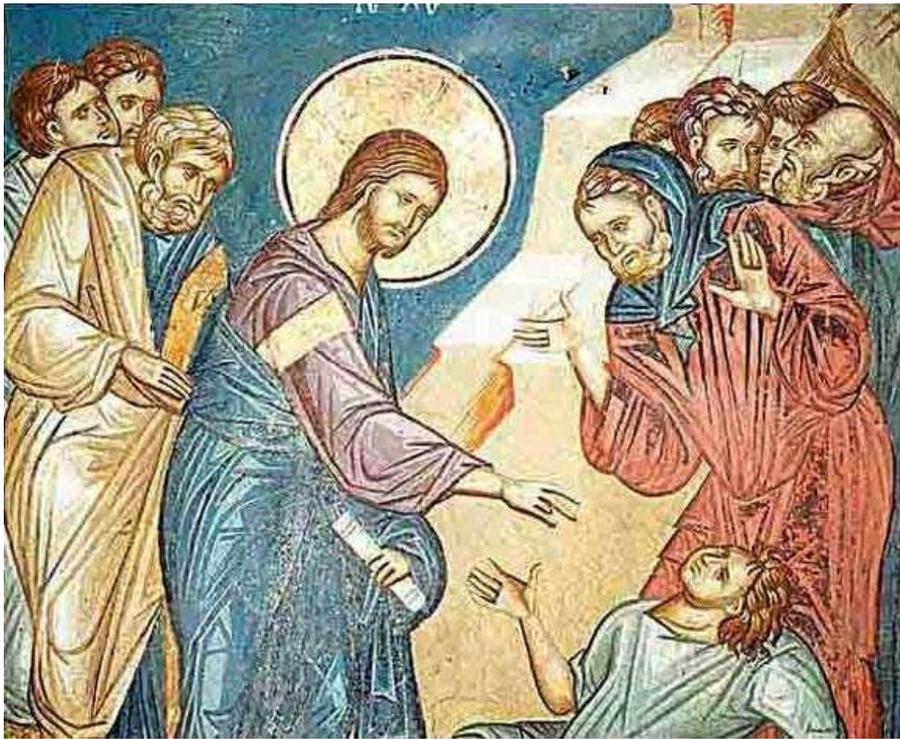


"Call Unto Me, and I Will Answer Thee."

"Bring him here to me ... and the boy was cured that very moment."

(Matt. 17:14-23).

What is life, dear brethren? Behold, a question which is daily before us! Some say that life is eating and drinking, and having a good time. Others would add to eating and drinking, a luxurious, \$300,000 home in Beverly Hills. To others, life is constant travel, with its resultant first-hand knowledge of the whole world. Still others associate life with the thrill of sports. We, however, as Orthodox Christians, see life from another viewpoint. For us, life is a road, a continuous procession. The traveler is man. As to where he is going, and what he expects to find on arrival — this can be summed up in one word: salvation. The objective purpose of human existence, then, is salvation. Otherwise, life has no meaning; it is without goal or purpose. Our moral struggle becomes empty and meaningless. The pain and affliction which we encounter every day of our lives is without rhyme or reason. A boat does not remain forever in stormy waters. The day comes at last when it arrives in a calm harbor, there to cast anchor. Yet the journey to the harbor is by no means easy; there are strong winds to be faced and, sometimes, shipwreck. Human life is something like that. Life is not at all easy. God is in heaven, man on earth, and a road of pain and agony lies in between. Many other roads exist, but they do not lead to heaven. "The gate is wide, and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and many are going that way." There is no harbour at the end of this highway — only chaos, fire, a burning lake, eternal fire, and gnashing of teeth, as the Scriptures warn. On the other hand, the road to heaven is narrow, the gate small, the curves many. Few choose this road. Most prefer the super-



highway that leads to hell. The gate to the path of holiness is much too narrow for those who have spent their entire lives feeding their bodies, to the everlasting neglect of their souls. All their lives they cared only to "eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die." And die they shall; everlasting denial of the presence of the Most High is the eternal death which awaits them. Some have followed

