



# Saint Paul the Apostle Orthodox Church

24 BURKE ROAD

FREEHOLD, NJ 07728

Thirty Sixth Sunday after Pentecost

February 10, 2013

Father Robert E Lucas, Pastor; Subdeacon Daniel J. Korba and Nikitas Tsokris, Cantors      Rectory 215-862-9227; Parish Center 732-780-3158

## We Are A Stewardship Parish Of Time, Talent and Treasure

The mission of our parish faith community is to teach the Gospel message in the rich tradition of the Orthodox Church; to enable people to reflect the image of Jesus Christ in every day activities of life; to offer spiritual formation through changing times; and to celebrate community among Orthodox believers in our Freehold area.

We of St. Paul the Apostle Parish dedicate ourselves to maintaining the sanctity of worship and spiritual enlightenment in a family environment that reaches and involves all ages and unifies all people.

We believe in the spirit of ecumenism in which we share our faith by word and example and extend our spiritual insights to all people.

We accept the responsibility of Christian Stewardship that through generous giving we may all experience a faith communion with Christ as the Center of our lives.

We dedicate ourselves to insuring the well-being of all people so that we may truly experience the message of Christ's salutary gospel.

We are a beacon on a hill with the eyes of many upon us; that beacon is the inspired Light of Christ which must shine brightly in our lives.

*It is not ourselves we preach but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' has shone in our hearts, that we in turn might make known the glory of God shining on the face of Christ. This treasure we possess in earthen vessels to make it clear that its surpassing power comes from God and not from us. We are afflicted in every way possible, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in us 2 Corinthians 4: 5 – 8.*

## GLAD TIDINGS

+++ Please keep the intentions of these members of our parish intercession community in your daily prayers: Anna, Ryan, Betty, Mary, Beth, Ann Helene, Debra and Michael.

+++ The sign-up sheet for both the Web Site and Bulletin sponsors is on the bulletin board in the kitchen. Please sign up as soon as possible. Do NOT make payment until your sign-up month has arrived. This will make it easier for Father to keep track of payments. Thanks in advance to all who support the parish in this way.

+++ We offer thanks to the Blessed Trinity for inspiring generosity in the souls of our faithful and the blessing of abundant grace in our midst with the offering received last Sunday: Tithe Offering, \$508.00; Candles, \$19.00; Parish Dues, \$50.00; Holy Day: \$70.00; Kitchen, \$1217.00, for a total of \$1814.00. We express our profound gratitude to the parishioner communicants who offer their God-given treasure and labored for the sake of the Lord and the good of our parish. God bless and reward you good and faithful souls! The attendance was 44 adults and 13 children last Sunday.

+++ As faithful believers, we intercede and associate ourselves in prayer with the following who have prayed and offered seven day lights for their intentions: Father Lucas, Pani Lucas, Eleni Pallas, Anna Zacharyczuk, Marilyn Korba, Eleanor Korba, Michael George, Maria Garcia and Pani Buletza.

+++ We make a **PENNIES FROM HEAVEN** Canister available for our faithful to bring in pennies for our altar and its appointments. We are already in receipt of **\$1694.00** from this apostolate. Even your pennies can help and are a blessing to our parish.

+++ Please be certain to see a member of the Parish Council if you would like to help our parish by using **Shop Rite Food Coupons** available in \$20.00 denominations. We invite **ALL** to be caring and supportive and use Grocery Coupons for food shopping as we have gratefully realized \$5550.00 on this project to date!

+++ **The Clothing Drive is a permanent on-going project in our parish. Please bring any type of clothing and fabrics along with stuffed animals and shoes for the benefit of our parish. The bags can be left in the vestibule or on the front porch of the rectory. Please invite your friends and neighbors to assist us in disposing of unwanted clothing, shoes and fabrics.**

+++ **Please pray the Lord our God grants us an enrichment of our spiritual lives for his glory.**

+++ **The next Pirohi Sale will be Saturday, March 2 and the Bake Sale will be March 15 and 16.**

+++ May all glory, adoration and worship be accorded our God in the Holy Trinity by all the faithful of our parish with one mind, one soul and one heart each day of the week!

