

SOBORNOST

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American Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Diocese

*ECUMENICAL PATRIARCHATE
OF CONSTANTINOPLE*

SERVICES

Wednesday: Lay Vespers 6:30 PM

Saturday: Confession 4:30 PM

Great Vespers 5:00 PM

Sunday: Matins (Orthros) 8:45 AM

Sunday School 9:30 AM

Divine Liturgy 10:00 AM

January 7, 2024 – Afterfeast of Theophany | Sunday

After Theophany | Synaxis of John the Baptist

How shall this tongue of mine now praise you, O Preacher, whom Christ's tongue called greater than all the earth-born? The famous Forerunner's memorial is the lot of the seventh.

One day after Theophany, namely on this day, we have received from on high and from the beginning to celebrate the Synaxis and Feast of the Honorable Forerunner and Baptist John, because he served the Mystery of Baptism to the Lord. For this reason this feast is numbered among the other feasts of the Forerunner. May we never be silent concerning his wonders and supernatural graces.

It followed that there arrived in Constantinople on the evening after Theophany, the honorable hand of the Forerunner by translation. It took place in the following manner. In the city of Sebaste, it is said that the sacred and honorable body of the Forerunner was buried, and the Evangelist Luke went there, taking the right hand of that prophetic body, where he took it to his homeland in Antioch. Numerous miracles took place there, among which is the following. At the city limits of Antioch, there lurked a dragon, which was divinized by the Greeks who inhabited Antioch, and they honored it every year with a sacrifice. The worst thing was that



they offered a person as a sacrifice. As time passed, the lot fell upon a Christian to offer his daughter to the dragon. This dragon would come out of its nest, which was a fearsome and extraordinary sight, and it would open its mouth and swallow the person offered. In this way they would be ripped apart in its teeth.

For this reason the father of this daughter fervently pleaded with weeping and tears to God and the Honorable Forerunner, to liberate his homeland of this bitter corrupter. Pleading thus, he was given the wisdom to undertake the following. He asked to venerate the holy hand of the Forerunner. And as he went to kiss it, he secretly bit off the thumb with his teeth. Having achieved what he desired, he left the church. When the day for his daughter to be sacrificed came, and the entire crowd of people were present, the father approached the dragon, holding his daughter. When he saw the dragon open its mouth to swallow his daughter, he threw down its throat the sacred thumb of the Forerunner. And - O the wonder! - immediately the dragon was killed. When this happened, the father took his daughter alive, and returned rejoicing to his home, where he told of this strange event. When the crowd of people saw this wonder, they were astounded. Wherefore they greatly thanked God and the Honorable Forerunner, and they built a great Temple in his name.

The following is also said about this holy hand. On the day of the Elevation of the Honorable Cross, which is the fourteenth of September, the honorable hand of the Baptist was also elevated, and the fingers would either extend or gather in. When they gathered in it showed future fruitless ill-fortune. For this reason many kings loved and desired much to acquire this sacred treasure, especially Constantine and Romanos Porphyrogenetos. Constantine reigned from 913 to 959 and Romanos from 920 to 944. During their reign, a Deacon of the city of Antioch, who was called Job, brought this honorable hand to Constantinople, on the evening of Theophany, which according to tradition the Christians were sanctified on the eve of Theophany. Wherefore the Christ-loving emperor (Constantine, that is) embraced it with much longing, and he kept it as a treasure in his palace. His Synaxis is celebrated in the Sphorakion. Now the right hand of the Honorable Forerunner is in the Monastery of Saint Dionysios, which is on the Holy Mountain, where the name of the Honorable Forerunner is honored. *(from johnsanidopoulos.com)*

Today's Epistle Lesson – St. Paul's Letter to the Ephesians 4:7-13 EOB

Brethren, grace has been granted to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift. Therefore, God says, "When he ascended on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts to men." Now, what does "he ascended" mean, if not that he first descended into the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is the

[same] one who also ascended far above all the heavens, so that he might fill all things. He gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some shepherds and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for a work of ministry, to build up the body of Christ. This is until we all attain to the unity of the faith and to the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, having reached the very fullness of Christ.