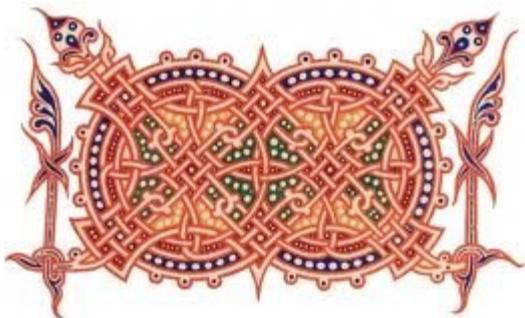
this course through ignorance: "And now, brethren, I know that you acted in ignorance ..." (Acts 3:17). Others acted out of frivolity and crass indifference: "I have just bought a piece of land and I must go and look it over ... I have just bought five yoke of oxen, and I am on my way to try them ... I have just gotten married, and so I cannot come" (Luke 14:18-20). Nevertheless, to all of them apply the hard, yet just, words of Christ: "O you unbelieving and perverted people of the times! How long can I put up with you?" (Matthew 17:17). To all classes and categories of man, to "whosoever will," Christ addresses His gracious invitation: "Come to me, all of you who toil and carry burdens, and I, yes, I, will lead you into rest. Put on my yoke, and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls, for the yoke I offer is easy to wear, and the load I ask is light to bear" (Matthew 11: 28-30). We all need Christ. None of us is anything without Him. Were it possible for man to effect his own redemption, without the sacrifice of Christ, His coming and death would have been tragically wasteful. Christ taught that all the good deeds in the world could not bring us one step closer to God. "So you, too, when you've done all you were ordered to do, say, 'We are slaves who claim no credit. We've only done our duty' " (Luke 17:10). St. Athanasius seeks to drive home the same truth when he writes: "The Word became flesh,

in order that we might become acceptable to Divinity. He was incarnate in order to deify us. He became man in order that we might become gods — participants of the Divine nature." And St. Paul states, perhaps more clearly, "It is God who has delivered us out of the dominion of darkness and has transferred us into the kingdom of His dearly loved Son" (Colossians 1:13). The anguished father who brought his ailing boy to the Savior understood this truth. With great tenderness of heart he addresses to Christ these simple, yet sincere, words: "Lord, have mercy on my son."

Indeed, dear brethren, out of all our supplications and entreaties to God, by far the warmest, the most powerful, is the simple Kyrie eleison — Lord have mercy. For this reason our Church repeats this prayer many times at all of her divine services. The words "Lord have mercy" include in themselves the entire human and divine truth. What is man? What is God? What is the relationship between them? "Lord have mercy" is the bridge which unites the two worlds of earth and heaven, human and divine, man and God.

In moments of deepest pain, when from the depths of our soul arises the Kyrie eleison, then God inclines His gracious hand to help us; the Almighty Himself enters our human drama with the words, "Bring him here to me." In those moments when pain and affliction have become our most faithful companions, then let us, dear brothers, lift our eyes to the heavens, and from the depths of our soul let us say, Lord have mercy — Kyrie eleison.

Fr. George Dimopoulos



HOLY TRINITY'S Liturgical Schedule from August 15 to August 23, 2020

Saturday August 15 - Dormition of the Holy Theotokos (fish allowed):

9:00 am - Matins
10:00 am - Holy Liturgy
12:00 pm - Coffee Hour

Sunday August 16 (Tenth Sunday after Pentecost):

9:00 am - Matins
10:00 am - Holy Liturgy
12:00 pm - Coffee Hour
1:00 pm - Baptism Darius
Andrei Simioana

Sunday August 23 (Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost):

9:00 am - Matins
10:00 am - Holy Liturgy
12:00 pm - Coffee Hour



The Holy Brâncoveanu Martyrs

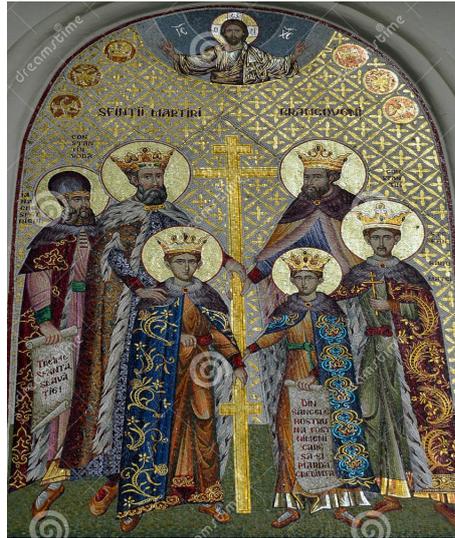
On August 16, the Orthodox Church honors the Holy Brâncoveanu Martyrs: Prince Constantine (1654–1714), Voivode of Wallachia, along with his sons, Constantine, Stefan, Radu, Matei and counselor Ianache Văcărescu, the Voivode's son-in-law.