+++ **Those who would like their homes blessed are asked to advise Father as soon as possible.**



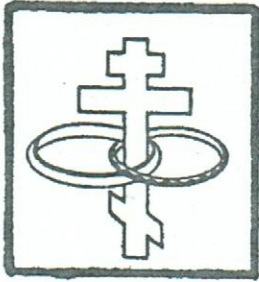
Birthday  
Wishes!

We are pleased to greet those of our faithful communicants who celebrate their birthday this month. Our Lord has offered these souls yet another year of blessed life. The most obvious way He blesses us and participates in our life is by sharing his divine life with us in the Eucharist at the celebration of the Divine Liturgy. Thus we gather together and offer thanks for yet another year of life blessed by his most gracious hands. Today, we prayerfully remember in the Divine Liturgy the following souls who celebrate their birthday during this month:

February 7 Robin Pasquino  
February 14 Sarah Ann Harrison  
February 14 Tatyana Lucas Harrison  
February 21 Joan Henry  
February 24 George Indromenos  
February 27 Marilyn J. Korba  
February 28 Joseph F. Choti

With a prayerful heart and grateful soul, our parish faith community asks the Lord to continue to bless these birthday celebrants with good spiritual and physical health for the coming year. We invite all to add their personal intercessory prayers so that with one voice and one heart we may also participate in the grace and joy of their celebration. As we wish them a happy and blessed celebration of their birthday, our ardent prayer resounds that the Lord our God will continue to bless them for

**Many and Blessed Years!**



## WEDDING ANNIVERSARIES

The Byzantine Fathers of the Church were wont to emphasize how ancient and how venerable marriage is in the sight of our God because it was established yet in paradise before the fall of Adam and Eve and brought to blessed perfection by Christ in Cana of Galilee. Its grace survived the sin of our first parents and it remains a sign of the presence of the Holy Trinity in our midst. It is a living symbol of the deep and abiding love between Christ and His Bride, our blessed Church. It is characterized in the liturgical life of the Church as a happy martyrdom. And it is precisely for this reason the sacramental Mystery of Marriage is such a joyous event. On the third Sunday of this month, we honor those of our good parishioners who observe their marriage anniversaries this month. They are specially remembered in the celebration of the Divine Liturgy and subsequently receive an individual and personal blessing of the Lord at its conclusion. Celebrating this month are:

### **February 1 Nicetas & Angeliki Tsokris**

We gratefully give thanks to the Blessed Trinity for having guided and strengthened the marriages of these believers, and their cooperation with sacramental grace to remain faithful to one another over the years. Like all who are faithful to Christ, they recognize the presence and necessity of the Holy Spirit not only in the marriage, but in subsequent family life as well. As we praise our God for their witness in our midst, let us also join them with our prayers and thanksgiving before the throne of the Lord. May they continue to praise His Holy Name by their love and devotion to one another for

**Many and Blessed Years**

THE HIJACKING OF THE  
FOURTH CRUSADE (1204)

*"We will build transports to carry four thousand five hundred horses, and nine thousand squires, and ships for four thousand five hundred knights, and twenty thousand sergeants of foot ... on condition that you pay us for each horse four marks, and for each man two marks. We undertake to keep, wheresoever we may be, for a year, reckoning from the day on which we sail from the port of Venice in the service of God and of Christendom. Now the sum total of the expenses above named amounts to 85,000 marks. And this will we do moreover. For the love of God, we will add to the fleet fifty armed galleys on condition that, so long as we act in company, of all conquests in land or money, whether at sea or on dry ground, we shall have the half, and you the other half."*

**Enrico Dandolo, Doge of Venice**

*"God is on everyone's side ... and in the last analysis, he is on the side with plenty of money and large armies."*

**Jean Anouilh**



## LIE

We're on our way to liberate Jerusalem.

## TRUTH

The leaders of the Fourth Crusade always intended to sack Constantinople!

