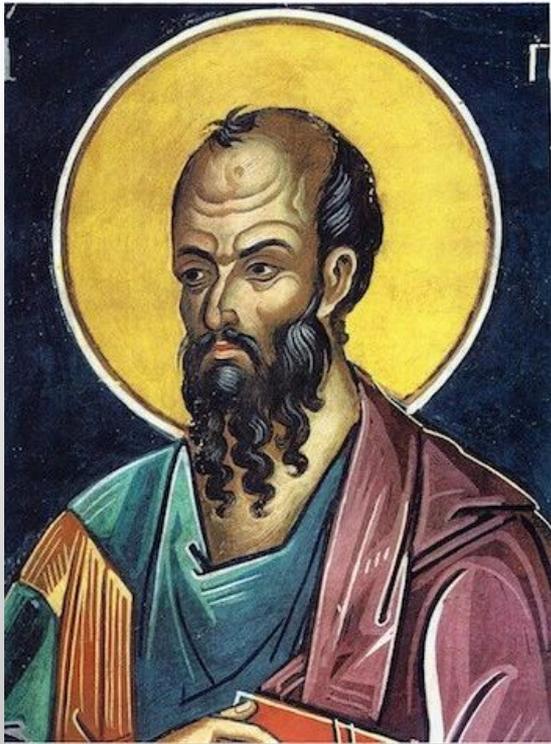


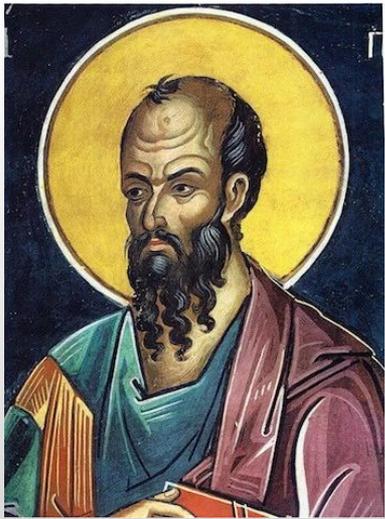
‘It is Better for Me to Depart and Be with the Lord’
Bodily Death and Entrance into Eternal Life



“And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in knowledge and all discernment, that you may approve the things that are excellent, that you may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ, being filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.

. . . so now also Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain. But if I live on in the flesh, this will mean fruit from my labor; yet what I shall choose I cannot tell. For I am hard-pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better. Nevertheless to remain in the flesh is more needful for you. And being confident of this, I know that I shall remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy of faith, that your rejoicing for me may be more abundant in Jesus Christ by my coming to you again.”

- Philippians 1:9-11, 20-26



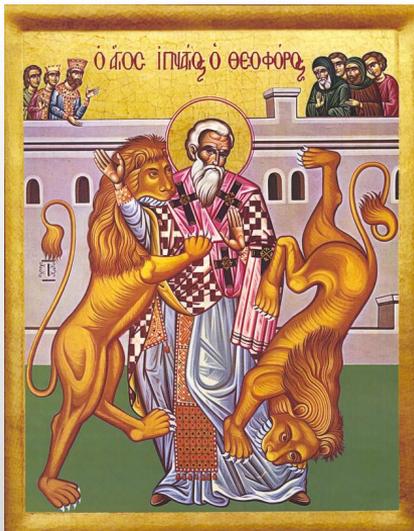
“ . . . Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain. But if I live on in the flesh, this will mean fruit from my labor; yet what I shall choose I cannot tell. For I am hard-pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better.”

- Philippians 1:20-23

St. Paul shows the way of perfect love for God: having his heart ‘set on the things which are above’ (Colossians 3:2), he desired to be more wholly present where his heart already was, with the One whom he loved.

In Holy Baptism, the soul is resurrected - and the body will join fully in this resurrection at the coming of Christ.





"Now I begin to be a disciple. ... Let fire and cross, flocks of beasts, broken bones, dismemberment ... come upon me, so long as I attain to Jesus Christ."

- **St. Ignatius of Antioch (martyred in 108 A.D.)**

"I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held. And they cried with a loud voice, saying, 'How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?' Then a white robe was given to each of them; and it was said to them that they should rest a little while longer, until both the number of their fellow servants and their brethren, who would be killed as they were, was completed."

