

# SOBORNOST

## St. Thomas the Apostle Orthodox Church

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*American Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Diocese*

*ECUMENICAL PATRIARCHATE  
OF CONSTANTINOPLE*

## SERVICES

**Wed: Moleben to the Theotokos 6:00 AM**

**Friday: Moleben to the Cross 6:00 AM**

**Saturday: Confession 5:00 PM**

**Great Vespers 5:30 PM**

**Sunday: Matins (Orthros) 8:45 AM**

**Children's Sunday School 9:30 AM**

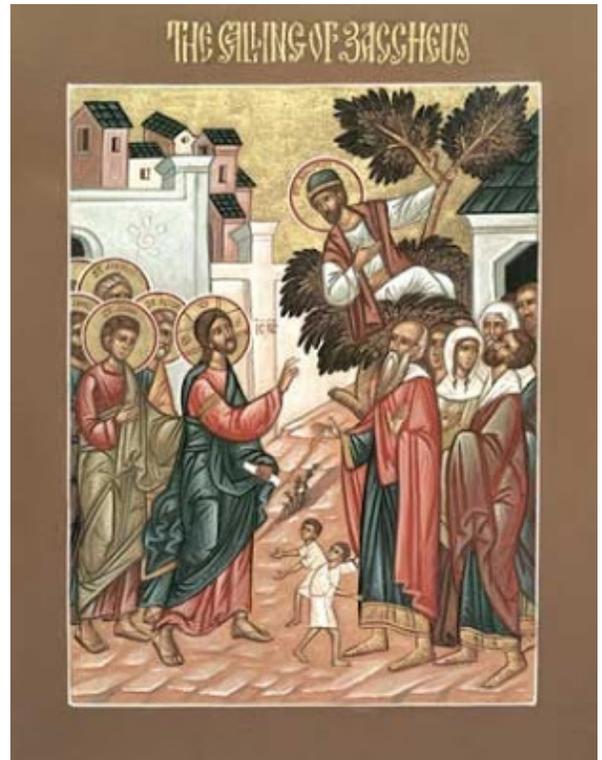
**Divine Liturgy 10:00 AM.**

## January 21, 2018 – Zacchaeus Sunday | St. Maximus the Confessor

*Zacchaeus Of Little Stature By St. Nikolai Velimirovich*

"Today, salvation has come to this house" (Luke 19:9). Thus it was spoken by the One Whose word is life and joy and restoration of the righteous. Just as the bleak forest clothes itself into greenery and flowers from the breath of spring, so does every man, regardless of how arid and darkened by sin, become fresh and youthful from the nearness of Christ. For the nearness of Christ is as the nearness of some life-giving and fragrant balsam which restores health, increases life, give fragrance to the soul, to the thoughts and to the words of man. In other words, distance from Christ means decay and death and His nearness means salvation and life.

"Today, salvation has come to this house" said the Lord upon entering the house of Zacchaeus the sinner. Christ was the salvation that came and Zacchaeus was the house into which He entered. Brethren, each one of us is a house in which sin dwells as long as Christ is distant and to which salvation comes when Christ approaches it. Nevertheless, will Christ approach my house and your house? That depends on us. Behold, He did not arbitrarily enter the house of the sinner



Zacchaeus, rather He entered as a most desired guest. Zacchaeus of little stature climbed into a tree in order to see the Lord Jesus with his own eyes. Zacchaeus, therefore, sought him; Zacchaeus desired Him. We must also seek Him in order to find Him and desire Him in order that He would draw nearer to us and, with our spirit, to climb high in order to encounter His glance. Then He will visit our house as He visited the house of Zacchaeus and with Him salvation will come.



Saint Maximus the Confessor was born in Constantinople around 580 and raised in a pious Christian family. He received an excellent education, studying philosophy, grammar, and rhetoric. He was well-read in the authors of antiquity and he also mastered philosophy and theology. When Saint Maximus entered into government service, he became first secretary (asekretis) and chief counselor to the emperor Heraclius (611-641), who was impressed by his knowledge and virtuous life.