## CHIEF PARTICIPANTS

Enrico Dandolo, Doge of Venice

Alexius IV Angelus, Emperor of Byzantium

Count Boniface of Montferrat, leader of the Fourth Crusade

## THE STORY SO FAR

After the First Crusade succeeded in wresting the Holy Land from Muslim control in 1099, the crusaders established various kingdoms in the Middle East, the most important being the Kingdom of Jerusalem. These kingdoms were not to last for long, however. In between bickering among themselves, their leaders spent most of their time fighting Muslim states to the east and raiding the Christian Byzantine Empire to the north. After Muslim armies captured part of the County of Edessa in 1144, the Second Crusade was launched, only to end in failure. This

was followed by a Third Crusade, launched after the fall of Jerusalem to Saladin, sultan of Egypt and Syria, in 1187, but it was not a success either. It was during these crusades that some Christian leaders began to believe that the Byzantines were betraying their cause to the Muslims, causing resentment in France, England, and Italy. It was then that Pope Innocent III began preaching a new crusade, one that would attack the Muslims through Egypt. All they needed were ships, and Venice had plenty of those ...



**T**he massive walls of Constantinople, with its mighty towers, would have been a remarkable sight to peasant soldiers from the backwaters of rural Europe. They seemed to stretch to the horizon whichever way you looked. Many must surely have turned to fellow travelers in bewilderment and asked, "Is this Jerusalem?"

One can only imagine their disappointment at being told that this was Constantinople, and that the people gathered along its walls were not Saracens but fellow Christians. Disappointment would have turned to confusion with the news that this was now the principal objective of the crusading armies. "But what of our vows of pilgrimage?" they would have asked.

Many leaders of the Fourth Crusade did not care a fig about those vows, however, nor would they have been bothered about the feelings of the soldiers who would shortly be asked to lay down their lives. As they cast their covetous eyes over the beautiful city, thinking of the wealth that lay inside, the Venetian contingent must have been congratulating themselves on their skilful handling of the crusading knights. They had not only manipulated them into abandoning their quest to free the Holy Land, but had convinced them to take part in the capture of this most precious of prizes—Constantinople, the greatest city in all Christendom. In doing so, they had managed to conceal the fact that the capture of Constantinople had always been their aim. As a consequence of this deception, the power of the Byzantine Empire was crippled, an act that would eventually see eastern Europe fall under Islamic domination for 400 years.

### **The Official Story—The Fourth Crusade Is Sidetracked**

The failure of the Third Crusade meant that most of the princes of Europe temporarily lost any enthusiasm they might have had for further crusades. Busy fighting their own petty wars, they were not inclined to go on any extended trips to the Holy Land. England and France were locked in a struggle for territory, the Christian kings of Spain were fighting Muslim kingdoms in the south of the country, and Henry IV of Germany had only recently been crowned Holy Roman Emperor, following the death



of his father during the Third Crusade. However, the arrival of a new occupant on the Throne of St Peter in 1198 was to change all that. Charismatic and energetic, Pope Innocent III was committed to the crusading movement and determined to reverse the failure of the Third Crusade. Innocent's call to arms stirred the nobility of France, where thousands responded to his representative, Fulk of Neuilly. In November 1199, the enterprise acquired an informal leader when, during a tournament near his castle in the Ardennes, Count Thibault of Champagne announced that he would take the Cross and go on Crusade. When Thibault became ill shortly afterward, leadership of the Fourth Crusade passed to an Italian count, Boniface of Montferrat. Geoffrey of Villehardouin, an envoy appointed by the leading nobles, described the count as a man of commanding presence, experienced in warfare and, importantly, related to the Kings of Jerusalem.

Having identified Egypt as a weak point, the crusaders decided to land there and move on the Holy Land from the south. To get them to their destination they approached the Venetians, who agreed to convey 33,500 crusaders and 4,500 horses. The Venetians required a full year to construct the large number of ships needed, and to find the sailors to man them. During this period they had to suspend most of the city's regular mercantile activities. The contract specified that the crusaders were to head straight for Cairo—then at the heart of the Muslim world—and that they were to set sail no later than June 24, 1202.