- **Revelation 6:9-11**

The martyrs show the supreme steadfastness of hope in the Resurrection.

The relics of the martyrs are kept in the Holy Altar (or *antimins*) of every Orthodox church, just as the martyrs are seen beneath the Holy Altar in the Apocalypse.

The Divine Liturgy is celebrated atop their bones, by which they witnessed the confession of Christ and in the conviction of hope in the Resurrection.



“There was a certain rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and [a]fared sumptuously every day. But there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, full of sores, who was laid at his gate, desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man’s table. Moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. So it was that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels to Abraham’s bosom. The rich man also died and was buried. And being in torments in Hades, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.

“Then he cried and said, ‘**Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.**’ But Abraham said, ‘Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted and you are tormented. And besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed, so that those who want to pass from here to you cannot, nor can those from there pass to us.’

“Then he said, ‘I beg you therefore, father, that you would send him to my father’s house, for I have five brothers, that he may testify to them, lest they also come to this place of torment.’ Abraham said to him, ‘**They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.**’ And he said, ‘No, father Abraham; but if one goes to them from the dead, they will repent.’ But he said to him, ‘**If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead.**’”



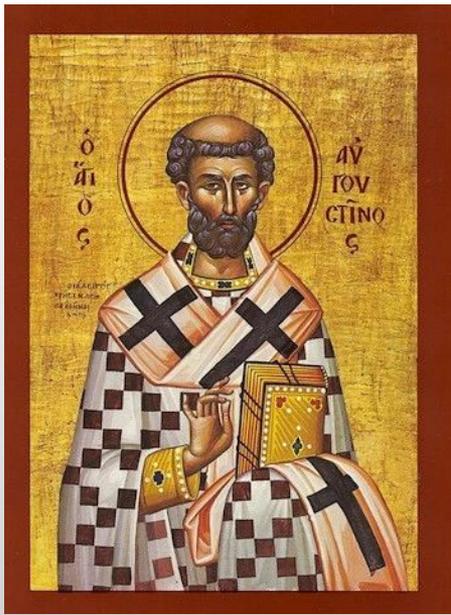
“The rich man also died and was buried. And being in torments in Hades, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.

“Then he cried and said, ‘Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.’”

- **Luke 16:23-24**

The soul is separated from the body at death, yet retains consciousness and self-identity.

The soul realizes spiritual realities, yet is unable to make the actions of repentance and to un-do its actions in this life. The soul comes face-to-face with its spiritual reality (sinful or united with Christ), and the soul no longer has bodily pleasures to distract it from this reality.



“During the time, moreover, which intervenes between a man’s death and the final resurrection, the soul dwells in a hidden retreat, **where it enjoys rest or suffers affliction . . .**”

- **St. Augustine of Hippo, *Enchiridion* 109**

The Church understands that the souls of the departed dwell either in the fullness of the Kingdom of God (those in Christ), in Hades (those separated from the Lord), or in some state of rest or affliction between the fullness of either extreme (such as those baptized, but in some sense separated from God through lack of repentance in this life).

The condition of the soul is not permanent until the Final Judgment at the return of Christ.

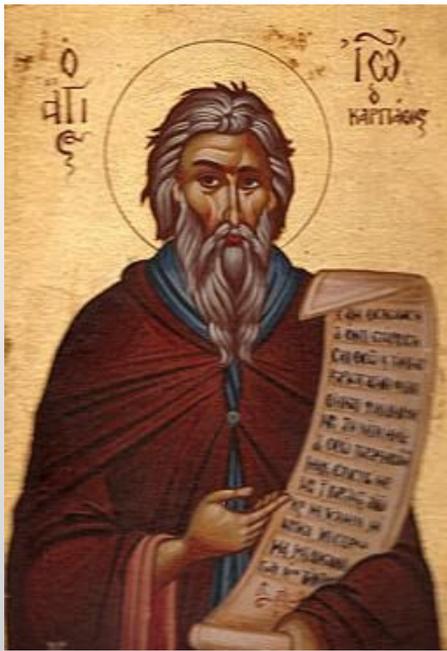
The Church prays for God to grant the soul mercy and a better place closer to the fullness of the Light of Christ.

Souls after death cannot make the actions of repentance, no matter how clearly they realize their separation from God. Therefore the Church acts on their behalf: by praying for them, by giving alms on their behalf, and by remembering them in the Divine Liturgy.



