

SOBORNOST

St. Thomas the Apostle Orthodox Church

(301) 638-5035 Church

4419 Leonardtown Road

Waldorf, MD 20601

Rev. Father Joseph Edgington, Pastor

(703) 380-9673 Cell

fredgington@gmail.com

www.apostlethomas.org



American Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Diocese

*ECUMENICAL PATRIARCHATE
OF CONSTANTINOPLE*

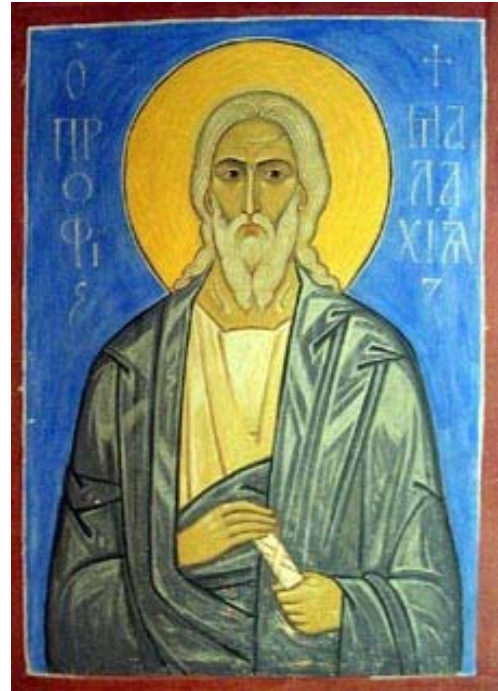
SERVICES

Saturdays: Confession 5:00 PM,

Great Vespers 5:30 PM

Sundays: Matins (Orthros) 8:45 AM

Divine Liturgy 10:00 AM.



January 3, 2016 – Forefeast & Sunday Before Theophany Holy Prophet Malachi

The first day of the Forefeast of Theophany falls on January 2. Like the hymns for the Nativity, many of the Church's hymns of this period are slightly modified versions of the hymns of Holy Week. Today's hymns invite us to go in spirit to the Jordan River where the Creator comes to be baptized. He is the Light which shines in the darkness (John 1:5), and today He begins to overcome that darkness.

Make ready, O Zabulon, and prepare yourself, O Nephtali; O River Jordan, stop and receive with joy the Master coming to be baptized. O Adam, rejoice with the first mother, Eve, and do not hide yourselves as before in Paradise. For, having seen you unclothed, Christ has appeared to clothe you with the first robe; He has appeared to renew all creation.

Troparion of the Preparation.

The Holy Prophet Malachi lived 400 years before the Birth of Christ, at the time of the return of the Jews from the Babylonian Captivity. Malachi was the last of the Old Testament prophets, therefore the holy Fathers call him "the seal of the prophets."

Manifesting himself an image of spiritual goodness and piety, he astounded the nation and was called Malachi, i.e., an angel. His prophetic book is included in the Canon of the Old Testament. In it he upbraids the Jews, foretelling the coming of Jesus Christ and His Forerunner, and also the Last Judgment (Mal 3:1-5; 4:1-6).

Bearing the name of the Angels, O glorious Malachi, you lived the angelic life on earth, O summit of the Prophets. You mystically conversed with Angels and were filled with divine glory, and set forth knowledge of things to come, that we may be enlightened in soul.

Troparion for the Prophet Malachi

(adapted from oca.org)

Today's Epistle Lesson – St. Paul's Second Letter to Timothy 4:5-8

My son Timothy, be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry. For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.

Today's Gospel Lesson – Saint Mark 1:1-8

The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. As it is written in the Prophets: "Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, who will prepare Your way before You." "The voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord; make His paths straight.'" John came baptizing in the wilderness and preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. Then all the land of Judea, and those from Jerusalem, went out to him and were all baptized by him in the Jordan River, confessing their sins. Now John was clothed with camel's hair and with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. And he preached, saying, "There comes One after me who is mightier than I, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to stoop down and loose. I indeed baptized you with water, but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

Request from Johnstown

It was necessary for the Cathedral to replace a \$4,000 camera that transmits Sunday Liturgy live over the internet. A special appeal is made to those who are homebound who use this service. Any gifts for this ministry may be sent to Fr. Robert Buczak, 249 Butler Ave., Johnstown, PA 15906, payable to Christ the Saviour Cathedral.