Regardless of what their leaders had planned, many crusaders did not make their way to Venice, but chose instead to depart from other Mediterranean ports. The result was that, by the time the bulk of the crusader army had gathered at Venice in late 1201, instead of the planned 33,500 troops, only 12,000 were present. Venice, meanwhile, had delivered on her part of the bargain. As promised, fifty war galleys, 150 large transports and 300 horse transports lay waiting at anchor—sufficient for three times the army that was ready to board. The Doge of Venice, the blind, ninety-four-year-old Enrico Dandolo, insisted that the crusaders pay the full amount outstanding—85,000 silver marks. The crusaders could only scrape together about 51,000 marks, and that only when some of the leaders had sacrificed everything they possessed. The Venetians reacted with outrage. They had cut back their trading activities for a considerable time to prepare for this expedition and refused to let the crusaders depart on their ships until the full amount had been paid. Appeals made by the crusaders to a shared Christian unity and faith left the Doge unmoved. Eventually, and against all expectations, it was Dandolo who finally broke the deadlock by proposing that he should join the crusade and become one of its leaders. He also suggested that, as a first objective, they should attack the Christian port of Zara in Dalmatia, which the Venetians had lost to Hungary in 1186. The papal representative agreed, declaring that it was necessary to prevent the crusade's complete collapse, and when the leaders of the crusade reluctantly acquiesced, Dandolo took the Cross at a public ceremony in the Basilica of St Mark.

During the siege of Zara in November 1202, Alexius, the son of the dethroned Byzantine emperor, Isaac II, contacted the crusaders and offered them a number of enticements if they would move against Constantinople and overthrow the reigning emperor, Alexius III. These included the submission of the Orthodox Church to Rome, the payment of any outstanding sums owed to the Venetians, and an undertaking to pay for the Egyptian campaign and to provide 10,000 Byzantine soldiers to join it. Even though the leading crusaders agreed to the plan because of their dire financial predicament, many in the lower ranks refused to participate in an enterprise that they regarded as being contrary to their vows. Those who remained joined the imperial claimant at the island of Corfu, and a fleet of sixty war galleys, one hundred horse transports and fifty large transports duly arrived beneath the walls of Constantinople in late June 1203. One month later the city fell to the crusaders and their Venetian allies.



## The Truth—Destination Constantinople

Of all the peoples living around the Mediterranean basin, the Venetians were among the most interesting. Isolated as a result of their location, they were haughty, devious and incredibly suspicious. They had never been a particularly religious people, having defied the Pope on numerous occasions throughout their history. It would be fair to

Venice was originally established as a Byzantine administrative center in the aftermath of the Lombard invasions of northern and central Italy in the 560s.



say that they were much more interested in money than religion. So there are good reasons to be sceptical about the Venetians' claim that they were simply trying to make the best of a bad deal with the crusaders after they had built all the ships that had been ordered. In fact, at no point were they ever interested in going to the Holy Land. The hijacking of the Fourth Crusade by the Venetians and the attack on Constantinople

were undertaken with just one purpose in mind—that of looting the city's treasures and seizing Byzantine territory. While the Venetians may have masqueraded as devout Christians answering the Pope's call, the reality was quite different.

The fabled wealth of Constantinople was the talk of Europe, largely as a result of stories told by returning crusaders, and the Venetians had become obsessed with the idea of sacking the imperial city. Believing the Greek-speaking inhabitants to be effeminate, the Venetians were looking for any opportunity to take advantage of their supposed weakness. But there were other factors at play as well.

Venice at this time was ruled by one of the most remarkable figures of the Middle Ages—Enrico Dandolo, the ninety-four-year-old blind Doge of Venice—who was involved in a series of events that started Venice on its quest to destroy the Byzantine Empire. Rivalry between Venice and Constantinople went back decades, with the Byzantines particularly keen to reduce the influence of Venetians in their affairs. Their opportunity came in 1171, when they accused Venetians living in Constantinople of destroying the Genoese settlement in the suburb of Galata. Emperor Manuel I arrested all Venetian citizens throughout the empire and imprisoned them. The Venetians reacted with fury and raised a fleet to attack Constantinople, but the expedition was a disaster. Dandolo had joined the mission led by Doge Vitale Michiel during 1171–72, which ended with the Doge's humiliation and death in Venice at the hands of a murderous mob. The following year, Dandolo was selected to be ambassador to Constantinople as Venice attempted unsuccessfully to arrive at a diplomatic solution over its clash with Byzantium. It was during this period that he developed his hatred of the Byzantines, especially after the events of 1182. In that year, a coup occurred in Constantinople in which Greeks rose up and massacred practically every Latin inhabitant of the city, including women and children, the old and infirm, even the sick in the hospitals. Among the victims were large numbers of Venetian merchants. These events must have seemed fresh in Dandolo's mind when he became the thirty-ninth Doge of Venice on January 1, 1193.

