



# HOLY TRINITY

## ROMANIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH



723 N BODINE ST PHILADELPHIA, PA 19123

# CHURCH BULLETIN

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## Sunday of the Myrrh-Bearing Women

### Gospel Reading Mark 15: 43 – 16: 8



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Joseph of Arimathea, a respected member of the council, who was also himself waiting expectantly for the kingdom of God, went boldly to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then Pilate wondered if he were already dead; and summoning the centurion, he asked him whether he had been dead for some time. When he learned from the centurion that he was dead, he granted the body to Joseph. Then Joseph bought a linen cloth, and taking down the body, wrapped it in the linen cloth, and laid it in a tomb that had been hewn out of the rock. He then rolled a stone against the door of the tomb. Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses saw where the body was laid. When the sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him. And very early on the first

day of the week, when the sun had risen, they went to the tomb. They had been saying to one another, 'Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance to the tomb?' When they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had already been rolled back. As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man, dressed in a white robe, sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed. But he said to them, 'Do not be alarmed; you are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has been raised; he is not here. Look, there is the place they laid him. But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him, just as he told you.' So they went out and fled from the tomb, for terror and amazement had seized them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.



### Apostle Reading Acts of the Apostles 6: 1– 7

Now during those days, when the disciples were increasing in number, the Hellenists complained against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution of food. And the twelve called together the whole community of the disciples and said, 'It is not right that we should neglect the word of God in order to wait at tables. Therefore, friends, select from among yourselves seven men of good standing, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may appoint to this task, while we, for our

part, will devote ourselves to prayer and to serving the word.' What they said pleased the whole community, and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit, together with Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolaus, a proselyte of Antioch. They had these men stand before the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them. The word of God continued to spread; the number of the disciples increased greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith.

### INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Gospel & Apostle Readings	1
Elder Cleopa Ilie: The Bravery and Courage of the Myrrh-Bearing Women	2-5
Liturgical Schedule from May 16 to May 23, 2021	5
Fr. Nicolai Buga: Holy Emperors Constantine and Helen	6-7

**Synaxarion.** Sunday May 16, 2021 - Sunday of the Myrrh-Bearing Women (the 3rd after Pascha): Holy Venerable Theodore the Sanctified; Holy Venerable Silas, Paisius and Nathan of Putna

## The Bravery and Courage of the Myrrh-Bearing Women

Among the great virtues adorning the lives of the holy Myrrhbearing Women, the most striking were their holy zeal for Christ, their reverence, and their courage of soul. The Jews and Pilate placed a protection and fortification at the Tomb of Christ, our Savior, that His disciples could not come by night and steal Him! They rolled a huge stone up against the Lord's Tomb, sealed it off, and placed strong and armed soldiers on watch. But all of this did not scare or frighten the holy Myrrhbearing Women. Their great zeal, sacred reverence, and courage of



soul passed over all the Jews' obstacles, and all the guards at the Tomb did not shake their resolve. But one thought, but one desire led their minds and hearts—to serve the funeral of their dear Savior with fullness of faith and with reverence.

Solomon once said, *One man among a thousand have I found; but a woman among all those have I not found* (Ecc. 7:28). And here are women who are more brave than men. Men, the disciples of Christ, were hiding from fear of the Jews. Peter, fervent and firm in faith, thrice denied the Lord, of which he then repented and bitterly wept (cf. Lk. 22:62). But women, by nature timid and weak and often afraid even when there is no danger, here, at the service of the burial of our Most Holy Savior, turned out to be stronger and braver than men. They were not afraid of the Jews' wrath or the brutality of the soldiers, and the guard at the Lord's Tomb also did not agitate their hearts.

The disciples, men, affrighted and disbanded in all directions, as the Savior had predicted to them beforehand. But the holy women gathered themselves. The men were hiding, but the women went out in the light of day, heading to the market and buying myrrh and spices to anoint the Life-bearing Body of Christ.