Sincerely, Very Rev. Protopresbyter Frank P. Miloro, *Chancellor*



Office of the Bishop
312 Garfield Street
Johnstown, PA 15906

Protocol No. 21/2015 CHRISTMAS ARCHPASTORAL LETTER

December 25, 2015 /January 7, 2016

CHRIST IS BORN! GLORIFY HIM!

Dear Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

I greet you with great joy and love in the Name of our Incarnate Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! I give thanks to Almighty God by whose grace we have been given the opportunity to celebrate the Birth of His Son. Looking around, we still see hatred, mistrust, violence, suffering, and the absence of peace in our world. This reality of life in this world makes us cry out for God's help, assistance and intervention.

The holy gift of God's Son at Christmas reveals to us His love and care for all humanity. As human beings, we are awed by the miracle of God becoming man: the divine glory revealed in a child born in poor circumstances, the omnipotent Creator a little baby in His Mother's arms. Indeed on this night the Redeemer becomes one of us, as St. John Chrysostom says, He took on our flesh to make us holy, and gave us His Spirit so that we can be reconciled with our Creator and enter into eternal life with Him.

Therefore as we celebrate the miracle of His Birth, let kindness come with every gift, and compassion, forgiveness and love with every greeting. Let us beautify our hearts with prayer and charity, so that all people may enter into the joy of the Feast of the Nativity with us. Let us give our families and friends the lasting gift of forgiveness and reconciliation. Let us pray for one another, that we may forget about our own concerns and truly love our neighbor as ourselves. Let us worship the One who came from the highest heaven to dwell with us on earth, raising us from this world into the Kingdom of God.

Today may all of us, Priests, Panis, Deacons, Subdeacons, Readers, Parish Officers, Parishioners, Friends, and Supporters of our God-protected American Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Diocese experience the joy and wonders of the Shepherds and the awe and respect of the Three Wise Men at the arrival of the Messiah, our new born King. Christ is Born!

Greetings from Johnstown with much love,

+Bishop Gregory of Nyssa

The American Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Diocese of the U.S.A.
ECUMENICAL PATRIARCHATE OF CONSTANTINOPLE

On Stewardship and the Orthodox Life – Part 47: Squandering God's Gifts



"No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God" (Luke 9:62 RSV)

The story is told of a young woman, a senior in high school, who tried out for the lead in the high school's spring play. She was a very talented young woman who wanted dearly to get that lead role. However, she was not chosen for the lead. She was offered a lesser, though significant, role in the play. In her disappointment she refused that role. In fact, she refused any role in the play. She

spent her spring pouting in her room about that major disappointment.

Looking back on the situation later, the young woman was sorry she had wasted her entire spring. She was lonely and she missed being with her friends. The play was a success, and she could not be a participant in the happy times that followed. She said, "I learned a hard lesson that spring."

As Jesus Christ made His way to Jerusalem for the last time, he was met by several people who want to follow Him and serve Him. Jesus first reminds them of the difficult road ahead. Some of the prospective followers then make excuses for not coming immediately. One has to bury his dead father. One wants to say good-bye at home. Following Christ, however, means no delay. Jesus says, "No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God." So much for human excuses.

What Jesus has to do and what we have to do as His followers is more important than everything and anything else. No matter what the excuse, it does not matter to the Master. Everything is to be sacrificed for God's kingdom. If we have talents to use for the sake of the Kingdom, they are wasted if we misuse them, or, like the young woman in our story, we don't use them at all. But seemingly much worse is to make excuse for using them later (which usually means not using them at all).

The young woman in our story missed out on the entire spring of her senior year. She missed her friends. She missed her opportunity to be a part of the group. All because she did not get her way.