Saint Maximus soon realized that the emperor and many others had been corrupted by the Monothelite heresy, which was spreading rapidly through the East. He resigned from his duties at court, and went to the Chrysopolis monastery (at Skutari on the opposite shore of the Bosphorus), where he received monastic tonsure. Because of his humility and wisdom, he soon won the love

of the brethren and was chosen igumen of the monastery after a few years. Even in this position, he remained a simple monk.

In 638, the emperor Heraclius and Patriarch Sergius tried to minimize the importance of differences in belief, and they issued an edict, the “Ekthesis” (“Ekthesis tes pisteos” or “Exposition of Faith”), which decreed that everyone must accept the teaching of one will in the two natures of the Savior. In defending Orthodoxy against the “Ekthesis,” Saint Maximus spoke to people in various occupations and positions, and these conversations were successful. Not only the clergy and the bishops, but also the people and the secular officials felt some sort of invisible attraction to him, as we read in his Life.

When Saint Maximus saw what turmoil this heresy caused in Constantinople and in the East, he decided to leave his monastery and seek refuge in the West, where Monothelitism had been completely rejected. On the way, he visited the bishops of

Africa, strengthening them in Orthodoxy, and encouraging them not to be deceived by the cunning arguments of the heretics.

The Fourth Ecumenical Council had condemned the Monophysite heresy, which falsely taught that in the Lord Jesus Christ there was only one nature (the divine). Influenced by this erroneous opinion, the Monothelite heretics said that in Christ there was only one divine will (“thelema”) and only one divine energy (“energia”). Adherents of Monothelitism sought to return by another path to the repudiated Monophysite heresy. Monothelitism found numerous adherents in Armenia, Syria, Egypt. The heresy, fanned also by nationalistic animosities, became a serious threat to Church unity in the East. The struggle of Orthodoxy with heresy was particularly difficult because in the year 630, three of the patriarchal thrones in the Orthodox East were occupied by Monothelites: Constantinople by Sergius, Antioch by Athanasius, and Alexandria by Cyrus.

Saint Maximus traveled from Alexandria to Crete, where he began his preaching activity. He clashed there with a bishop, who adhered to the heretical opinions of Severus and Nestorius. The saint spent six years in Alexandria and the surrounding area.

Patriarch Sergius died at the end of 638, and the emperor Heraclius also died in 641. The imperial throne was eventually occupied by his grandson Constans II (642-668), an open adherent of the Monothelite heresy. The assaults of the heretics against Orthodoxy intensified. Saint Maximus went to Carthage and he preached there for about five years. When the Monothelite Pyrrhus, the successor of Patriarch Sergius, arrived there after fleeing from Constantinople because of court intrigues, he and Saint Maximus spent many hours in debate. As a result, Pyrrhus publicly acknowledged his error, and was permitted to retain the title of “Patriarch.” He even wrote a book confessing the Orthodox Faith. Saint Maximus and Pyrrhus traveled to Rome to visit Pope Theodore, who received Pyrrhus as the Patriarch of Constantinople.

In the year 647 Saint Maximus returned to Africa. There, at a council of bishops Monothelet-ism was condemned as a heresy. In 648, a new edict was issued, commissioned by Constans and compiled by Patriarch Paul of Constantinople: the “Typos” (“Typos tes pisteos” or “Pattern of the Faith”), which forbade any further disputes about one will or two wills in the Lord Jesus Christ. Saint Maximus then asked Saint Martin the Confessor (April 14), the successor of Pope Theodore, to examine the question of Monothelitism at a Church Council. The Lateran Council was convened in October of 649. One hundred and fifty Western bishops and thirty-seven representatives from the Orthodox East were present, among them Saint Maximus the Confessor. The Council condemned Monothelitism, and the

Typos. The false teachings of Patriarchs Sergius, Paul and Pyrrhus of Constantinople, were also anathematized.

When Constans II received the decisions of the Council, he gave orders to arrest both Pope Martin and Saint Maximus. The emperor's order was fulfilled only in the year 654. Saint Maximus was accused of treason and locked up in prison. In 656 he was sent to Thrace, and was later brought back to a Constantinople prison.

The saint and two of his disciples were subjected to the cruelest torments. Each one's tongue was cut out, and his right hand was cut off. Then they were exiled to Skemarus in Scythia, enduring many sufferings and difficulties on the journey.