St Constantine Brâncoveanu was born to a noble Romanian family, Prince Matthew (Papa) Basarab and Stanca, neé Cantacuzino. When his parents died, he was first raised and educated by his maternal grand-father, Postelnic (Chamberlain) Constantine Cantacuzino (1598 -1663), then by his maternal uncle, Stolnic (Seneschal) Constantine Cantacuzino, who had studied at the University of Constantinople, and was the first Romanian ever to have graduated from the University of Padua (established in 1222) — the largest and most prestigious university in early modern Europe.

When another uncle, the Ruling Prince Șerban Cantacuzino (1678-1688), died on October 19, 1688, Constantine was chosen to succeed him as Prince of Wallachia.

The beginning of his reign took place under the luminous sign of the second printing of the so-called “Bucharest Bible” (1688) - the first Bible published entirely in Romanian. A promoter of education, he reorganized the the old School of St Sava's Monastery in Bucharest (1694) which he turned it into a New “Academia Domneasca” (Princely Academy). This superior school — the precursor of the University of Bucharest (1864) — was a “public college for Romanians and foreigners”, whose curriculum was similar to those of the European universities. He also opened several schools at the Old St. George and Colțea monasteries, both in Bucharest, as well as at the Sâmbăta de Sus Monastery, in Făgăraș County, Transylvania, where courses were taught either in Romanian or Slavonic.

Throughout his reign (1688-1714), St. Constantine assumed the role of protector of the printing houses in both Wallachia and Transylvania. From Istanbul he brought the future Metropolitan Antim of Iberia (Georgia), under whose guidance numerous books were



to be printed in Romanian, Greek, Slavonic, Georgian and even Arabic.

He also built and restored many churches and monasteries, such as the churches of Potlogi and Mogosoia, the monasteries of Brâncoveni and Hurezi, as well as the New Church of St. George in Bucharest, where his holy relics rest. With the financial support of St Constantine, some of these monasteries organized their own libraries. These libraries - such the one at the Hurezi Monastery - became famous thanks to the large number of im-

portant and rare books which the holy prince had brought from Western Europe.

St Constantine was a wise and just ruler. He was guided by Christian principles, and worked for the benefit of his people. His philanthropy extended not only into Romanian lands, such as Transylvania and Moldavia (where the population was mostly Romanian and the faith was mainly Orthodox), but also into remote lands such as Georgia or Syria (Aleppo), where the Orthodox believers were in need of Christian religious books .

In 1714, after a reign of twenty-five years, Sultan Ahmed III (1703-1730) sent Ali Pasha and a multitude of Turkish soldiers to remove Constantine from the throne of Wallachia. The reason invoked was, according to Mehmed Rashid, a contemporary Turkish chronicler, that he gathered too much wealth and weapons and prepared a rebellion against the Porte. In the very Great Week of the Holy Passions of the Lord On March 25, 1714, the Turks arrived to Bucharest and arrested Brâncoveanu, his four sons, and his son-in-law and counselor, Ianache. The noble prisoners were brought to Constantinople, where they imprisoned at the fortress of Yedikule („the Seven Towers”), and were tortured for four months, hopping to locate his other possessions. Prince Constantine was told that if he and his sons wanted to escape death, they would have to convert to Islam and pay a large sum of money. Although his fabulous wealth became somehow legendary, and the Turks used to call him „Altin Bey” (the Prince of Gold), Constantine did not have the money required by the Turks, nor did he wish to convert to the Moslem faith. Finally,

Finally, he was obliged under torture to sign for the gold deposited in Venice. Seeing that neither tortures nor threats would induce the prisoners to forsake Christ, the Sultan sentenced them to death.

The execution took place on August 15, the very of Feast of Dormition of the Most Holy Theotokos - one of the most sacred days of celebration for Orthodox Christians - when Lady Marica used to celebrate not only her name-day but also her husband's birthday. Prince Constantine just turned sixty years old.



