

## ***Bishop David Con't***

due to the loss of a loved one.

Our experience of death is rooted in what I would call "The Adam Factor." If we look at the beginning of creation, how God created the universe and everything in it, at each step of the formation of each part, He saw that it was good [Genesis 1:10,12,18, 21, 25, and 31, where He says, "it was *very* good"]. It was only when Adam and Eve disobeyed God that their life changed the course of humanity forever.

In Genesis 2, God sees that Adam and Eve now have knowledge of good and evil. He knows they will not be able to balance their life well with this knowledge and so He had to banish them from Paradise. The Church Fathers use this act to say that by allowing man to taste of death, he ceases to commit sin. It is an act of love and mercy as much as it seems to us as a punishment.

And what was their first experience with death? God had to kill animals to make skins to cover their bodies. And the second experience of death was even worse, as they saw the loss of one of their children at the hands of the other, when Cain murdered Abel. And the world has descended into one tragic deed after another ever since.

Thus, the Mystery of God contained in our understanding here is found in two important facts. It is in our inability to grasp the true purpose of death and our lack of comprehension of time and eternity. Saint Paul reminds us that we lack the ability to fully comprehend this mystery when he says in Corinthians, "What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the human heart conceived, what God has prepared for those who love Him..." [I Corinthians 2:9]. This is to say that the source of our struggle with Mystery is our own limited understanding, not God's commands or directives. Said another way, how can we expect a reasonable response to an unreasonable act? If God did not intend for us to die, if God created us to be in Communion with Him, if God gave us a way to avoid death in the first place and we did not heed it, if He then sent His only-begotten Son to die for us and give us a path to life, it seems to me He has done all He can for us in our current state. And He did all of this because He loves us despite our disobedience and our human frailties.

Thus we come to perhaps the most beautiful statement by an Apostle concerning our topic. Saint Paul wrote the Romans, "for I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be to separate us from the love

of God in Christ Jesus our Lord" [Romans 8:38-39]. You see, with the relationship we now have with God thanks to His Son, *there is nothing* that can separate us from His love, and therefore nothing that can take away the love we have for our loved ones who are temporarily separated from us. Yes, our time now is temporary, painful but temporary, for the day comes when we can never, ever be separated from them again.

In conclusion, when I lost my Matushka to cancer ten years ago, I had the following verse inscribed on our tombstone from the Book of Revelation: "And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away" [Revelation 21:4]. This world and all its suffering shall pass away and all life shall be renewed. This is the hope I keep for my future. I hope you can keep it for yourself as well.

May God comfort us and ease our pain and suffering through His love and mercy.

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## **Greatmartyr and Healer Panteleimon Commemorated on [July 27](#)**

The Great Martyr and Healer Panteleimon was born in the city of Nicomedia into the family of the illustrious pagan Eustorgius, and he was named Pantoleon. His mother Saint Euboula (March 30) was a Christian. She wanted to raise her son in the Christian Faith, but she died when the future martyr was just a young child. His father sent Pantoleon to a pagan school, after which the young man studied medicine at Nicomedia under the renowned physician Euphrosynus. Pantoleon came to the attention of the emperor Maximian (284-305), who wished to appoint him as royal physician when he finished his schooling.

The hieromartyrs Hermolaus, Hermippus and Hermocrates, survivors of the massacre of 20,000 Christians in 303 (December 28), were living secretly in Nicomedia at that time. Saint Hermolaus saw Pantoleon time and again when he came to the house where they were hiding. Once, the priest invited the youth to the house and spoke about the Christian Faith. After this Pantoleon visited Saint Hermolaus every day.

One day the saint found a dead child on the street. He had been bitten by a great snake, which was still beside the child's body. Pantoleon began to pray to the Lord Jesus Christ to revive the dead child and to destroy the venomous reptile. He firmly resolved that if his prayer were fulfilled, he would become a follower of Christ and receive Baptism. The child rose up alive, and the snake died before Pantoleon's eyes. ***Con't Page 8***

## *St Panteleimon Con't*

After this miracle, Pantoleon was baptized by Saint Hermolaus with the name Panteleimon (meaning "all-merciful"). Speaking with Eustorgius, Saint Panteleimon prepared him to accept Christianity. When the father saw how his son healed a blind man by invoking Jesus Christ, he then believed in Christ and was baptized by Saint Hermolaus together with the man whose sight was restored.