After three years, the Lord revealed to Saint Maximus the time of his death (August 13, 662). Three candles appeared over the grave of Saint Maximus and burned miraculously. This was a sign that Saint Maximus was a beacon of Orthodoxy during his lifetime, and continues to shine forth as an example of virtue for all. Many healings occurred at his tomb.

In the Greek Prologue, August 13 commemorates the Transfer of the Relics of Saint Maximus to Constantinople, but it could also be the date of the saint's death. It may be that his memory is celebrated on January 21 because August 13 is the Leavetaking of the Feast of the Transfiguration of the Lord.

Saint Maximus has left to the Church a great theological legacy. His exegetical works contain explanations of difficult passages of Holy Scripture, and include a Commentary on the Lord's Prayer and on Psalm 59, various "scholia" or "marginalia" (commentaries written in the margin of manuscripts), on treatises of the Hieromartyr Dionysius the Areopagite (October 3) and Saint Gregory the Theologian (January 25). Among the exegetical works of Saint Maximus are his explanation of divine services, entitled "Mystagogia" ("Introduction Concerning the Mystery").

The dogmatic works of Saint Maximus include the Exposition of his dispute with Pyrrhus, and several tracts and letters to various people. In them are contained explanations of the Orthodox teaching on the Divine Essence and the Persons of the Holy Trinity, on the Incarnation of the Word of God, and on "theosis" ("deification") of human nature.

"Nothing in theosis is the product of human nature," Saint Maximus writes in a letter to his friend Thalassius, "for nature cannot comprehend God. It is only the mercy of God that has the capacity to endow theosis unto the existing... In theosis man (the image of God) becomes likened to God, he rejoices in all the plenitude

that does not belong to him by nature, because the grace of the Spirit triumphs within him, and because God acts in him” (Letter 22).

Saint Maximus also wrote anthropological works (i.e. concerning man). He deliberates on the nature of the soul and its conscious existence after death. Among his moral compositions, especially important is his “Chapters on Love.” Saint Maximus the Confessor also wrote three hymns in the finest traditions of church hymnography, following the example of Saint Gregory the Theologian.

The theology of Saint Maximus the Confessor, based on the spiritual experience of the knowledge of the great Desert Fathers, and utilizing the skilled art of dialectics worked out by pre-Christian philosophy, was continued and developed in the works of Saint Simeon the New Theologian (March 12), and Saint Gregory Palamas (November 14). (*from oca.org*)

### **Today’s Epistle Lesson – St. Paul’s First Letter to Timothy 4:9-15**

My son Timothy, this *is* a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance. For to this *end* we both labor and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is *the* Savior of all men, especially of those who believe. These things command and teach. Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity. Till I come, give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you by prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the eldership. Meditate on these things; give yourself entirely to them, that your progress may be evident to all.

### **Today’s Gospel Lesson – Saint Luke 19:1-10**

At that time, *Jesus* entered and passed through Jericho. Now behold, *there was* a man named Zacchaeus who was a chief tax collector, and he was rich. And he sought to see who *Jesus* was, but could not because of the crowd, for he was of short stature. So he ran ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see Him, for He was going to pass that *way*. And when *Jesus* came to the place, He looked up and saw him, and said to him, “Zacchaeus, make haste and come down, for today I must stay at your house.” So he made haste and came down, and received Him joyfully. But when they saw *it*, they all complained, saying, “He has gone to be a guest with a man who is a sinner.” Then Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, “Look, Lord, I give half of my goods to the poor; and if I have taken anything from anyone by false accusation, I restore fourfold.” And *Jesus* said to him, “Today salvation has come to this house, because he also is a son of Abraham; for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.”