Today's Gospel Lesson – Saint Matthew 4:12-17 EOB

At that time, when Jesus heard that John had been arrested, he withdrew into Galilee. Leaving Nazareth, he came and lived in Capernaum, which is by the sea, in the region of Zebulun and Naphtali, so that what had been spoken through Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled: 'The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, toward the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles, the people who sat in darkness saw a great light, to those who sat in the region and shadow of death to them light has dawned.' From that time on, Jesus began to preach and to say, "Repent! For the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand."

A Word From the Holy Fathers

Many, excellent and great are the epithets and titles of the Honorable Forerunner, which he is called in the Gospels and by Christ Himself.

That which he is first called is "**Son.**" *Do not be afraid, Zechariah; your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to call him John. (Lk. 1:13) When it was time for Elizabeth to have her baby, she gave birth to a son. (Lk. 1:57)*

The next is "**Baby.**" *When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. In a loud voice she exclaimed: "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear! But why am I so favored, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. (Lk. 1:41-44)*

Another name is "**Child.**" *And you, my child, will be called a prophet of the Most High. (Lk. 1:76) And the child grew and became strong in spirit; and he lived in the wilderness until he appeared publicly to Israel. (Lk. 1:80)*

He was even called "**Great.**" *He will be a joy and delight to you, and many will rejoice because of his birth, for he will be great in the sight of the Lord. (Lk. 1:14-15)*

And "**John.**" *On the eighth day they came to circumcise the child, and they were going to name him after his father Zechariah, but his mother spoke up and said, "No! He is to be called John." They said to her, "There is no one among your relatives who has that name." Then they made signs to his father, to find out what he would like to name the child. He asked for a writing tablet, and to everyone's astonishment he wrote, "His name is John."* (Lk. 1:59-63)

And of course, "**Prophet.**" *What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. For all the Prophets and the Law prophesied until John.* (Matt. 11:7,9,13)

The Lord called him "**Elijah.**" *And if you are willing to accept it, he is the Elijah who was to come.* (Matt. 11:14) *And he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah.* (Lk. 1:17)

Many called him "**Teacher.**" *Even tax collectors came to be baptized. "Teacher," they asked, "what should we do?"* (Lk. 3:12)

They even called him "**Prodromos.**" [*Prodromos is often translated as Forerunner or Precursor, but the literal translation is closer to "he who prepares the way." - Ed.*] *And you, my child, will be called a prophet of the Most High; for you will go on before the Lord to prepare the way for him.* (Lk. 1:76)

And he was called a "**Preacher.**" *And so John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. And this was the message he preached: "After me comes the one more powerful than I."* (Lk. 1:4,7)

He described himself as a "**Voice.**" He was asked by men sent from the Pharisees: *"Who are you? Give us an answer to take back to those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?" John replied in the words of Isaiah the prophet, "I am the voice of one calling in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way for the Lord.'"* (Jn. 1:22-23)

He is and was called a "**Baptist.**" *Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John.* (Matt. 3:13) *And so John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.* (Mk. 1:4)

Undoubtedly he is a "**Martyr.**" *He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all might believe. He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light.* [*The Greek word for Martyr is martyra, which is translated as "witness." - Ed.*] (Jn. 1:7,8) His testimony was sealed with the martyrdom of blood, when his honorable head was cut off, because he preached the truth, and rebuked all lawlessness.