After the death of his father, Saint Panteleimon dedicated his life to the suffering, the sick, the unfortunate and the needy. He treated all those who turned to him without charge, healing them in the name of Jesus Christ. He visited those held captive in prison. These were usually Christians, and he healed them of their wounds. In a short time, reports of the charitable physician spread throughout the city. Forsaking the other doctors, the inhabitants began to turn only to Saint Panteleimon.

The envious doctors told the emperor that Saint Panteleimon was healing Christian prisoners. Maximian urged the saint to refute the charge by offering sacrifice to idols. Saint Panteleimon confessed himself a Christian, and suggested that a sick person, for whom the doctors held out no hope, should be brought before the emperor. Then the doctors could invoke their gods, and Panteleimon would pray to his God to heal the man. A man paralyzed for many years was brought in, and pagan priests who knew the art of medicine invoked their gods without success. Then, before the very eyes of the emperor, the saint healed the paralytic by calling on the name of Jesus Christ. The ferocious Maximian executed the healed man, and gave Saint Panteleimon over to fierce torture.

The Lord appeared to the saint and strengthened him before his sufferings. They suspended the Great Martyr Panteleimon from a tree and scraped him with iron hooks, burned him with fire and then stretched him on the rack, threw him into a cauldron of boiling tar, and cast him into the sea with a stone around his neck. Throughout these tortures the martyr remained unhurt, and denounced the emperor.

At this time the priests Hermolaus, Hermippus and Hermocrates were brought before the court of the pagans. All three confessed their faith in the Savior and were beheaded (July 26).

By order of the emperor they brought the Great Martyr Panteleimon to the circus to be devoured by wild beasts. The animals, however, came up to him and licked his feet. The spectators began to shout, "Great is the God of the Christians!" The enraged Maximian ordered the

soldiers to stab with the sword anyone who glorified Christ, and to cut off the head of the Great Martyr Panteleimon.

They led the saint to the place of execution and tied him to an olive tree. While the martyr prayed, one of the soldiers struck him with a sword, but the sword became soft like wax and inflicted no wound. The saint completed his prayer, and a Voice was heard from Heaven, calling the passion-bearer by his new name and summoning him to the heavenly Kingdom.

Hearing the Voice, the soldiers fell down on their knees before the holy martyr and begged forgiveness. They refused to continue with the execution, but Saint Panteleimon told them to fulfill the emperor's command, because otherwise they would have no share with him in the future life. The soldiers tearfully took their leave of the saint with a kiss.

When the saint was beheaded, the olive tree to which the saint was tied became covered with fruit. Many who were present at the execution believed in Christ. The saint's body was thrown into a fire, but remained unharmed, and was buried by Christians. Saint Panteleimon's servants Laurence, Bassos and Probus witnessed his execution and heard the Voice from Heaven. They recorded the life, the sufferings and death of the saint.

Portions of the holy relics of the Great Martyr Panteleimon were distributed throughout all the Christian world. His venerable head is now located at the Russian monastery of Saint Panteleimon on Mt. Athos.

The veneration of the holy martyr in the Russian Orthodox Church was already known in the twelfth century. Prince Izyaslav (in Baptism, Panteleimon), the son of Saint Mstislav the Great, had an image of Saint Panteleimon on his helmet. Through the intercession of the saint he remained alive during a battle in the year 1151. On the Feast of the Great Martyr Panteleimon, Russian forces won two naval victories over the Swedes (in 1714 near Hanhauze and in 1720 near Grenham).

Saint Panteleimon is venerated in the Orthodox Church as a mighty saint, and the protector of soldiers. This aspect of his veneration is derived from his first name Pantoleon, which means "a lion in everything". His second name, Panteleimon, given him at Baptism, which means "all-merciful", is manifest in the veneration of the martyr as a healer. The connection between these two aspects of the saint is readily apparent in that soldiers, receiving wounds more frequently than others, are more in need of a physician-healer. Christians waging spiritual warfare also have recourse to this saint, asking him to heal their spiritual wounds.

The holy Great Martyr and Healer Panteleimon is invoked in the Mystery of Anointing the Sick, at the Blessing of Water, and in the Prayers for the Sick.