“But man was created for immortality, and by His resurrection Christ opened the gates of the Heavenly Kingdom, of eternal blessedness for those who have believed in Him and have lived righteously. **Our earthly life is a preparation for the future life**, and this preparation ends with our death . . . **But when it leaves the body, the soul finds itself among other spirits, good and bad. Usually it inclines toward those which are more akin to it in spirit**, and if while in the body it was under the influence of certain ones, it will remain in dependence upon them when it leaves the body, however unpleasant they may turn out to be upon encountering them . . . **Some souls** find themselves (after the forty days) in a condition of foretasting eternal joy and blessedness, and others in fear of the eternal torments which will come in full after the Last Judgment. Until then changes are possible in the condition of souls, especially through offering for them the **Bloodless Sacrifice** (commemoration at the Liturgy), and **likewise by other prayers.**”

- **St. John of Shanghai and San Francisco (Maximovitch)**



"When the soul leaves the body, the enemy advances to attack it, fiercely reviling it and accusing it of its sins in a harsh and terrifying manner. But if a soul enjoys the love of God and has faith in Him, even though in the past it has often been wounded by sin, it is not frightened by the enemy's attacks and threats. Strengthened by the Lord, winged by joy, filled with courage by holy angels that guide it, encircled and protected by the light of faith, it answers the malicious devil with great boldness. When the soul says all this fearlessly, the devil turns his back..."

- St. John of Karpathos (7th c.)

The time of departure of the soul from the body in death is a very serious moment.

Those who are right with God will experience the joy of God's presence.

The faithful must always strive to depart having received Holy Confession and Holy Communion.



"When the soul of a man departs out of the body, a great mystery is there accomplished. If it is under the guilt of sins there come bands of devils, and angels of the left hand, and powers of darkness that overtake the soul, and hold it fast on their side. No one ought to be surprised at this. If, while alive in this world, the man was subject and compliant to them, and made himself their bondsman, **how much more, when he departs out of this world, is he kept down and held fast by them.**"

- St. Macarios of Egypt (4th c.)

The reality of one's spiritual state is made manifest at death: if one is a friend of God, he will go to be with the Lord. If, however, one has become a companion of the devil without repentance, then the evil spirits come to claim that which is akin to themselves.

If both instances, soul of the departed will go to where his heart already is (whether the kingdom of heaven or the realm of sin, selfishness, and darkness).

Blessed are You, O Lord, teach me Your statutes.

The choir of the saints has found the fountain of life and the door of Paradise. May I also find the way through repentance, the sheep that was lost am I, call me up to You, O Savior, and save me.

Blessed are You, O Lord, teach me Your statutes.

You who did fashion me of old out of nothingness, and with Your Image Divine did honor me; but because of the transgressions of Your commandments, did return me again to the earth from whence I was taken; lead me back to be refashioned into that ancient beauty of Your Likeness.

Blessed are You, O Lord, teach me Your statutes.

I am the image of Your unutterable glory, though I bear the scars of my stumblings. Have compassion upon me, the works of Your hands, O sovereign Lord, and cleanse me through Your loving-kindness; and the homeland of my heart's desire bestow on me, by making me a citizen of Paradise.

Blessed are You, O Lord, teach me Your statutes.

Give rest O God to the souls of Your servants, and appoint for them a place in Paradise; where the choirs of the saints, O Lord, and the just will shine forth like stars; to Your servants that are sleeping now give rest, overlooking all their offenses.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.

The triune radiance of the One Godhead with reverent songs acclaiming, let us cry; Holy are You, O eternal Father, and Son also eternal, and Spirit Divine; shine with Your light on us who with faith adore You, and from the fire eternal rescue us.



Now and ever and unto the ages of ages. Amen.

Hail, O gracious Lady, who in the flesh bears God for the salvation of all; and through whom the human race has found salvation; through You may we find Paradise, Theotokos, our Lady pure and blessed.



“Give rest O God to the souls of Your servants, and appoint for them a place in Paradise; where the choirs of the saints, O Lord, and the just will shine forth like stars; to Your servants that are sleeping now give rest, overlooking all their offenses.”

- **Evlogetaria of the Departed**

The Orthodox funeral offers meditation upon the reality of death, offers supplication for the forgiveness of the sins of the departed, and is animated by faith in the Resurrection.