Good stewards give of their time and talents completely to God and the work that He can only do in us and through us. If we are to be followers of Christ, we must go. Go now. No excuses. *(from acrod.org)*

ACRY CHAPTER #25
POTOMAC, MARYLAND
TRUTH T-SHIRTS FUNDRAISER FOR 2016 ACRY CONVENTION



Glory be to Jesus Christ!

As you may or may not be aware, ACRY Chapter #25 of Holy Resurrection Orthodox Church, Potomac, Maryland will be hosting the 2016 ACRY Convention. They are currently running a fundraiser for this event in the form of inspirational "TRUTH" T-Shirts, pictured above. What better way to celebrate the upcoming holidays but to offer a special stocking stuffer sale!!!!

YOUTH – Small, Medium and Large = \$10.00

Colors: Irish Green and Black

WOMEN – Small, Medium, Large = \$12.00 (XXL = \$15.00)

Colors: Kelly Green and Navy Blue

MEN – Small, Medium Large, XL = \$12.00 (XXL, XXXL = \$15.00)

Colors: Black and Royal Blue

Free shipping on bulk orders of 10 shirts or more.

Individual orders shipping is \$2.00 per shirt.

Our parish will be placing ONE order and submitting ONE check, so anyone wishing to order needs to fill out a form and make checks payable to St. Thomas. All order forms and questions can be directed to Shannon McNeil.



Merry Christmas to ALL
HAPPY SHOPPING!!!!



A Word From the Holy Fathers

On Theophany, that is, the Day of the Lord's Baptism, every year a great miracle is performed. The Holy Spirit, coming down upon the water, changes its natural properties. It becomes incorrupt, that is it does not spoil, remains transparent and fresh for many years, receives the grace to heal illnesses, to drive away demons and every evil power, to preserve people and their dwellings from every danger, to sanctify various objects whether for church or home use. Therefore Orthodox Christians with reverence drink Holy Water - a great Agiasma (holy thing), as the Greeks call it.

One should always have at home enough Theophany water so that it will last the whole year, and make use of it at every need; in cases of illness, leaving on a journey, whenever one is upset, students when going to examinations. They do well who daily, before eating any kind of food, drink a little Holy Water. It strengthens the powers of our soul - if it is done, of course, with prayer and reverence, and one does not merely expect from it a mechanical result.

Every priest should take care to bless a sufficient quantity of water for his church, so that it will be on hand for the course of the whole year for every need and to be given out to those who ask for it; and parishioners should provide for themselves at Theophany with Holy Water for the whole year and even so that it can be kept for future years.

– St. John Maximovich

Also Commemorated Today: St. Genevieve of Paris



Saint Genevieve was born of wealthy parents in Gaul (modern France) in the village of Nanterre, near Paris, around 422. Her father's name was Severus, and her mother was called Gerontia. According to the custom of the time, she often tended her father's flocks on Mt. Valerien.

When she was about seven years old, St Germanus of Auxerre (July 31) noticed her as he was passing through Nanterre. The bishop kissed her on the head and told her parents that she would become great in the sight of God, and would lead many to salvation. After Genevieve told him that she wished to dedicate herself to Christ, he gave her a brass medal with the image of the Cross upon it. She promised to wear it

around her neck, and to avoid wearing any other ornaments around her neck or on her fingers.

Years later, when she was fifteen, Genevieve was taken to Paris to enter the monastic life. Through fasting, vigil and prayer, she progressed in monasticism, and received from God the gifts of clairvoyance and of working miracles. Gradually, the people of Paris and the surrounding area regarded Genevieve as a holy vessel (2 Tim. 2:21).

St Genevieve considered the Saturday night Vigil service to be very important, since it symbolizes how our whole life should be. “We must keep vigil in prayer and fasting so that the Lord will find us ready when He comes,” she said. She was on her way to church with her nuns one stormy Saturday night when the wind blew out her lantern. The nuns could not find their way without a light, since it was dark and stormy, and the road was rough and muddy. St Genevieve made the Sign of the Cross over the lantern, and the candle within was lit with a bright flame. In this manner they were able to make their way to the church for the service.

When it was reported that Attila the Hun was approaching Paris, Genevieve and the other nuns prayed and fasted, entreating God to spare the city. Suddenly, the barbarians turned away from Paris and went off in another direction.