He was also called "**Righteous**" and "**Holy**." *Herod feared John and protected him, knowing him to be a righteous and holy man.* (Mk. 6:20)

He called himself an "**Apostle**." *"You yourselves can testify that I said, 'I am not the Messiah but am sent ahead of him.'"* [The Greek word for Apostle is *apostolos*, which is translated as "one who is sent." - Ed.] (Jn. 3:28)

Another excellent name of his is "**Evangelist**." *And with many other words John exhorted the people and proclaimed the good news to them.* [The Greek word for Evangelist is *evangelistis*, which is translated as "one who proclaims the good news." - Ed.] (Lk. 3:18)

He is even called a "**Nymphagogos**," [A *Nymphagogos* is a Conductor or Attendant of the Bride or Bridegroom, whose job it was to lead and attend to the bride or bridegroom to their spouse and to their house. - Ed.] who leads souls to the Bridegroom Christ, as he once said: *"The bride belongs to the bridegroom. The friend who attends the bridegroom waits and listens for him, and is full of joy when he hears the bridegroom's voice. That joy is mine, and it is now complete. He must increase; I must decrease."* (Jn. 3:29-30)

He is also called a "**Lamp**." *John was a lamp that burned and gave light, and you chose for a time to enjoy his light.* (Jn. 5:35)

He also had the title of "**Rebuker of Herod**." *For John had been saying to Herod, "It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife."* (Mk. 6:18) *But when John rebuked Herod the tetrarch because of his marriage to Herodias, his brother's wife, and all the other evil things he had done.* (Lk. 3:19)

John received such great and important names. He is honored by these because his works were in accordance with his titles. Thus John was "*greater than among those born of women.*" (Matt. 6:11). This is the one for whom the prophet David really chants, as if borrowing the mouth of God and Father and says: "I have prepared a lamp for my Christ. On him, the Grace of the Holy Spirit will be revealed and will shine, who will anoint him Messiah and king" (Ps. 131:17-18).

This is that great Elijah, not the Tishbite, but the one who stood between the Law and Grace and became the forerunner of the first coming of Christ, although historically, he lived after Elijah the Tishbite, the one who had the same inspiration as him and strength, as the archangel told his father Zechariah (Luke 1:17).

And to which Zechariah did the angel say these things? To the Zechariah whose blood cries out louder than the blood of righteous Abel (Matthew 23:35).

He is the one who leaped in his mother's womb, before he even saw the light of day, because he was informed of the presence of his Master in the womb. He used

the language of his mother and, while he was still in her womb, announced the birth of the Son and Word of God from the Theotokos Mary, saying: "But why is this granted to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?" (Luke 1:43).

He is the one who, with the preaching of repentance, will soften the hearts of the parents and bring them back to their children and "will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord" (Luke 1:17).

This was the fruit of a divine promise, the joyful message of Gabriel, the tender branch given by God, to the tree withered by age. The fertile flower of barrenness. The prophet who is the son of a prophet. The resident of the desert. The one who prepared and prepares the people of the whole world for the spiritual battles and for the welcoming of the Lord. The bright moon of the Sun, which shines forever. The lamp of the divine Light. The soldier of the eternal king. The Nymphagogos of the Bridegroom. The servant of the Master. The voice of the Word, who was a priest forever like Melchizedek, as without a father, without a mother and without a genealogy. The priest who was found worthy to officiate even the Baptism of God Himself. He who heard God the Father speak with his own ears. He who baptized the Son and He who saw the Holy Spirit.

He who was the end of the law. He who mediated between the Grace of God and men. He who was the greatest of all the prophets and in whose person all prophetic ministry is exhausted. The herald of the kingdom of heaven. The forerunner of Christ, who is Himself the truth. The door through which we enter the place of repentance. He who was the jewel and the splendor of the virgins. He who prepared our salvation. The one who legislated temperance and became a bridle to the lawless and wicked and even the one who guided those who respected the divine law.

This is the great John. The name that came out of the mouth of God and was conveyed from the heavens to Zechariah with the archangel's voice. This is the voice that was born from the deaf and mute father. He who, with his father's silence, abolished his mother's barrenness. He revealed the "Lamb of God" with his finger, giving it greater power than even the best orator. He who in his person has the right to boast about self-control. The one who lived his earthly life as an incorporeal one, who was found like a precious pearl in the mud. He who, like a precious treasure, was found in a fragile and cheap treasury. The one who threatened the unfruitful souls with the axe of Divine justice, the desert-loving turtledove of the Church, the unstoppable mouth, the voice of the one who cries in the wilderness and resounds thunderingly to the ends of the world, saying "prepare

the way of the Lord, make straight the way" on which the Lord will pass into the souls of men (Matthew 3:3; John 1:23).