Funerals during the Paschal season are celebrated differently, due to the overwhelming joy of Pascha.

The final absolution prayer may be read over the departed (especially if a bishop is serving or it is the spiritual child of the priest serving).

Funerals are traditionally served open casket, and the faithful give a final kiss to the departed.



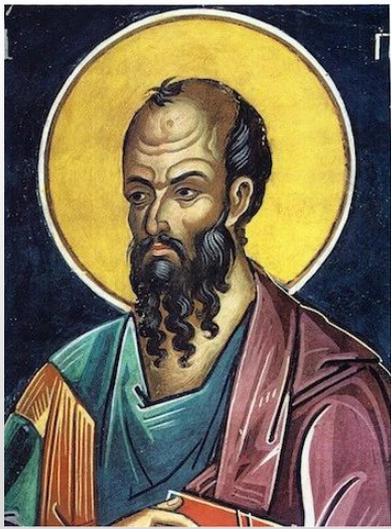


Judas Maccabeus Pursues Timotheus

By Gustave Doré

“After the battle [against Idumea] Judas led his men to the town of Adullam. It was the day before the Sabbath, so they purified themselves according to Jewish custom and then observed the holy day. By the following day it was urgent that they gather up the bodies of the men who had been killed in battle and bury them in their family tombs. **But on each of the dead, hidden under their clothes, they found small images of the gods worshiped in Jamnia, which the Law forbids Jews to wear.** Everyone then knew why these men had been killed. So they praised the ways of the Lord, the just judge, who reveals what is hidden, and **they begged him that this sin might be completely blotted out.** Then, Judas, that great man, urged the people to keep away from sin, because they had seen for themselves what had happened to those men who had sinned. He also took up a collection from all his men, totaling about four pounds of silver, and sent it to Jerusalem to provide for a sin offering. **Judas did this noble thing because he believed in the resurrection of the dead.** If he had not believed that the dead would be raised, it would have been foolish and useless to pray for them. **In his firm and devout conviction that all of God's faithful people would receive a wonderful reward, Judas made provision for a sin offering to set free from their sin those who had died.”**

- II Maccabees 12:38-45



“The Lord grant mercy to the household of Onesiphorus, for he often refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chain; but when he arrived in Rome, he sought me out very zealously and found me. **The Lord grant to him that he may find mercy from the Lord in that Day**—and you know very well how many ways he ministered to me at Ephesus.”

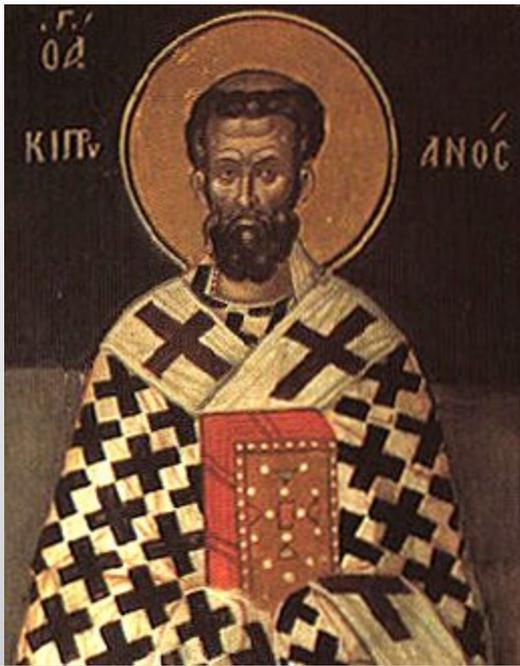
- II Timothy 1:16-18



“The widow who does not pray for her dead husband has as good as divorced him.”

- Tertullian (160 - 240 A.D.)

St. Paul and Tertullian witness to the antiquity of prayer for the departed as an authentically Apostolic Christian practice.