O, blessed women, how were you not afraid to go out

alone at night, and how did you dare to approach that place guarded by royal soldiers, and how did you not fear, but strove to roll away the stone, break the seal, open the tomb and anoint the Body of the Lord with spices? These ascetic feats sprang from the zeal, reverence, and great bravery of your souls.

Feeble women by nature, but not in your minds and hearts; for womanly weakness did not appear in you in any way, but all your feats surpassed the bravery of men.

Upon you were truly fulfilled the words of

Scripture, which say, *My strength is made perfect in weakness* (2 Cor. 12:9), and again, *God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty* (1 Cor. 1:27; cf. Ps. 8:2, Mt. 21:16). The words of our Most Holy Savior were truly in your hearts, Who said, *fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul* (Mt. 10:28). And again the Holy Spirit says, *Be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart, all ye that hope in the Lord* (Ps. 30:24). You completed the apostolic work before the apostles. You displayed the faith and courage of soul of the holy martyrs before them.

Elias the great prophet, ablaze with Divine zeal, rebuked Ahab, and you confounded the guards of the Lord's Tomb. Gideon once crushed a multitude of Midianites with three hundred soldiers (cf. Jdg. 7:25). You, along with the righteous men Joseph and Nikodemos, stronger than all of the Jews' and Pilate's fortifications became fearless ministers, ready even unto death to serve Him Who came to serve and lay down His soul for the redemption of the whole of mankind. You, O holy women, together with the Most Pure Virgin Mary, the mother of our eternal Savior, with great zeal and bravery of soul gathered to celebrate the very first service to the Savior. Therefore, you were blessed even before the apostles to preach the Resurrection of the Lord.

Beloved faithful!

Who are these holy Myrrhbearing Women who followed Christ together with the apostles and were accounted worthy to be witnesses to the Lord's sufferings, and to anoint His holy Body with spices as it lay in the Tomb? The holy Gospel briefly provides us their names and deeds. The first and most full of spiritual zeal and courage is Mary Magdalene, from the city of Magdala in Galilee. The other holy Myrrhbearers are Maria, the mother of James (Mk. 16:1) and of Joses (Mk. 15:47), who is the cousin of the Mother of God; Mary, the wife of Cleopas (Jn. 19:25), and Salome, the mother of the Sons of Thunder (Mt. 27:56; 28:1; Mk. 16:1; Lk. 24:10). Then there is Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, Susanna, and many others serving Him out of their own means (Lk. 8:3). Among the Myrrhbearers were Martha and Mary, the two sisters of Lazarus from Bethany, where the Savior often stayed with the holy apostles on the way to Jerusalem or Galilee.

What were the main virtues of these holy Myrrhbearing Women? Above all, they firmly believed that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, the Messiah proclaimed by the prophets, Who came to earth to save mankind. Then, they led a life pure and holy, in prayer and fasting, abstinence, and almsgiving, abiding in sacred love for one another, and, as they were able, lovingly rendering hospitality to Jesus and His holy disciples.

However, the faith and zeal of the holy Myrrhbearing Women are not limited to this. They didn't just receive the Lord into their homes, wash His feet, serve Him at the table, and provide Him the opportunity to rest, but more than that, they followed after Christ with zeal, and were witness to His miracles and boldly confessed that He is the Son of God, the Savior of the world.

But the Myrrhbearing Women's greatest bravery was revealed during the Lord's sufferings. After the disciples deserted Him in fear and Peter denied Christ, the only ones following Him from afar were the holy Myrrhbearing Women with the Mother of God at the head, Mary Magdalene, and the apostle of love, John, for it's impossible to ever cast off Divine love.

The bravery and courage of the Myrrhbearing Women was seen on the path of the Cross to Golgotha. They alone, with St. John, accompanied the Lord to the crucifixion and were witnesses to His suffering. They alone prayed for Him with tears and deep sighs, such that the Savior, moved with compassion for them, said, *Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep*

*for yourselves, and for your children... For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?* (Lk. 23:28-31).