## *A Word From the Holy Fathers*

As man I deliberately transgressed the divine commandment, when the devil, enticing me with the hope of divinity (cf. Gen. 3:5), dragged me down from my natural stability into the realm of sensual pleasure; and he was proud to have thus brought death into existence, for he delights in the corruption of human nature. Because of this, God became perfect man, taking on everything that belongs to human nature except sin (cf. Heb. 4:15); and indeed sin is not part of human nature, In this way, by enticing the insatiable serpent with the bait of the flesh. He provoked him to open his mouth and swallow it. This flesh proved poison to him, destroying him utterly by the power of the Divinity within it; but to human nature it proved a remedy restoring it to its original grace by that same power of the Divinity within it. For just as the devil poured out his venom of sin on the tree of knowledge and corrupted human nature once it had tasted it, so when he wished to devour the flesh of the Master he was himself destroyed by the power of the Divinity within it.

– St. Maximus the Confessor

### **Meaningfully and Personally Sharing in the Passion, Cross and Resurrection of Christ**

On the Fifth Sunday of the Fast, Sunday 29 March 2015, His Eminence Metropolitan Hierotheos of Nafpaktos delivered a sermon in the crowded Church of Saint Nicholas in Larissa, in which he analyzed our sharing in the mystery of the Cross and Resurrection of Christ according to Saint Maximus the Confessor. Below is a summary of this sermon:

Saint Maximus the Confessor is a great Father of the Church and Ecumenical Teacher who lived in the seventh century, producing ascetic theology, defending the doctrine of Chalcedon regarding the two natures of Christ, and fighting against Monoenergism and Monothelitism. He was a great hesychast and simultaneously a confessor of the faith.

The basic theory or theology of Saint Maximus deals with the journey of man towards God which takes place through three stages: a) practical philosophy, namely the purification of the heart, overcoming pleasure and suffering, b) natural theoria, namely the illumination of the nous, overcoming forgetfulness and ignorance, and the acquisition of love and prayer to God, c) secret theology, namely theosis, by which the imagination is overcome and the believer sees the uncreated Light.

This theory of Saint Maximus can be seen and applied through six points in relation to his teaching on the Cross and Resurrection of Christ and their direct relationship to our spiritual life.

The six points are as follows:

1. In the last Passover of Christ, as described in the Gospels, which Saint Maximus interpreted from the perspective of the salvation of the world and within the personal spiritual life of people.
2. With the second point the Saint interprets our sharing in the mystery of the Cross and Resurrection of Christ through the perspective of the relationship between Pilate, Herod and the mob, by which he shows how people are liberated from sin.
3. The third point is the trilingual inscription above the Cross of Christ, showing that the Crucified One is the King of practical philosophy, natural theoria and secret theology. And these three categories of people are associated with Christ and those crucified with Him.
4. The fourth example of interpretation is the Cross, Burial and Resurrection of Christ. Saint Maximus teaches: "All visible things (phenomena) need a cross, that is, a capacity which holds back the participation in what is active in them according to sense. All intelligible things (noumena) need a tomb, that is, the total immobilization of the activities of the mind in them. For when this natural activity and movement with respect to all things is taken away along with their participation, the Logos which alone exists by itself as if he had risen from the dead is manifested anew" ("100 Chapters on Knowledge", 66).
5. In the new tomb, the burial linens and the sudarium of Christ; that is, to meet the Risen Christ in our hearts we must go beyond sensible and human knowledge.
6. The sixth point deals with what Pascha means according to Saint Maximus the Confessor, namely that "a true Pascha (Passover) is when the Logos transitions towards the human nous." Thus Saint Maximus gives a meaningful and personal interpretation of the events of the Passion, Cross and Resurrection of Christ, and as Christians we have two options: either be crucified and resurrected with Christ or crucify Christ with our passions. (*from johnsanidopoulos.com*)

## **Individual Assessments for 2018**

Dear Fellow Parishioners,

Thanks be to God, we have reached the New Year, and with that comes our responsibility to be good stewards of all that He has entrusted to us; our environment, our parish and our Diocese.

To support our Diocese, each individual age eighteen and older (except for high school and undergraduate college students) is asked to contribute \$70.00 in 2018.

We (St Thomas Parish) have paid the 2018 assessments in full for each parishioner when we received the bill from the Diocese. We trust that each person in turn will re-pay us during the year. Your assessments are used to support the following basic needs of our Diocese:

- Our Diocesan Bishop Gregory whose Ordination and teachings are directly traceable to our Lord's Apostles. Without our Bishop, we cannot exist as a parish of the Holy Orthodox Church!