The opportunity for Dandolo to take revenge arrived with the leaders of the Fourth Crusade. The French leadership came to the Venetians to negotiate for ships and provisions. They were led by Boniface of Montferrat who, contrary to official accounts, was in fact weak, self-serving, inexperienced, ignorant, arrogant, and completely lacking in faith, scruples or remorse—a dangerous combination. Dandolo found it easy to manipulate him and the rest of the crusader leadership, as future events were to show. The Venetians, using their financial acumen, maneuvered the crusaders into a situation where they owed them a large sum of money. When they couldn't pay, the Venetians offered the crusaders a way of discharging their debt, using booty gained from an attack on Zara. Pope Innocent was appalled when he discovered the agreement, decreeing that it was unconscionable for the crusader armies to attack a Christian city. The Pope's protests were ignored, however, and the crusaders were unable to get the Venetians to change their minds—though how hard they tried is questionable, since it seems that Boniface was sorely tempted by stories of the great wealth that lay within the city.

Part of the deal was that Dandolo would become the leader of the crusade—only he had no intention of sailing to Cairo, of supporting the now-doomed kingdom of Jerusalem, or of liberating the Holy Sepulchre. He had only one goal in mind: the overthrow of Constantinople itself. It was thus that the Venetians got their way and were able to perpetrate one of the greatest disasters in history.


## Byzantium in Turmoil

The Byzantine Empire was in a state of chaos at the end of the twelfth century. The days of her greatness were over, and there were two rival contenders for the imperial throne. One of these—prince Alexius, the son of the deposed emperor Isaac II—believed he could use the crusading army to further his ambitions. About fourteen years old and therefore easily manipulated, Alexius escaped from Constantinople and appealed to the crusaders, promising many things, including a commitment to heal the schism between the Eastern and Western Churches if they would help him to depose his uncle, the usurper Alexius III. Doge Dandolo found the perfect tool in the young Alexius to help him achieve his goal of conquering Constantinople.


The crusaders, whose stated objective had been Egypt, took very little persuading to set their course for Constantinople. They appeared before the walls of the city in June 1203, proclaiming the young prince as Emperor Alexius IV, and commanding the people to depose his uncle. Alexius III, sunk in debauchery, took no effective measures to resist, and the siege of Constantinople began. On July 17, the crusaders and the Venetians took the city by storm, installing Alexius IV and his father Isaac II as co-emperors.

Discovering that the Venetians had manipulated him, Alexius IV now attempted to get the invaders—who were camped outside the city walls—to resume their journey by offering them money, but to no avail. The Venetians were not going anywhere, and they placed all sorts of conditions and demands on their puppet emperor. When these could not be met, the Byzantines attempted to close the city against the crusaders. At the end of January 1204, the city's populace rose in revolt against Alexius IV, imprisoning him and his father. The elderly Isaac died soon afterwards, possibly from poison, and Alexius was strangled on February 8, allowing the anti-western Alexius V Ducas to be installed as emperor. Using these events as a pretext, the crusaders decided to take the city for themselves. Although Pope Innocent III had commanded them not to attack, the clergy concealed the papal letters, and the crusaders readied themselves for the assault, while the Venetians attacked from the sea. The Byzantines could put up little resistance, and within a very short period of time the greatest city in Christendom was overrun and sacked.