This is the tongue that with its divine words and its pure voice, even after his death, rebukes Herod and preaches Christ, saying: "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt. 3:2).

To God belong the glory and the majesty forever and ever. Amen.

– St. Andrew of Crete, *Homily on the Beheading of the Honorable Forerunner*

The Mystery of Baptism

Metropolitan Hierotheos of Nafpaktos and Agiou Vlasiou

A necessary condition for becoming a Christian, my beloved brethren, is the mystery of Baptism, which is called by the Holy Fathers an "introductory mystery", because through it we enter the ecclesiastical life and become members of the Body of Christ and at the same time members of the Church.

Holy Baptism is also called "birth", because through it we are spiritually reborn. Man is born twice, once biologically from his mother and the other spiritually from his spiritual mother who is the Church. In both cases there is a womb; in the first it is the womb of the mother, in the second case it is the spiritual womb, which is the sacred Font. There is a third birth that comes from repentance and from the spiritual struggle that takes place with the Grace of God and our conscious and free response to it.

With Holy Baptism we acquire a spiritual family, which differs from our carnal family. The carnal family has restrictions on blood, race, homeland, while the spiritual family does not have such racial restrictions, since members of the Church are those who are Orthodox throughout the earth, regardless of age, gender, race, ethnicity. But also members are the saints who have left this world and live in Heaven.

However, we must emphasize that Baptism, as we see in the ancient tradition, is preceded by catechism. And when we say catechism we do not mean only the offering of the teaching of the faith orally, but also the purification from the passions. That is, in the ancient Church there was the catechism class, in which were those who wanted to be baptized and who learned how to purify the heart from passions and to obtain, by the Grace of God, the illumination of the nous. When a person reached such a spiritual state, they accepted Holy Baptism and became a true member of the Church. But when they sinned with Baptism, then they fell back into the ranks of the penitents. Over time infant baptism was introduced, because the Church was confident that Christian families would help their children grow up Christian. Thus they were granted the gift of Holy Baptism

as a spiritual vaccine, so that they could face the attacks of the enemy with victory by the Grace and energy of God.

During the catechumen ceremony that precedes Baptism there are three acts, which show the great value of the mystery of Baptism. The first is the renunciation of Satan with all his worship, the second is the acceptance of Christ and the third is the worship of Christ.

With Holy Baptism we are born into a new life, we gain the opportunity to grow spiritually, the image of God within us is purified and we have the opportunity to reach likeness with God. With the Grace of Baptism we can pray and call God "Father" and other people our brethren, we can face the machinations of the devil, we have the ability to commune of the Immaculate Mysteries and, of course, depending on our spiritual condition, we can fulfill our purpose for being created.

Let us praise God for the great gift that we are baptized Orthodox Christians.
(from johnsanidopoulos.com)

Saint Joseph the New of Cappadocia

St. Joseph was born between 1820 and 1830. He hailed from Kermir, in Cappadocia (near Caesarea), and his name was Joseph Kioseirkoglou. Tall, slender, pale, very handsome, and of Angelic countenance, he would wear a long garment like a rason and a small vest when censing. The holy Joseph was a peddler and a pilgrim—a great man of prayer who sowed the word of God wherever he went.

On one of his journeys, he suddenly reposed around the age of thirty. After his burial, the Turks set a guard so that the Christians would not steal his Relics, since a light frequently appeared above his grave.

The relatives of the blessed Joseph instinctively knew that he was a Saint. For this reason, some time later, they decided to take possession of the Holy Relics of the sanctified peddler, in order to honor them and keep them as a blessing. The removal and transferal of these Relics took place in a miraculous way one night: They carefully dug as the guard slept, whereupon, with a light snap, the sacred bones all joined together of their own accord, so that the Saint's relatives were easily able to gather them up with two shovels and depart. Though pursued by the guard, who had awoken and understood what had happened, the Grace of the Saint helped them to escape unharmed with the invaluable treasure.