At Golgotha the holy Myrrhbearing Women, together with the apostle of immortal love, were also the sole witnesses to the crucifixion of our Lord Jesus Christ. They saw Him bleeding and falling beneath the weight of the Cross. They saw Him naked, without a robe, stretched out upon the Cross. They saw how His hands and feet were pierced with nails, and how He fainted under the Cross from pain. They heard the blasphemous words of the Jews, the repentant confession of the thief, and the heart-rending prayer of the Savior: *Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* (Mt. 27:46).

The Myrrhbearing Women saw how the sun was darkened, how the heavens groaned, how the dead arose from the graves, and they heard the prayer of the Son of God for the forgiveness of the Jews-murderers: *Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do* (Lk. 23:34). They, these women, braver than the apostles, more full of zeal than the disciples, saw how they cast lots for Christ's tunic, sewn by the hands of the Mother of God, and heard His last word: *Father, into thy hands I commend My spirit* (Lk. 23:46).

How great was the zeal, the firmness of their faith, and the bravery of soul of the holy Myrrhbearing Women! They didn't fear the Roman soldiers, so bloodthirsty. They didn't fear the Jews' fury, not fearing God, and were by no means afraid of the death of the Lord on the Cross, like those having no hope!

But the bravery of the holy Myrrhbearing Women was not limited to Golgotha. They were there on Friday evening when they removed the Lord from the Cross, and together with Joseph of Arimathea they bought a shroud and spices, anointed His Body with the spices, *and wrapped Him in the linen, and laid Him in a sepulchre which was hewn out of a rock, and rolled a stone unto the door of the sepulchre. And Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses beheld where He was laid.*

*And when the sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, had bought sweet spices, that they might come and anoint Him. And very early in the morning the first day of the week, that is, Sunday, they came unto the sepulchre at the rising of the sun. And they said among themselves, Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre?*

*And when they looked, they saw that the stone was rolled away: for it was very great. And entering into the sepulchre, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, clothed in a long white garment; and they were affrighted. And he saith unto them, Be not affrighted: Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified: He is risen; He is not here: behold the place where they laid Him. But go your way, tell His disciples and Peter that he goeth before you into Galilee: there shall ye see Him, as He said unto you. And they went out quickly, and fled from the sepulchre; for they trembled and were amazed: neither said they any thing to any man; for they were afraid. Now when Jesus was risen early the first day of the week, He appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom He had cast seven devils. And she went and told them that had been with Him, as they mourned and wept (Mk. 15:46-16:10).*

Do you see the zeal of the Myrrhbearers, and their bravery and firmness of faith in the Son of God? Do you see the courage of these holy women? The disciples sat, hiding and locked away in a room from fear of the Jews, but they bought a shroud and spices to anoint the Body of Jesus.

The disciples wept and lamented the death of the Lord, but they ran to Golgotha at sunrise to see His Tomb. In fear, those waited for news from Golgotha, but these, entering into the Tomb, received from the Archangel Gabriel the news that the Lord is risen, with the words, "Weep no more!" Then, by his command, they ran back and told the apostles that Christ is risen—He is no more in the grave!

So much courage and faith, so much steadfastness and boldness these women had. The men sat, hiding, but the women ran to the Tomb, entered within, bearing spices, encouraging one another, spoke with the angels, and were the first to see the Life-bearing Tomb and the shroud folded nearby. They feared neither darkness of night, nor the soldiers guarding the Tomb, nor death, nor angels—nothing. They had but one desire—to see Jesus, and anoint and kiss His holy Body. The Myrrhbearing Women were the first and most worthy witnesses of the crucifixion, death, burial, and Resurrection of the Lord. They were the first to proclaim to the apostles and the whole world that Christ is risen, and that death, the devil, and hell are vanquished and Paradise is open wide.

Where now are such women, loving Christ with such firmness of faith and good deeds as the Myrrhbearing Women from the Holy Gospel?