That a Christian army—one that was supposed to liberate the Holy Land—had done this, is an act that Orthodox Christians have never been able to forgive. As in any pillaging of a city, numerous atrocities were committed, including the desecration of the High Altar of the great church of Hagia Sophia. The crusaders took three days to sack the city, during which time many ancient Roman and Greek works were either stolen or destroyed. Nuns were violated and Orthodox clergy were hunted down and massacred. All of the great treasures of Constantinople (excluding those that had been



It was rumoured that Doge Enrico Dandolo had lost his eyesight at the hands of the Byzantines during an earlier visit to Constantinople.



destroyed by the rampaging crusaders) were taken back to Venice. While the leaders of the crusade were excommunicated by the Pope, the Western Church wasted no time in introducing the Latin rite and Latin prelates into the Orthodox East, further antagonising the Eastern Church. The crusaders then installed one of their own—Baldwin, Count of Flanders—as emperor in Constantinople, where they remained in command until 1261. Doge Dandolo returned home triumphant. He had established an empire for Venice, carved from the remains of the Eastern Roman Empire, and was able to present his city with the title of “Lords and Masters of a Quarter and a Half-quarter of the Roman Empire.”



## THE HORSES OF ST MARK'S

Visitors walking around the Piazza San Marco in Venice will, at some point, have their eyes drawn to the top of the basilica dedicated to the Patron Saint of Venice. There, high above the main doors, stand four bronze horses, magnificent and proud, poised as if ready to launch themselves into a full gallop. These are modern replicas, installed in the 1980s to save the originals from the effects of pollution after they had stood guard over the church for the better part of 600 years.

But for some 900 years before their installation in Venice, the bronze horses of St Mark's had graced the northern end of the Hippodrome of Constantine, built in the center of Constantinople by the Roman Emperor Constantine himself. For almost a millennium they looked down upon the hustle and bustle of the city's social life, centered on the regular chariot races that were held there, with fans betting enormous sums on the blue or green teams.

All of this was lost during the sack of Constantinople. While the crusaders destroyed everything they could get their hands on, the more refined Venetians were eagerly stealing as much booty as they could carry off on their ships. One item that caught the personal fancy of Doge Dandolo, possibly seen during a previous visit, was the group of four horses that stood over the ancient hippodrome, so he ordered their removal to Venice.

Ironically, these horses also caught the attention of another conqueror, Napoleon, who took them to Paris in 1797 for the Arc de Triomphe, but they were returned to the façade of St Mark's in 1815.

Visitors today can climb a steep stairway to where the four replica horses stand on the basilica, and they can view the originals inside a room on the same upper level. Gazing on them, visitors are admiring one of the treasures that became a victim of the fall of the greatest city in all Christendom.

## Legacies

The sack of Constantinople crippled the power of the Byzantine Empire, which until then had been the main barrier preventing the forces of Islam from entering Europe by the most direct route, across the Dardanelles or the Bosphorus. Its conquest had calamitous consequences for the future of eastern Europe, a fact that was evident to many even at the time. As historian Robert Payne writes: "Innocent III ... was aghast at their actions. There came from him, in letter after letter, cries of helpless rage. How was it possible that anyone could be so unreasonable, so inept, and so absurd as to conquer Constantinople? Were not the Turks on the march, and was it not certain that Byzantium served as a bastion against them?"

With the conquest of Constantinople, the Byzantine Empire suffered a blow from which it never really recovered. Even though it survived for another 200 years after the Latin emperors were evicted in 1261, it would never again be a formidable power, shorn as it was of territory, naval power, and money.

The immediate effect of the sack of 1204 was felt in the local area, since it left neighboring Balkan states free to pursue a policy of conquest. This happened slowly, since the Latin empire still exercised some authority. However, the rate of Balkan expansion accelerated during the 1300s owing to a futile civil war that completely crippled what was left of the Byzantine Empire. The main short-term beneficiaries

in the area were the Serbs, who were able to create the Serbian Empire and subjugate much of the Balkans. The legacy of this short-lived empire still haunts the region today. Much of the recent conflict and tension within the former Yugoslav republics stems from a dream of resurrecting the empire and restoring all the land of "Greater Serbia." This was certainly one of the

1. Pope John Paul II apologised for the Crusade's attack on Constantinople, and was accepted by Bartholomew I, Patriarch of Constantinople in 2004.

contributing factors in the wars over Kosovo during the 1990s.