Having returned to Caesarea, his hungry and beleaguered relatives went to sleep somewhere on the road, saying: "If you are a Saint, show us a sign!" Suddenly, his five relatives were awakened by a slap on their faces... and there before them

lay five fresh loaves of bread! The family of St. Joseph divided his Holy Relics among themselves, honoring them and glorifying God for this great blessing.

Apparitions and miracles

One of the Saint's relatives, who kept this priceless treasure at her house, frequently witnessed miraculous events. When she would return home after working outdoors, she would try to open the door to enter, but was not, strangely enough, able to do so. She would then hear the sound of a censer inside, just like at the Divine Liturgy! Finally, when she would enter, the room where she kept the Holy Relics was filled with a Divine fragrance!

The Saint would distinctly appear both to this relative and to other devout visitors. Once, as soon as this relative entered her house, she found herself before a young man, who said to her: "Do not be afraid! I am the Patron Saint of your house! I have come to tell you that such and such a neighbor vowed to bring me a container of oil, but did not bring it." And the youth immediately vanished. She told her neighbor what had taken place, and the latter, staggered, confessed that she had indeed made such a vow. Apart from his apparitions, the Saint also healed the infirmities of many faithful who came to the house and venerated his Holy Relics with faith.

After the death of this relative, the precious treasure was inherited by her daughter, whose sister-in-law once removed one of the Saint's fingers. Her hands immediately broke out in pimples, but the doctors were unable to do anything to help her. The sacrilegious sufferer then saw the Saint in a dream telling her to return his finger. As soon as she had returned it, she became completely well.

It is also noteworthy that, during a great epidemic that struck Cappadocia, many people, including Turks, were healed using water blessed by the Saint's sacred Relics.

Constantinople to Athens

After the catastrophe in Asia Minor, in 1922, St. Joseph's relative moved to Constantinople, where she continued to preserve and honor the priceless treasure, which her pious daughter inherited after her death.

Once, her house's Iconostasis caught fire and all of the Icons were burned. Though the fire advanced menacingly, as soon as it reached the wooden box containing the sacred Relics, it suddenly went out on its own!

Another time, when burglars broke into the house, turning everything upside down to find valuable objects, strangely enough, they did not see the gold jewelry laid out on the table! This was attributed to the protection of St. Joseph.

This protection was vividly evident again in 1978, when the relative decided to leave Constantinople and move to Athens. Greeks were strictly prohibited from bringing bones of the reposed into Greece. The Saint's relative, however, could in no way separate herself from the invaluable family treasure. She then ardently prayed to St. Joseph, and the miracle happened: At the Turkish and Greek custom-houses, though the officers examined all of the luggage, they miraculously did not open, or even touch, the bag with the Relics!

On December 1, 1981, this relative reposed in the Lord and her pious niece, Nike Chatzatoglou, decided to offer the priceless treasure to the Holy Monastery of Sts. Cyprian and Justina, Phyle, Attica. The Monastery had the especial blessing of receiving the Grace-filled Relics of the newly-revealed St. Joseph of Cappadocia on the Sunday after Theophany in the year of Salvation 1982 (January 11/24).\

Troparion in the Fourth Tone

Having been well-pleasing to Christ through your virtuous life, when you completed your course you became a companion of the Saints in the Heavens; wherefore, as you enjoy the glory on high, O Joseph, intercede with the Master of all, we implore you, that He grant us forgiveness of sins.

Kontakion in the Second Tone

As you passed your life in a God-pleasing manner, you participate in the splendor of the Saints; with them, O Joseph, entreat that those who celebrate your memory with love may be delivered from all corruption and necessity. (*from johnsanidopoulos.com*)

St. Kentigerna of Scotland

Celtic saints lived all over Wales, Cornwall, Ireland, Scotland, Brittany and on hundreds of large and tiny coastal islands. Remains of their monasteries, beehive-cells, hermitage huts, chapels, tombs, crosses and holy wells are scattered everywhere in these "Celtic regions". These western lands indeed produced thousands of saints, who lived mostly from the fourth to the eighth centuries.