Still, the number of holy women in the Christian Church increased and sometimes even exceeded the number of men. Recall the great host of the holy martyrs, such as Thekla the Equal-to-the-Apostles; Barbara, killed for Christ by her own father; Ekaterina; Irina; Mary; Sophia with her three daughters; Fevronia; Tatiana and Philothea of Argesh,<sup>1</sup> and the great number of venerable women who labored in monasteries and deserts, becoming vessels of the Holy Spirit and working wonders. Let us mention but a few of these: Mary of Egypt, Euphrosynia, Ksenia, Pelagia, Melania, and also the venerable Parasceva of Iasi, Theodora of Sihla, and many others.

All of these holy brides of Christ, disciples of the holy Myrrhbearers and ascetics of prayer of the Church, pray for us all.

Beloved faithful!

Today is the day of Christian women. They are the successors of the Myrrhbearing Women, the daughters of the Resurrection, the handmaidens of the Lord, lanterns of faith, the soul of the family. Christian women, believers of the Orthodox Church, preserve the flame of faith and ancient traditions and the holy flame of prayer and piety in our homes more than men. Believing women are at the same time good mothers, dedicated Christians, honest and hardworking wives, and models for society.

Faithful women are the first to church, the first in prayer, in fasting, labors, alms, reading good books, in care for the sick and for all. They preserve the spiritual warmth of faith, love, patience, and peace in church, family, and society.

Our families are in need of such wonderful mothers today. The Church of Christ is in need of such pious daughters. The society today in which we live is in need of such honest and model women for all. For so many mothers do not want to bear children, or to give them a good Christian upbringing. How many women kill most of their children, and those few that they bear are not raised in the fear of God, and they don't care for them, so they become burdens to their families and a disgrace for society.

Mothers, you are today's myrrhbearers of the Church of Christ, bringing the Lord not precious spices, but your purity of faith and good children, well raised and faithful. Speak to them most of all about God, the saints, the Church and our ancestors. Tempt them in nothing, and give them as many good books as possible to read.

You can make a huge contribution to the spiritual renewal of the world, the Church, and society. Add holy oil to the souls of your children. Tomorrow great souls will come from them, good people, devout priests, enlightened teachers, and exemplary Christians. The future of families, children, and the Church depend on you most of all. Always be about the fulfilling of your duties, as were your own mothers. Remember what holy mothers you had!

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Young girls, for the sake of the Lord preserve your honor and good faith unblemished, while you have not yet received the status of mothers in the Church and society. And you also, widows and older mothers, keep an eye on the young, on your children, on all those around you. Do not be silent! Young mothers are in need of your example and sacrifice, young virgins are in need of your advice, and children and grandchildren of your prayer, tears, and reproofs.

Begin everything with the Lord, with prayer, with regular confession, and greater humility and patience. More good mothers, and more honest and faithful widows and virgins today will mean more children in homes, more believers in church, more peace in families, less drunkenness, divorce, and abortions in the world, less disease and tears in the world and more souls in Paradise tomorrow! Amen.

Christ is Risen!

**Archimandrite Cleopa Ilie**

(Translated by Jesse Dominick  
Source: [www.pravoslavie.ru](http://www.pravoslavie.ru))



## HOLY TRINITY'S Liturgical Schedule from May 16 to May 23, 2021

### **Sunday May 16: (Sunday of the Myrrh Bearing Women, the 3rd after Pascha):**

9:00 am - Matins  
10:00 am - Divine Liturgy  
11:00 am - Sunday School  
12:00 am - Coffee hour

### **Friday May 21 - Holy Emperors Constantine and His Mother Helen:**

9:00 am - Matins  
10:00 am - Divine Liturgy  
11:30 am - Coffee hour

### **Friday May 22:**

11:00 am - Baptism Myra Hashmi

### **Sunday May 23 (Sunday of the Paralytic, the 4th after Pascha):**

9:00 am - Matins  
10:00 am - Divine Liturgy  
11:00 am - Sunday School  
12:00 am - Coffee hour



## Holy Emperors Constantine and Helen

On May 21<sup>st</sup> the Orthodox Church celebrates the feast day of the Holy and Glorious Constantine and his mother, Helen, the great Sovereigns and Equals-to-the-Apostles. While, highlighting the importance of Saint Constantine's reign in the history of the Roman Empire, historians call him "the Great", the Church - calls him "isapostolos" - "equal to the Apostles".