But perhaps the major consequence of the disastrous Fourth Crusade was that Byzantium was no longer able to provide a bulwark against Ottoman Turkish expansion into Europe. Bypassing the failing Byzantine Empire, the Turks conquered bordering states one by one. The final death blow came to the dying Empire in 1453, when Turkish forces under Mehmed II took Constantinople. By 1499 they had completely occupied the Balkan Peninsula, which they were to rule for the next 400 years. "There are few greater ironies in history," writes John Julius Norwich, "than the fact that the fate of Eastern Christendom should have been sealed—and half of Europe condemned to some five hundred years of Moslem rule—by men who fought under the banner of the Cross."

In the midst of all this loss and desolation, the crippling of Byzantium did have one lasting benefit for the world—a surge of new influences on the Renaissance. With Byzantium in its final decline, the Emperor John VIII and his Greek entourage visited Florence in 1448 in a last-ditch effort to get Western help to prevent the fall of Constantinople to the Ottoman Turks. No aid was forthcoming, since most in the West realized that the Byzantine Empire was doomed. However, the splendor of the Greek delegation greatly impressed the Florentines, and stimulated a surge of interest in Greek culture, history, and ideas. Their initial visit was followed by the creation of a Greek settlement in Florence after the Ottoman capture of Constantinople in 1453. It was made up of artisans, philosophers, and doctors, who brought with them many texts of antiquity that had been lost to the West for centuries. This influx increased in the 1460s after the fall of the Morea—part of the Peloponnese Peninsula in southern Greece. These events infused the Italian Renaissance with many new ideas, which then spread throughout Europe, later bringing about the birth of humanism, the beginnings of the nation-state, and ideas that eventually triggered the Reformation.

Having created conditions that allowed the Ottomans to subjugate eastern Europe, the events of the Fourth Crusade continued to reverberate down the centuries, even into the twentieth century. The slow decline of the Ottoman Empire during the 1800s earned it the title “The Sick Man of Europe.” This encouraged nationalist sentiments to rise in the Balkans, which culminated in revolt. Serbia gained its independence from the Ottomans in two uprisings, the first in 1804 and the second in 1815, although Turkish troops continued to occupy the capital Belgrade until 1867. Greece gained her independence in 1830 and other states followed soon after. Meanwhile, the major European powers were involved in either propping up the Ottoman state (Britain) or seeking to destroy it (Russia). Over the next fifty years this became one of the principal causes of World War I, as Balkan nationalism tore the fragile fabric of European peace apart. That the roots of World War I can be seen to extend back some 800 years into the distant past is a legacy bequeathed to the world by Venice and her blind, vengeful doge.



## A CHRISTIAN TILLER OF HOSTILE SOIL

While studying the lives of the saints in our Holy Church, we find that these special followers of Christ came from all walks of life. Some were fisherman; others were military leaders. Some lived alone in caves carved into hillsides; still others dwelt in the regal surroundings of royalty. The "common denominator" shared by all saints was their complete love for Christ and their desire to serve Him with whatever they did in life.

Today, we want to highlight the unique way by which one of God's holy ones did this: by being a gardener! ST. CHRESTOS was born in Albania in the 18th century. From his youth, he was a lover of nature, finding great joy in caring for the plants and flowers that beautified God's creation.

He was a devout Christian, and he found that his gardening made him feel closer to God, Who originally intended for mankind to live forever in the Garden of Eden. When he moved to Constantinople in 1748, Chrestos found a city that was no longer a magnificent Christian center, but rather a community solidly under Muslim rule. Still, because of his horticultural talents, Chrestos was able to attain employment at a garden in the palace of the Turkish Sultan. Because of his firm Christian convictions, Chrestos was despised by his fellow workers, even though it was said that the Sultan's garden never looked better. They carefully launched a plan to discredit him, accusing Chrestos of ridiculing the Muslim faith. Consequently, he was cast into prison, where he was brutally tortured for years. Despite being promised that he would be restored to his former gardening position if he would disavow his Christian beliefs, Chrestos steadfastly refused. For days prior to his execution by beheading, Chrestos refused to eat or drink, maintaining that he wanted to die "hungering and thirsting" for being with Christ. He was put to death on February 12, 1752. *Icon by Austin Kachek - Manville, NJ*

The Orthodox Weekly Bulletin . . . . . Vestal, Cliffwood, New Jersey . . . . . Litho in U.S.A.