There is a tradition that the church which St Genevieve suggested that King Clovis build in honor of Sts Peter and Paul became her own resting place when she fell asleep in the Lord around 512 at the age of eighty-nine. Her holy relics were later transferred to the church of St Etienne du Mont in Paris. Most of her relics, and those of other saints, were destroyed during the French Revolution. In the Middle Ages, St Genevieve was regarded as the patron saint of wine makers. (*from oca.org*)

FINDING OF THE RELICS OF ST. EPHRAIM OF NEA MAKRI

The Holy New Martyr and Wonderworker Ephraim was born in Greece on September 14, 1384. His father died when the saint was young, and his pious mother was left to care for seven children by herself. When Ephraim reached the age of fourteen, the all-good God directed his steps to a monastery on the mountain of Amoman near Nea Makri in Attica. The monastery was dedicated to the Annunciation and also to St Paraskeva. Here he took on his shoulders the Cross of Christ, which all His followers must bear (Matt. 16:24). Being enflamed with love for God, St Ephraim eagerly placed himself under the monastic discipline. For nearly twenty-seven years he imitated the life of the great Fathers and ascetics of the desert. With divine zeal, he followed Christ and turned away from the attractions of this world. By the grace of God, he purified himself from soul-destroying passions and became an abode of the All-Holy Spirit. He was also

found worthy to receive the grace of the priesthood, and served at the altar with great reverence and compunction.



On September 14, 1425, the barbarous Turks launched an invasion by sea, destroying the monastery and looting the surrounding area. St Ephraim was one of the victims of their frenzied hatred. Many of the monks had been tortured and beheaded, but St Ephraim remained calm. This infuriated the Turks, so they imprisoned him in order to torture him and force him to deny Christ. They locked him in a small cell without food or water, and they beat him every day, hoping to convince him to become a Muslim. For several months, he endured horrible torments. When the Turks realized that the saint remained faithful to Christ, they decided to put him to death. On Tuesday May 5, 1426, they led him from his cell. They turned him upside

down and tied him to a mulberry tree, then they beat him and mocked him. "Where is your God," they asked, "and why doesn't he help you?" The saint did not lose courage, but prayed, "O God, do not listen to the words of these men, but may Thy will be done as Thou hast ordained."

The barbarians pulled the saint's beard and tortured him until his strength ebbed. His blood flowed, and his clothes were in tatters. His body was almost naked and covered with many wounds. Still the Hagarenes were not satisfied, but wished to torture him even more. One of them took a flaming stick and plunged it violently into the saint's navel. His screams were heart-rending, so great was his pain. The blood flowed from his stomach, but the Turks did not stop. They repeated the same painful torments many times. His body writhed, and all his limbs were convulsed. Soon, the saint grew too weak to speak, so he prayed silently asking God to forgive his sins. Blood and saliva ran from his mouth, and the ground was soaked with his blood. Then he lapsed into unconsciousness. Thinking that he had died, the Turks cut the ropes which bound him to the tree, and the saint's body fell to the ground. Their rage was still not diminished, so they continued to kick and beat him. After a while, the saint opened his eyes and prayed, "Lord, I give up my spirit to Thee." About nine o'clock in the morning, the martyr's soul was separated from his body. These things remained forgotten for nearly 500 years, hidden in the depths of silence and oblivion until January 3, 1950. By then a women's

monastery had sprung up on the site of the old monastery. Abbess Makaria (+ April 23, 1999) was wandering through the ruins of the monastery, thinking of the martyrs whose bones had been scattered over that ground, and whose blood had watered the tree of Orthodoxy. She realized that this was a holy place, and she prayed that God would permit her to behold one of the Fathers who had lived there. After some time, she seemed to sense an inner voice telling her to dig in a certain spot. She indicated the place to a workman whom she had hired to make repairs at the old monastery. The man was unwilling to dig there, for he wanted to dig somewhere else. Because the man was so insistent, Mother Makaria let him go where he wished. She prayed that the man would not be able to dig there, and so he struck rock. Although he tried to dig in three or four places, he met with the same results. Finally, he agreed to dig where the abbess had first indicated.