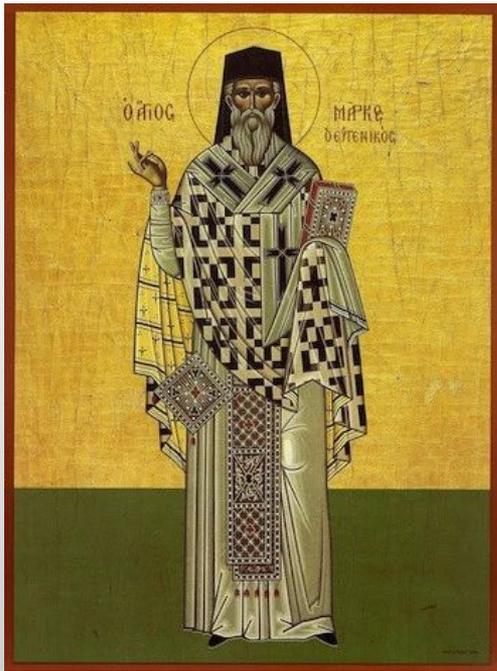
“He [departed] ought not to be named in the priests prayer who has done his best to detain the clergy from the altar.”

- **St. Cyprian of Carthage (d. 258 A.D.)**

St. Cyprian witnesses to the antiquity of memorial prayers for the departed. These anciently often take the form of *diptychs*, in which both the living the and the departed are commemorated (especially hierarchs, etc.).

The priest and deacon remember the names in the *diptychs* for the departed just after the consecration, praying for their souls and showing the unity of the Church on earth and in heaven.

At a Liturgy celebrated by a leader of an autocephalous church, the names of all the other leaders of autocephalous churches throughout the world are commemorated at the Great Entrance, showing the unity of the Church throughout the world.



“To this we answer the following: Of the fact that **those reposed in faith are without doubt helped by the Liturgies and prayers and almsgiving performed for them, and that this custom has been in force from antiquity**, there is the testimony of many and various utterances of the Teachers, both Latin and Greek, spoken and written at various times and in various places. **But that souls are delivered thanks to a certain purgatorial suffering** and temporal fire which possess such (a purgatorial) power and has the character of an help—**this we do not find either in the Scriptures or in the prayers and hymns for the dead, or in the words of the Teachers.**”

- St. Mark of Ephesus

The Orthodox Church rejects the Latin (Roman catholic) doctrine that departed souls are cleansed by objective punishment (purgatory).

Rather, they receive mercy from God through commemoration in the Divine Liturgy, prayers, and almsgiving.



“He [departed] ought not to be named in the priests prayer who has done his best to detain the clergy from the altar.”

- **St. Cyprian of Carthage (d. 258 A.D.)**

St. Cyprian witnesses to the antiquity of commemorations of the departed in the Divine Liturgy. This is natural, since it joins with the heavenly worship.

Frequently those remembered in the prayers in the Divine Liturgy (both living and departed) are commemorated in the *proskomedie* / *prothesis*. As the priest and deacon prepare the bread and wine for the Liturgy, the priest cuts a small fragment of bread for each person commemorated.

These fragments placed on the *discos* and then let fall into the Chalice by the deacon after the communion of the faithful with the prayer “wash away, O Lord, the sins of all those here commemorated, by thy precious Blood.”

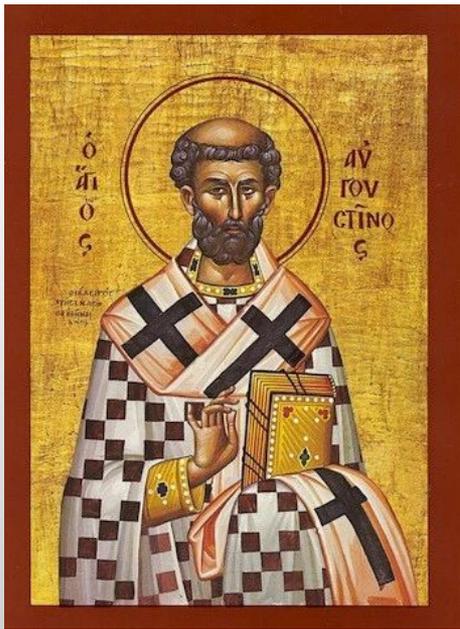


“Let the **third day** of the departed be celebrated with psalms, and lessons, and prayers, on account of Him who arose within the space of three days; and let the **ninth day** be celebrated in remembrance of the living, and of the departed; and the **fortieth day** according to the ancient pattern: for so did the people lament Moses, and the anniversary day in memory of him. And **let alms be given to the poor out of his goods for a memorial of him.**”

These things we say concerning the pious; for as to the ungodly, if you give all the world to the poor, you will not benefit him at all. **For to whom the Deity was an enemy while he was alive, it is certain it will be so also when he is departed;** for there is no unrighteousness with Him. For *the Lord is righteous, and has loved righteousness.* And, *Behold the man and his work* (Isaiah 62:11).”