Constantine the Great (272-337) - who was to become "the prince beloved by God," as Theodoret (*Hist. Eccl.* I.1) calls him - was born in Naïssus, the principal city of the province of the Roman province Dacia Mediterranea (nowadays Niš (Nish), in Serbia), around the year 272 (possibly 294). He was the son of General Constantius Chlor, the future Caesar Constantius I (293-306), the ruler of the the Western provinces of the Roman empire, and of the blessed Helen, a devoted Christian of humble birth who was to become St Helen.

Flavia Julia Helena was Constantius Chlor's first wife. She was born in c.250, in Drepanum, the province of Bithynia (today Yalova, in Turkey). She was probably a Christian even before the birth of her son and, obviously, much longer before her son's conversion (Paul Stephenson, *Constantine: Unconquered Emperor, Christian Victor*, pp. 2-3). She devoted her entire life to his son, whom she always remained close. After Constantine would become emperor, he would show his devoted mother great honor and respect, granting her the imperial title "Augusta."

Although Constantine's father did not have a noble origin either, he was a skilled and efficient general. These qualities were later transmitted to his son Constantine, who would follow his father's military career. Indeed, he would lead the Roman army in Britain and join his father, assisting him in the management of the western part of the Empire.

At that time, emperor Diocletian (284-305) and his co-ruler Maximian Galerius (305-311) in the East, and emperor Maximian Hercules (284-305) in the West, started a bloody persecution against Christians. Constantius Chlorus did not persecute Christians in the lands he governed. He managed to remain tolerant. His



spirit of tolerance towards Christians as well as Helena's devotion to Christ had a great impact on St Constantine, their son. As Eusebius says, "*at a time when four emperors shared the administration of the Roman empire, Constantius alone, following a course of conduct different from that pursued by his colleagues, entered into the friendship of the Supreme God. For while they besieged and wasted the churches of God, leveling them to the ground, and obliterating the very foundations of the houses of prayer, he kept his hands pure from their abominable impiety, and never in any respect resembled them. They polluted their provinces by the indiscriminate slaughter of godly men and women; but he kept his soul free from the stain of this*

*crime.*" (Eusebius of Caesarea, "Life of Constantine the Great", I. 13. 1-2).

Upon his father's death in 306, at Eboracum (now York) in the province of Britannia, Constantine was proclaimed Caesar and his successor to his throne. Learning that Maxentius and Maximin had formed a league against him, in 312, he marched into Italy at the head of his troops. It is there that, according to the testimonies of historians Eusebius and Lactantius, on the eve of the battle with Maxentius, one afternoon, Constantine saw in the sky a bright cross beneath the sun with the inscription: "In hoc signo vinces" („By this sign you will conquer"). The following night, our Lord Jesus Christ appeared to him in a dream and declared to him the power of the Cross and its significance. When he arose in the morning, he immediately ordered that a *labarum* be made (which is a banner or standard of victory over the enemy) in the form of a cross, and he inscribed on it the Name of Jesus Christ.

He engaged in battle on October 28, near Pons Milvius, a bridge over the Tiber in northern Rome, Italy. Maxentius was defeated and drowned in the Tiber River while fleeing. The next day, Constantine triumphantly entered Rome. The Senate proclaimed him Augustus and Emperor of the West, while his brother-in-law, Licinius ruled in the East. In 313, an edict was promulgated at

Milan by the two Emperors allowing full liberty to everyone to render worship to God as he wished. But out of malice, Licinius later persecuted the Christians again. Constantine fought him once and again, and utterly destroyed him in 324. Thus he was left the sole Emperor of East and West. Under him and because of him the persecutions against the Church ceased, Christianity triumphed and idolatry was overthrown.