Unfortunately, the early lives of nearly all of them were either lost or else rewritten by Roman Catholics in late medieval times with many Catholic additions and thus their modern versions are not very reliable. But nevertheless we still know the basic information on most of these saints, at least when and where they lived, which churches and monasteries they established, with what other saints they communicated, which places they visited.

As was the case with Egyptian monks like St. Anthony the Great and St. Macarius the Great, or monks of the Kiev Caves Monastery and Optina, Celtic saints were very closely connected with each other. The monasteries they founded were

interconnected as well and this continued on to following generations. Amazingly, Celtic holiness is unique for its “families of saints”, which were sometimes very large and included representatives of several generations. There was the spiritual relation between saints (spiritual fathers and mothers, their disciples, disciples of their disciples and so on); but besides this, there were many saints who were relatives by blood: holy parents and children and grandchildren, holy brothers and sisters, cousins, uncles, aunts, nephews and nieces. And by their holy life and prayers they hallowed the earth and the places where they lived, which can be felt even today when you visit them. We can only wonder at the piety and level of Christian life of that age. There are many examples of “family holiness” in Celtic lands. One of them is the example with the holy relatives Kentigerna, Fillan and Comgan.

Venerable Kentigerna of Inchebroida *Commemorated January 7*

The holy woman Kentigerna († 734) is often called “an island anchoress.” She was a daughter of Kelly, prince (or, more exactly, chieftain) of Leinster in Ireland. Widowed, she left her native Ireland together with her saintly brother, Comgan, and her children, among whom was St. Fillan, and moved to Scotland in order to preach the Gospel of Christ to pagan people and evangelize some parts of the country that were still not Christian. With time she settled at Strathfillan, and later on the island of Inchebroida in present-day West Dunbartonshire (western central Scotland) where she lived as an anchoress for many years.

The name “Inchebroida” means “the isle of the eldress.” Today this island is commonly known as Inchcailloch, situated on Loch Lomond. In memory of the holy anchoress a ruined ancient church dedicated to St. Kentigerna can be found there to this day. She may also have founded a tiny convent on this island. Many Scottish hermits—holy men and women—settled on small isles and islets, including those situated on lakes (known as lochs in Scotland). Traces and remains of their churches and hermitage cells have survived on the sites where they led a solitary life well over 1000 years ago, constantly and fervently praying despite the severe cold of the north and threatening waves.

Venerable Fillan of Strathfillan *Commemorated January 9 and August 26*

St. Fillan (Foelan) lived in the eighth century. He was born in Ireland; his mother was St. Kentigerna and his uncle was St. Comgan. From time immemorial he has been much venerated in both Ireland and Scotland. He may have been educated at Taghmon Monastery in Wexford (Ireland) under St. Fintan Munnu. Later, probably in about 717, he moved together with his mother and other relatives to Scotland. There he became a monk and lived the monastic life until the end of his life. It is known that for some time Fillan preached the Good News together with Sts. Kentigerna and Comgan and then retired to live as a hermit in a cave on the site of

the present-day village Pittenweem (“the cave’s place”) in the county of Fife. This village was to become one of the most important places for his veneration. With time Fillan was appointed abbot of a monastery in Fife but after several years he gave up his abbacy and retreated to Glendochart (in Perthshire) where he lived alone in prayer and contemplation and finally built a church. Today a number of places and churches in the vicinity of Glendochart bear the name of the saint.

During his life Fillan by his prayer healed from many diseases the sick who flocked to him. The hermit worked miracles. Once, when he was abbot, a wolf ate one of his oxen while the saint was working in the field. The abbot commanded the wolf as a penance to plough up that part of the field instead of the ox that it had eaten. The wild wolf obeyed the saint and immediately fulfilled the task. The veneration of St. Fillan in Scotland was so strong that in 1314 the Scottish king Robert Bruce took the reliquary with the saint’s arm with him to the Battle of Bannockburn and attributed his victory over the English to the saint's intercession.