- The General Administration of our Diocese.

- Christ the Savior Seminary for the formation of the future Priests of our Diocese.

- The Church Messenger - the production and distribution of our monthly Diocesan Newspaper (If you are not receiving the Messenger, please let us know).

- The Mission Fund, which assists in the establishment and support of new mission parishes (We at St. Thomas have been the beneficiaries of this fund in the form of a generous interest-free loan toward the construction of our new church building).

- The maintenance of our Diocesan Cathedral church in Johnstown, PA, the home parish of our Diocesan Bishop and Chancellor.

If you are unsure whether your 2017 Assessment has been paid in full, please see or call Dana Dewey, Trustee, at (301) 481-3445.

Thank you in advance for your timely and generous support of our God-saved Diocese.

Yours in Christ,

Kari David, Treasurer

Dana Dewey, Trustee

## *Parish News*

1. Fr. Joseph is planning a trip to visit the Kardiotissa myrrh-streaming icon of the Mother of God in Taylor, Pennsylvania on Wednesday, January 24<sup>th</sup>. Contact Fr. Joseph if you are interested in going. If you're planning to drive, the address is 743 S. Keyser Ave, Taylor, PA; it's a good 4½ hour drive from the church. The moleben starts at 6:00 PM. Given the drive and time of service, it's not a bad idea to plan on staying overnight; the local Hampton Inn and Holiday Inn have been patronized by others from the parish, and been given good reviews; there are other more budget-friendly options available as well. The church is also not far from the Monastery of St. Tikhon of Zadonsk (OCA), which has a daily liturgy preceded by

the Midnight Office at 6:00 AM. Its address is 175 St. Tikhon's Road, Waymart, PA 18472.

2. Holy water was blessed on Theophany for parish use. If you'd like to take some home, please bring a container. Contact Fr. Joseph or Pani Stacey to get your house blessed.

## **VOLUNTEERS WANTED**

We are excited to announce that St. Thomas is forming a choir! Rehearsals will start in February in preparation for Easter. All interested men and women in our parish who enjoy singing are encouraged to get in touch with Adina or Bernard Vallandingham at [adinavall@yahoo.com](mailto:adinavall@yahoo.com) or [valland.b@gmail.com](mailto:valland.b@gmail.com). The choir will first meet on Sunday, February 4<sup>th</sup> after church to discuss rehearsal schedule and location. The first rehearsal is scheduled for Thursday, February 8<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 pm.

### **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 Grace Bishop GREGORY, Fr. Joseph & Family, Greek Orthodox Archbishop Paul Yazigi of Aleppo, Syriac Orthodox Archbishop Yohanna Ibrahim of Aleppo, His Grace Bishop Neofitos of Nyeri and Mt. Kenya, Fr. John & Pani Betty Jean Baranik, Fr. Vincent Saverino, Presbyteria Katie Baker and family, Santiago Alzugaray, Alicia Barosio and family, Jeffrey Carey, Tatyana and Slava Chumak & family, Xenia Chilkowich, Jon Church, Ramius Connour, Curtis Cooper, Luke Cooper, Tina Crull, Mary Diane David, Ron Domieniecki, Linda A. Georgiev, Heather Himler, John Homick, Cameron Houk, Helen Janowiak, John M. Janowiak, Tucker Karl and family, Robert Karpin, Andrew Kinn, Kopan family, Brian, Helen, and Luke Mahony, Valentina Makowelski, Susan Matula, Anna Meinhold, Dn. Henry Middleton, David & Kathryn Newman, Bobby Nutter & Family, Henry & Lisa Osborne, Westin Perry & Parents, John Reece, Mary Reed, Chris & Kaitlin Rixey, Jerry Von Ronne, Anne Rosario, James, Theodore and Christina Ristas, Samson Family, Sharon Sheptak, Dawn & Faith Ulmschneider, Lydia Vita, Christine, Marshall, Nathaniel, Subdcn. Nectaros and Ia, the Syrian Christians displaced by war, Mother Virginia Marie and the Carmelite Nuns of Port Tobacco, and all those in need of our prayers. (Please advise Fr. Joseph of changes.)