Dressed only in long shirts and chained, beaten, tortured and starved, exhausted by pain and suffering, the six martyrs were brought before Sultan Ahmed, who asked them to renounce Christianity, in order to save their lives. Brâncoveanu answered, without hesitation:

„Your Highness: My wealth, as much as it was, you have taken it from me, but my Christian faith is something I will not relinquish. I have been born and lived in it; it is in my faith (as a Christian) that I shall die. I have filled the land of my country with Christian churches and, now, attaining an old age, you would have me worship in your Turkish djamis? No, Your Highness. I have defended my land; I have kept my faith. It is in my (Christian) faith that I want to close my eyes, me and my sons.”

After that, he encouraged his sons:

„My children, be brave! We have lost everything we had in this earthly world. All we have left is our souls. Let us not lose them too, but bring them pure before our Savior Jesus Christ. Let us wash our sins with our blood!”

Following these words, the sultan ordered that the execution began with Constantine's sons. The first to be beheaded was his son-in-law, treasurer Ianache Văcărescu, followed by the Voivode's four sons: Constantin II (31 years old), Ștefan (29), Radu (24), and Matei, the youngest son (12 years old).

Horrified by his brothers' death, the youngest one faltered in great fear. His father told him to follow his brothers: *“There has never been anyone in our family who lost his faith. If it is possible, one should rather die a thousand times, than deny the faith of his ancestors, for a few years more on earth”.*

Then the child put his head on the stock and said to the executioner: *“I want to die a Christian. Strike.”*

Petrified with pain, the Voivode murmured: *“Lord, may Thy will be done!”*, after which they beheaded him, too.

Contemporary sources note that Sultan Ahmed was accompanied by the ambassadors of the kings and emperors of Europe, to the Sublime Porte. Although most of them were also Christians, none of them, not even the representative of “pravoslavnaya” Russia, had, at the very least, the decency to protest or to decline the honor of attending the bloody and gruesome spectacle.

And yet, one of them, General Joachim Franciszek Goltz, Ambassador of Poland in Constantinople, has left us an eloquent testimony on the echoes of the Brâncoveanu's martyrdom among European chancelleries of that time:

“History has never had such a bloody slaughter” — he wrote. “The whole world still shudders in horror at having seen this poor prince, who - after he spent most of his days in the riches, enjoying the glory of this world - in the end, swimming in the blood of his entire family, he gave his soul under the edge of the sword.”

The six decapitated bodies were thrown into the Bosphorus. The heads were carried on sticks along the streets of the city, streets of the city stuck at one of the gates of the Serai and left there for three days, after which they were thrown into the sea. The holy relics were recovered by pious Christian fishermen who

brought them to the Monastery of the Dormition of the Theotokos (Panagya on the island of Halki. There they were secretly kept until the summer of 1720, when Princess Marica brought St Constantine's holy relics back to his country and secretly buried them in the New Church of St. George, which he had founded in Bucharest. The white marble tombstone she placed over was very simple, with no inscription, adorned only with an eagle, Wallachia's coat of arms. She also placed a silver lamp above the tomb. It was only in 1914, when Romanians commemorated the 200th anniversary of the Brâncoveanus' martyrdom, that archeologist Virgil Drăghicescu of the Romanian Academy discovered the Holy Voivode's tomb, thanks to the inscription he found on the silver lamp, which no one had noticed until then:

„This lamp, which was given to the New St. George's [church], illuminates the place where the bones of the blessed Lord Voivode Io Constantin Brâncoveanu Basarab are resting, and it was made by her Excellency Princess Maria, who hopes that her bones will also rest here. July, 12 days, year 7228 (= 1720)“.

Her wish was fulfilled in 1745, when she died and was buried there. Discovering Brâncoveanu's tomb was "the greatest reward for my modest work of a lifetime" - as Drăghicescu wrote in a letter to the scholar Dimitrie Onciul.

Prince Constantine Brâncoveanu and his sons were glorified by the Romanian Orthodox Church in 1992, when on June 20 the Holy Synod canonized them.

“Being worthy to suffer a martyr's death for the right faith and for your people together with your sons Constantin, Ștefan, Radu, Matei and with the counselor Ianache, Oh, right-faithful Voievod Constantin, pray to Christ God to save our souls!” (Troparion of the Holy Brâncoveanu Martyrs).

Fr. Nicolai Buga



Holy Martyr Constantine Brâncoveanu



The Seven Towers (Yedikule) Prison. The Ambassadors' Tour



The Church of Panagya Kamariotissa on Chalke Island, Turkey



The New Church of St George in Bucharest