Fillan reposed and was buried in Strathfillan, the centre of his veneration. He probably built a church or a monastery on this site and preached to the local Pictish population. The cave of St. Fillan in Pittenweem survives to this day. After his death the cave became a destination for many pilgrims, and a holy well with healing power existed near it for many years. In late medieval times a small Augustinian priory, associated with the monastery on the Isle of May (in the outer Firth of Forth), was founded in Pittenweem and named after St. Fillan. Several centuries ago Fillan’s cave was left derelict and forgotten for a certain time. In about 1900, a horse that pastured in a local priory garden suddenly fell into an overgrown hole. When the hole was cleared it turned out that it was the saint’s cell, abandoned long before. Several stones which had healing properties owing to Fillan’s prayers were discovered in the cave together with the partly surviving holy well. In 2000, both the cave and the well were consecrated and opened for visitors.

The personal bell and staff of St. Fillan survive to this day: they are kept at the National Museum of Scotland in Edinburgh. In the past this bell was usually placed above those who suffered from severe headache—and the pain abated! In Strathfillan many lunatics were miraculously healed in ancient times. D.H. Farmer and other researchers write that mentally ill people used to be dipped into the Strathfillan well and then left for one night, tied up in a corner of St. Fillan's ruined chapel. If the following morning they were found loosed from their chains, they were considered to be completely cured. This practice existed until the first half of the nineteenth century. Today Strathfillan is a picturesque strath (a Scottish word meaning a broad, often mountainous, valley) in west Perthshire with the river Fillan flowing through it.

In the picturesque village of Killin, situated near Stirling, there are so-called healing stones, associated with St. Fillan, and kept at a former mill. According to tradition, due to the prayers of St. Fillan each of these stones heals a specific part of the body from various diseases. Interestingly, it was James Stuart, a minister from Killin, who in 1767 prepared the first New Testament in Scottish Gaelic, and his son, John, prepared the first edition of the Old Testament in this ancient language several decades later.

In the village of St Fillans in Perth and Kinross in central Scotland there is an ancient pre-Norman chapel dedicated to St. Fillan. According to local tradition, St. Fillan for some time lived on a hill nearby. An Episcopalian church in the village of Kilmacolm in Inverclyde is also dedicated to him. The nineteenth century Catholic church in the village of Houston in Renfrewshire in west central Scotland bears his name. There is also an ancient ruined church of St. Fillan not far from it, in the parish of Houston and Killellan. Close to the village there are two holy wells, dedicated to St. Fillan and St. Peter, which still have curative power. There are several other partly surviving early churches dedicated to this saint, scattered in different parts of Scotland, mostly on islands, which so much attracted Celtic saints by their severe beauty. Outside Scotland, St. Fillan is venerated in the Irish counties of Westmeath and Laois.

Venerable Comgan of Lochalsh *Commemorated October 13*

According to tradition, St. Comgan (also known as Cowan) who lived in the eighth century was born in Ireland and was son of Kelly, prince of Leinster. He succeeded his father but was unjustly driven out of the country by representatives of small neighbouring kingdoms. So the saint went to Scotland with his sister Kentigerna and her three children, among whom was Fillan. There were seven companions with them. The missionaries landed in the Highlands in the north of Scotland. Soon Comgan settled at Lochalsh opposite the Isle of Skye (the largest island in the Inner Hebrides off the north-western coast of Scotland) where he founded a monastery and became its abbot. The saint, known as a great ascetic, lived here for many years; unfortunately, little is known about his other missionary activities. After the repose of St. Comgan, St. Fillan buried him on the famous monastic island of Iona and erected a church in his memory.

St. Comgan has been widely venerated in many parts of Scotland for many centuries. A number of settlements of Scotland bear the name of this saint, among them are Kilcongen, Kilchoan (in Highland, where there is a very ancient ruined church of St. Comgan in this westernmost Scottish village) and others. Several churches in this country are dedicated to him, and there are traces of his monastic

and missionary activities in such places as Islay, North Uist, Ardnamurchan and Turriff.