In the ruins of an old cell, he cleared away the rubble and began to dig in an angry manner. The abbess told him to slow down, for she did not want him to damage the body that she expected to find there. He mocked her because she expected to find the relics of a saint. When he reached the depth of six feet, however, he unearthed the head of the man of God. At that moment an ineffable fragrance filled the air. The workman turned pale and was unable to speak. Mother Makaria told him to go and leave her there by herself. She knelt and reverently kissed the body. As she cleared away more earth, she saw the sleeves of the saint's cassock. The cloth was thick and appeared to have been woven on the loom of an earlier time. She uncovered the rest of the body and began to remove the bones, which appeared to be those of a martyr.

Mother Makaria was still in that holy place when evening fell, so she read the service of Vespers. Suddenly she heard footsteps coming from the grave, moving across the courtyard toward the door of the church. The footsteps were strong and steady, like those of a man of strong character. The nun was afraid to turn around and look, but then she heard a voice say, "How long are you going to leave me here?" She saw a tall monk with small, round eyes, whose beard reached his chest. In his left hand was a bright light, and he gave a blessing with his right hand. Mother Makaria was filled with joy and her fear disappeared. "Forgive me," she said, "I will take care of you tomorrow as soon as God makes the day dawn." The saint disappeared, and the abbess continued to read Vespers. In the morning after Matins, Mother Makaria cleaned the bones and placed them in a niche in the altar area of the church, lighting a candle before them. That night St Ephraim appeared to her in a dream. He thanked her for caring for his relics, then he said, "My name is St Ephraim." From his own lips, she heard the story of his life and martyrdom.

Since St Ephraim glorified God in his life and by his death, the Lord granted him the grace of working miracles. Those who venerate his holy relics with faith and

love have been healed of all kinds of illnesses and infirmities, and he is quick to answer the prayers of those who call upon him. St. Ephraim has especially helped troubled and despairing youth, and protects against suicide, alcoholism, drugs, and all sorts of harmful addictions through his intercessions. St. Ephraim was canonized in 2011 by the Ecumenical Patriarchate (March 2), and by the Russian Orthodox Church (December 29). (*from johnsanidopoulos.com*)

Parish News

- ❖ Fr. Joseph is planning a trip to Taylor, Pennsylvania to see the myrrh-streaming icon of the Theotokos there on January 13th. Please contact him if you are interested in going as well.
- ❖ We will be celebrating the feast of the Theophany on Tuesday evening at 7:00 PM. If you plan to receive the Eucharist, please observe at least a three hour fast. We will also celebrate the Great Blessing of water to supply holy water for use as needed during the coming year. If you would like to take some home with you for personal use, please bring a container to fill.

AMAZONSMILE

The on-line shopping store, Amazon.com will donate 0.5% of the price of your eligible AmazonSmile purchases to American Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Greek Catholic Diocese of the USA whenever you shop on AmazonSmile. AmazonSmile is the same Amazon you know – same products, same prices, same service. Simply go to the home page of our Diocesan website (www.acrod.org) and click on the AmazonSmile button in the far left column and then shop as usual.

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, Fr. John & Pani Betty Jean Baranik, Presbytera Katie Baker and family, Fr. Kenneth Bachofsky, Fr. Michael Kleban, Alicia Barosio and family, Millie Borys, Jeffrey Carey, Xenia Chilkowich, Ramius Connour, Curtis Cooper, Tina Crull, Heather Himler, Alex Holthus, Cameron Houk, Tucker Karl and family, Robert Karpin, Andrew Kinn, Kopan family, Alex & Valentina Makowelski, Anna Meinhold, Dn. Henry Middleton, David & Kathryn Newman, Bobby Nutter & Family, Henry & Lisa Osborne, Westin Perry & Parents, Mary Reed, Chris & Kaitlin Rixey, Jerry Von Ronne, Anne Rosario, James, Theodore and Christina Ristas, Samson Family, Sharon Sheptak, John Sparks, Daria Virvan, Lydia Vita, Christine, Marshall, Nathaniel, 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.)