In 324, for economic, commercial, strategic and cultural reasons, Constantine decided to move the capital of the empire from Rome to the ancient city of Byzantium, where he laid the foundations of the new capital of his realm, which he solemnly inaugurated six years later, on May 11, 330, naming it after himself, Constantinople. Since the throne of the imperial rule was transferred to Constantinople, thus became the "New Rome" because the imperial seat was transferred there from "Old Rome."

Desiring to exactly know the true Christian faith and teaching and to establish religious and political peace, severely affected by the disputes arising from the heresy of Arius of Alexandria, in 325 Constantine gathered all the bishops in the city of Nicaea. 318 bishops attended this Council. Among them were confessor-bishops from the period of the persecutions and many other luminaries of the Church, St Nicholas of Myra in Lycia and St Spyridon of Trymithus, the Wonderworkers, included. They confirmed the Orthodox faith and proclaimed the Son consubstantial with the Father. The Council was presided over by Osius, the Bishop of Cordova, Spain, and by Vitus and Vincentius, priests of the Roman Church and legates of Pope Silvester. The emperor was present at the sessions of the Council and personally addressed the participants.

The heresy of Arius was condemned, Arius and his followers were anathematized. A Symbol of Faith (Creed) was composed, in which was included the term "consubstantial with the Father," confirming the truth of the divinity of Jesus Christ, Who assumed human nature for the redemption of all the human race.

In 326 Saint Helen undertook a journey to Jerusalem to find the sacred wood upon which Christ our God was crucified. Let us not forget that the finding of the Precious and Life-Giving Cross of our Savior Jesus Christ, in 327, during the life of Patriarch Macarius of Jerusalem, is also the fruit of the endeavors of the pious Empress, encouraged and sustained financially and logistically by his son. The Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, included in the calendar of the Orthodox Church on September 14, reminds us of this unique achievement of the two holy emperors.

We should also mention that the search by St. Helen for the Life-Creating Cross led to the finding of the tomb where Joseph of Arrimathea who procured Jesus' body laid it in his own tomb — from which Jesus would rise again in power three days later.

It is interesting that the person who provided the most valuable information about the site of the tomb was an elderly Jew by the name of Jude. He was able to show St Helen's team the temple of Venus, erected by emperor Hadrian (117-138) over the Sepulchre of the Lord. Due to the miracles that followed after the discovery of the Holy Cross, the elder Jude and other Jews there believed in Christ and accepted Holy Baptism. Jude received the name Cyriacus and afterwards was consecrated Bishop of Jerusalem. During the reign of Julian the Apostate (361-363) he accepted a martyr's death for Christ (see October 28).

Although in her declining years, Saint Helen, in her zeal to glorify Christ, erected churches in Jerusalem at the sites of the Crucifixion and Resurrection, in Bethlehem at the cave where our Savior was born, another one on the Mount of Olives whence He ascended into Heaven, and many others throughout the Holy Land, Cyprus, and elsewhere. She was proclaimed Augusta, her image was stamped upon golden coins, and two cities were named Helenopolis after her in Bithynia and in Palestine.

Having been thus glorified for her piety, she departed to the Lord being about eighty years of age, according to some in the year 330. She was buried in a prophyry sarcophagus in a round church in Rome, on the so-called Lavicana Way. This sarcophagus is now preserved in the Vatican Palace.

Seven years later, Constantine fell ill in Nicomedia. According to Eusebius (*The Life of Constantine*. Book IV, 61-62), and also according to Socrates and Sozomen, in 337, he requested and received the divine and holy Baptism on his deathbed, having prepared for it all his whole life. Being deemed worthy of the Holy Mysteries, he reposed on the day of Pentecost (May 21), in the year 337, having lived sixty-five years, of which he ruled for thirty-one years and died on May 22, 337. His remains were transferred from Nicomedia to Constantinople and were deposited in the Church of the Holy Apostles, which had been built by him (see *Homily XXVI on Second Corinthians* by Saint John Chrysostom). He was buried there, in a crypt he had prepared for himself.

**V. Rev. Fr. Nicolai Buga**