Venerable Kentigerna, Fillan and Comgan, pray to God for us! (*from orthochristian.com*)

Also Commemorated Today

Martyr Paphnutius (1938).

New Hieromartyr Basil, priest (1939).

Martyr John (1940).

Martyr John (1942).

New Martyr [Athanasius](#) of Attalia and Smyrna (1700) (Greek).

Saints [Julian and Julias](#) the Missionaries from Aegina (391)

St. [Pakhomios](#) of Keno Lake (1515)

Hieromartyr [Lucian](#) the Syrian, priest of Antioch (312) (date of repose; feast transferred to Oct 15)

St. [Brannock](#) (Brynach) of [Braunton](#) (6th c.) (Celtic & British).

St. [Cronan Beg](#), Bishop of Aendrum (7th c.)

St. [Gourzely](#) (Gwrddelw, Gwrddyly), son of Caw of Cawlwyd, founder of a church in Caerlleon (6th c.) (Brittany)

St. [Théau](#) (Tillo, Thillo, Thielman, Tilloine, Tillon, Tilman), apostle to Tournai (702) (Belgium)

[Aldericus](#) (Aldric, Audry), bishop of Le Mans (856) (Gaul)

St. [Anastasius](#), Archbishop of Sens (977) (Gaul)

St. [Crispin](#), bishop of Pavia (5th c.) (Italy)

St. [Emilian](#) (Aemilio), monk-hermit of Bordeaux (767) (Gaul)

St. [Reinold](#) (Rainald, Reynold), monk-martyr of Cologne (960) (Germany)

St. [Valentine](#), bishop of Rhaetia (Passau) (c. 470) (Austria)

St. [Wittikund](#) of Westphalia (804) (Germany)

St. [Cedde](#), [bishop](#) of the East Saxons (664) (trad. Feast day; reposed 26 Oct)

Social Team for January 14

Team 1 is up next week - Amelia Hanbury, Patty Blaydoe, Mickey Norfolk. Thank you!

Save the Date!

Even with the overturn of Roe v. Wade, the hard work of creating a pro-life culture has a long way to go. So, the annual March for Life in Washington, DC will continue to gather hundreds of thousands of people from all over the country to pray together and stand for life. As usual, parishioners from St. Thomas will meet

behind the Orthodox Christians for Life banner on the Mall on January 19. See <https://www.oclife.org/march> for further details.

Parish News

Fr. Joseph blessed holy water yesterday on the Feast of Theophany. If you'd like to take some home, bring a container to put it in. If you'd like your house blessed, please contact Pani Stacey to set up a date & time.

Follow Our Diocese On-Line

Diocesan Website: <http://www.acrod.org>

Camp Nazareth: <http://www.campnazareth.org>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/acroddiocese>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/acrodnews>

You Tube: <https://youtube.com/acroddiocese>

In Your Prayers – Please Remember... His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch BARTHOLOMEW, His Eminence Metropolitan GREGORY, Fr. Joseph & Family, His Grace Bishop Neofitos of Nyeri & Mt. Kenya, Bennett family, Tatyana & Slava Chumak & family, Luke & Marlena Cooper, Roberta Corson, Jon Church, Tina Crull, Mary Diane David, Marlene Doukas, Linda A. Georgiev, Sandi Hebel, Howl family, Helen P. Janowiak, John M. Janowiak, Andrew Kinn, Kopan family, Helen, Brian, Luke and Mia Mahony, Valentina Makowelski, Susan Matula, Anna Meinhold, David & Kathryn Newman, Bobby Nutter & family, Nicholas Pavlik, Weston Perry & family, John Reece, Mary Reed, Marge Rusnak, Rose Song, Fr. Nectarios & Ia, Mother Virginia Marie & the Carmelite Nuns of Port Tobacco, the suffering people of Ukraine, and those in need of our prayers. (Please advise Fr. Joseph of changes.)