- **Apostolic Constitutions 42 and 43**

The Church offers prayer even for those departed at enmity with God, but differently (they are not commemorated in the *prothesis* or *trisagion* prayers if they are not communicants of the Church). Prayers for the departed beseech God’s mercy, and are not a substitute for repentance in this life.



“But by the prayers of the holy Church, and by the salvific sacrifice, and by the alms which are given for their spirits, there is no doubt that the dead are aided, that the Lord might deal more mercifully with them than their sins would deserve. The whole Church observes this practice which was handed down by the Fathers: that it prays for those who have died in the communion of the Body and Blood of Christ, when they are commemorated in their own place in the sacrifice itself; and the sacrifice is offered also in memory of them, on their behalf . . . It is not at all to be doubted that such prayers are of profit to the dead; but for such of them as lived before their death in a way that makes it possible for these things to be useful to them after death.”

- St. Augustine of Hippo, Sermon 172.2

The Church only prays *trisagion* prayers and offers commemoration in the Divine Liturgy for the Orthodox.



“Let the **third day** of the departed be celebrated with psalms, and lessons, and prayers, on account of Him who arose within the space of three days; and let the **ninth day** be celebrated in remembrance of the living, and of the departed; and the **fortieth day** according to the ancient pattern: for so did the people lament Moses, and the anniversary day in memory of him. And **let alms be given to the poor out of his goods for a memorial of him.**”

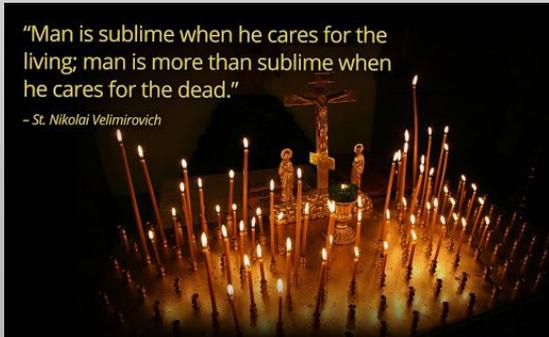
- Apostolic Constitutions 42



For the departed Orthodox, memorial prayers are appointed for the third, ninth, and fortieth days.

Additionally, prayers are offered for all of the departed especially on the Saturdays of Souls (Saturday is the day which the Lord rested bodily in the tomb), and in some churches on the second week after Holy Pascha (*radonitsa / provody*).

The Church prays for all departed - believers or otherwise - on the Sunday of Holy Pentecost.



“Man is sublime when he cares for the living; man is more than sublime when he cares for the dead.”

- St. Nikolai Velimirovich



“Let the **third day** of the departed be celebrated with psalms, and lessons, and prayers, on account of Him who arose within the space of three days; and let the **ninth day** be celebrated in remembrance of the living, and of the departed; and the **fortieth day** according to the ancient pattern: for so did the people lament Moses, and the anniversary day in memory of him. And **let alms be given to the poor out of his goods for a memorial of him.**”

- Apostolic Constitutions 42



***Kollyva* (boiled wheat, often with embedded sweets) is offered traditionally at memorials. The sharing of this bread is in some sense an act of hospitality and mercy on behalf of the departed.**

The origin of *kollyva* is the miracle of St. Theodore the Recruit. The pagan authorities conspired secretly to taint the food in the marketplace with blood offered to idols. St. Theodore revealed this to the believers through a vision granted to the Patriarch Eudoxius, and told them instead to eat boiled wheat.

This boiled wheat (*kollyva*) may be seen as a symbol of purity from evil and dedication to God.



“Let the **third day** of the departed be celebrated with psalms, and lessons, and prayers, on account of Him who arose within the space of three days; and let the **ninth day** be celebrated in remembrance of the living, and of the departed; and the **fortieth day** according to the ancient pattern.”

- **Apostolic Constitutions 42**

In the usual understanding of the Church (ref. St. John Maximovitch), the soul does not depart this world until the 3rd day after repose.

The third until the ninth days are often understood to correspond to a time of beholding the delights of paradise.

The ninth to the fortieth days are often understood to correspond to a time in which the reality of eternal separation from God is likewise revealed.

The fortieth day is often understood to correspond to the day on which the Lord appoints a place for the soul, though the soul may still be benefited by prayers of the Church.

The memorials may be understood to represent:

The three days of the Lord in the tomb / the Holy Trinity,

The nine ranks of angels, and

The forty days of the Lord on the earth after the Resurrection.



“The noble Joseph, having taken down thy most pure Body from the tree, wrapped in pure linen and spices, and sorrowing, placed it in a new tomb.”

- **Troparion of Holy Saturday**

The Orthodox faithful care for the bodies of the departed in the expectation of the resurrection, as the noble Joseph and the myrrhbearing women sought to care for the Body of the Lord.

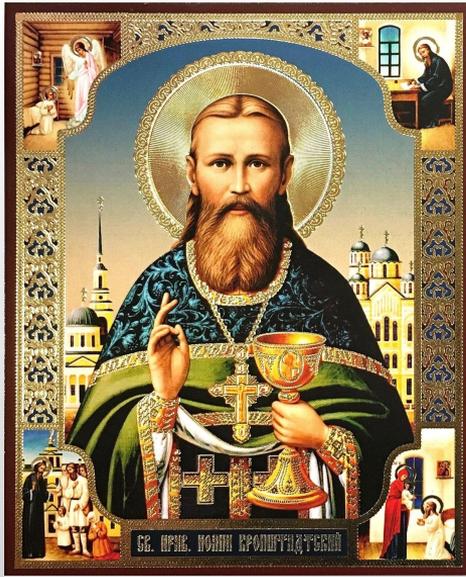
Orthodox practice burial and never cremation.

If one is cremated, the funeral service will not be served.

The only possible exception is in some areas of the world where burial is forbidden by law.

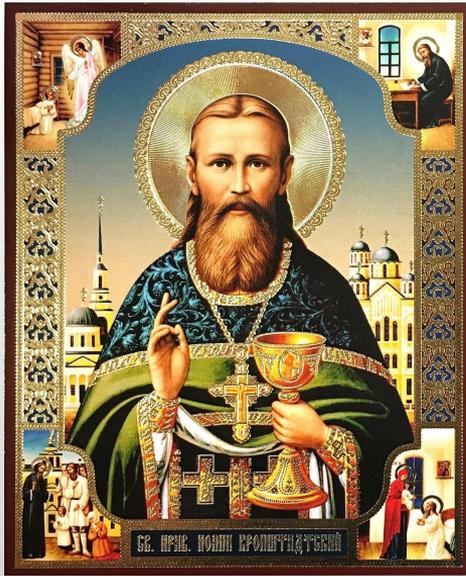
Orthodox care for the graves of the departed, often with flowers and lamps and with prayers, animated by joy in the Lord’s Resurrection.





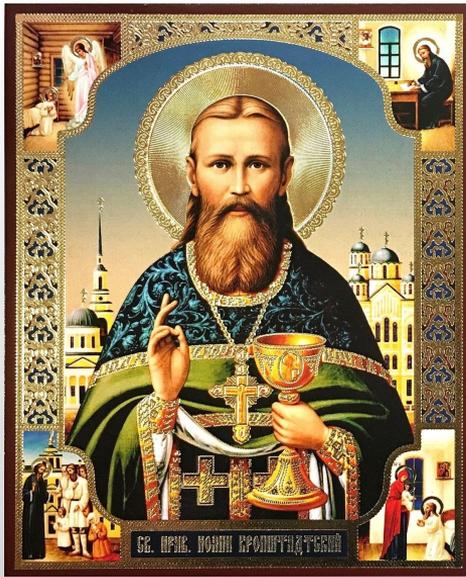
“**Nothing in the world is more important than the salvation of human souls**, and there is no subject more worthy of unceasing and perpetual remembrance than the redemption of the world by the Son of God from sin, the curse and eternal death. The Holy Church has engraved in her Divine services, by means of eternally indelible letters, by images and rites, the whole ordering of our salvation, in order that men — so inclined to forget God, and the salvation of their souls, and all that God has done for their salvation, eternal joy and bliss — should constantly have, so to say, before their eyes, and as though within their reach, all God's great, most wise and good deeds concerning them, and that they may continually be **urged to repentance, amendment, and salvation**, and shun the vanities of this corrupt and fleeting world. ‘The world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.’”

- **St. John of Kronstadt**



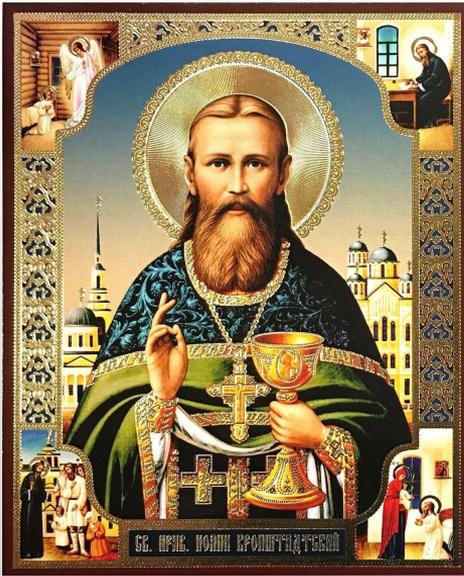
“All present things are but a shadow of the future. The present light is a shadow of the future ineffable light. Earthly bliss is a faint shadow of future unspeakable, eternal bliss; fire a faint shadow of the fire of Gehenna, which will burn sinners unto ages of ages; pure earthly joy a shadow of unspeakable future joys; the magnificent royal palaces a faint shadow of the resplendent mansions of Paradise prepared for those who love God and fulfil His commandments. The glorious attire of the sons and daughters of men cannot be compared with that glorious garment with which the elect shall be clothed, for they will put on Christ. ‘Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the Kingdom of the Father,’ according to the Saviour's sure promise.”

- St. John of Kronstadt



“When you pray for the repose of the soul of the departed, force yourself to pray with your whole heart, remembering that to do so is your essential duty, and not only that of a priest or ecclesiastic. Represent to yourself how necessary repose is to the departed one, and how greatly he (or she) needs the prayers for him (or her) of the living, being a member of the one body of the Church; **how the demons are contesting his (or her) soul from the angels,** and how it trembles, not knowing what its eternal destiny will be. **Our prayer of faith and love for the departed means much in the Lord's sight.** Represent to yourself, further, how necessary rest is for you when you are bound by the fetters of sin, and how fervently, with what sincerity, ardour, and power you then pray to the Lord and to the Most-pure Mother of the Lord, and how you rejoice and triumph when, after your fervent prayer, you obtain the remission of your sins and peace of heart. Apply all this to the soul of the departed. **His (or her) soul also needs prayer — your prayer now** — because it cannot pray fruitfully any longer itself; the soul of the departed also requires the rest which you can implore for it by means of your ardent prayer, joined to works of charity for the benefit of that soul, and especially by the offering of the bloodless sacrifice on its behalf.”

- **St. John of Kronstadt**



“That our **union with God in the future world** will come to pass, and that it will be for us the source of **light, peace, joy, and beatitude**, this **we partly recognise by experience even in the present life**. During prayer, when our soul is wholly turned towards God, and is united to Him, we feel happy, calm, easy, and joyful, like children resting on their mother's breast; or, I would rather say, we experience a **sensation of inexpressible well-being**. ‘It is good for us to be here.’”

- **St. John of Kronstadt**

Those who know the Lord and love Him in this life will know Him and love Him in the life to come (ref. St. Symeon the New Theologian).



“In that we have beheld the Resurrection of Christ, let worship the holy Lord Jesus, the only sinless one. They cross we adore O Christ, and thy Holy Resurrection we praise and glorify. For thou art our God, we know none other beside thee. O come, all ye people, let us adore Christ’s Holy Resurrection, for lo, through the cross is joy come into all the world. Ever blessing the Lord, let us sing His Resurrection, for in that He endured the cross for us, He has destroyed death by death.

Shine, shine, O New Jerusalem. Dance now and be glad, O Sion, and delight thou O pure Theotokos, in the Resurrection of thy Son.

How divine, how beloved, how sweet is Thy voice, O Christ, for Thou hast verily promised to be with us to the end of the age. Having this as our anchor of hope, we the faithful do rejoice.

O Christ, great and most holy Pascha, O Wisdom, Word, and Power of God, grant that we may more perfectly partake of Thee in the never-ending day of Thy Kingdom.”

- **Paschal Canon**

Questions / Discussion