

SOBORNOST

St. Thomas the Apostle Orthodox Church

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American Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Diocese

*ECUMENICAL PATRIARCHATE
OF CONSTANTINOPLE*

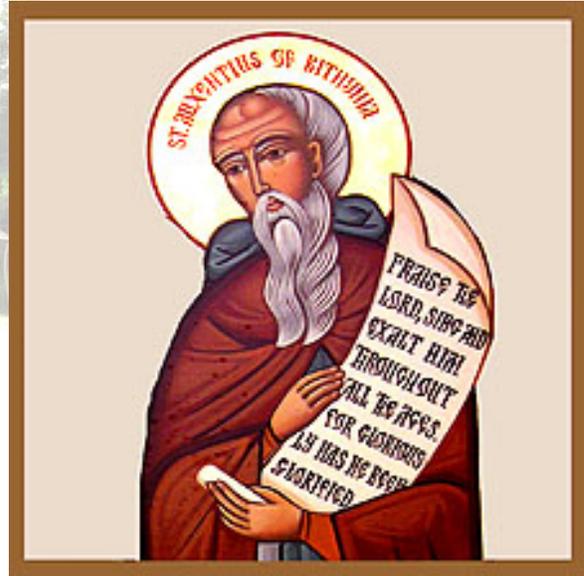
SERVICES

Saturdays: Confession 5:00 PM,

Great Vespers 5:30 PM

Sundays: Matins (Orthros) 8:45 AM

Divine Liturgy 10:00 AM.



February 14, 2016 – Zaccheus Sunday

Venerable Auxentius of Bithynia

Saint Auxentius, by origin a Syrian, served at the court of the emperor Theodosius the Younger (418-450). He was known as a virtuous, learned and wise man, and he was, moreover, a friend of many of the pious men of his era. Distressed by worldly vanity, St Auxentius was ordained to the holy priesthood, and then received monastic tonsure. After this he went to Bithynia and found a solitary place on Mount Oxia, not far from Chalcedon, and there he began the life of a hermit (This mountain was afterwards called Mt. Auxentius). The place of the saint's efforts was discovered by shepherds seeking their lost sheep. They told others about him, and people began to come to him for healing. St Auxentius healed many of the sick and the infirm in the name of the Lord. In the year 451 St Auxentius was invited to the Fourth Ecumenical Council at Chalcedon, where he denounced the Eutychian and Nestorian heresies. Familiar with Holy Scripture and learned in theology, St Auxentius easily bested those opponents who disputed with him. After the end of the Council, St Auxentius returned to his solitary cell on the mountain. With his spiritual sight he saw the repose of St Simeon the Stylite (459) from a great distance. St Auxentius died about the year 470, leaving behind him disciples and many monasteries in the region of Bithynia. He was buried in the Monastery of St Hypatius at Rufiananas, Syria. *(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.”

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.

January Treasurer's Report

Glory to Jesus Christ! For the month of January our income/expenses were:

Operating income \$12967.00 | Operating Expenses \$13792.69

Over/Under income \$825.69 This month's major expenses were the annual service contracts and the assessments. Please remember to pay your diocesan assessment. Thank you for being good Stewards of God's House.

Kari David, Treasurer

ANNUAL PARISH RETREAT, SKI TRIP TO WEST VIRGINIA



THINK SNOW! Mark your calendar for **11-13 March 2016** to join our annual parish retreat to Davis, West Virginia, for a weekend of fellowship, skiing and fun at Timberline Resort and Blackwater Falls State Park. All families and guests are welcome. **PLEASE ATTEND A SHORT ORGANIZATIONAL MEETING AFTER LITURGY ON 14 FEBRUARY (TODAY).** *See Dana Dewey if you are interested, but cannot attend this meeting.* This very affordable trip has been planned for those who have never skied before, and for experienced skiers, too. It's also a great opportunity for any non-skiers to get away for a relaxing weekend in the scenic Canaan Valley area of wild and wonderful West Virginia! We'll stay at Canaan Valley Baptist Church in Davis, WV. We'll have use of their fellowship hall, kitchen, Sunday school rooms, and bathrooms, including showers. Timberline resort has a great family style atmosphere, and several recent improvements. It has a 1,000+ foot vertical drop, with trails for accomplished skiers and beginners alike – from the double diamond "Drop" to the gentle, two mile long "Salamander," and lots of intermediates in between. We'll ski 9AM to 4:30PM on Saturday and on Sunday morning we'll conduct our own worship service at our host Church, and have an optional tour of nearby Blackwater Falls State Park before returning home. All first time skiers must take a lesson before getting on a lift! We want a perfect safety record, and this is where it starts! You can get a free lesson from our certified instructor, Al Harvey, and his crew of helpers. They will also help you throughout the day - ask them to watch you, and to offer helpful tips that can make your skiing easier, safer, and more enjoyable. Experienced skiers will only need a quick safety check run on the beginners' slope before hitting the slopes with their buddies. Spread the word and THINK SNOW!

On Stewardship and the Orthodox Life – Part 55: “Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful.” (Luke 6:36 RSV)



We cannot deny that we are a blessed people. So many of us have comfortable homes, a regular income, the continued miracle of the supply of power to operate our automobiles as well as keep our homes cool in the summer and warm in the winter. Food is available to us by the truckload from our local groceries. These are wonderful blessings from God for which we are to be forever truly thankful.

There are two reasons for God to continue to grant His blessings to us. The first reason is that we may grant the same blessings to others who are in need of them. The second reason is that we might grow in in our likeness to God Himself, the very image and likeness in which we were created.

It is as if, when we pray in the prayer our Lord taught us, “Give us this day our daily bread,” God looks right into our hearts to see if we will grant the same daily bread to others more needy than we. Likewise when we pray “God be merciful to me a sinner,” God watches to see if we will show mercy and compassion to those with whom we come into contact.

Such is the evidence of our connection to God: *Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful.* We will act as God would with a cheerful and loving heart. We will do as God bids us to do, no matter how inconvenient or no matter how it goes against how we are feeling at the moment.

This is the way God develops what some might call our Christian character. We Orthodox call it *theosis*, the process by which we return to the very way God created us, in His image and likeness. It is for our good, and for the sake of our eternal salvation that God has called us to practice self-denial, to bear the Cross of Christ, to sacrifice in seeking to save that which is lost.

Thus our efforts to bless others are not only the means of our own growth in grace, such efforts have a direct bearing on our eternal salvation. To those who have been faithful and true in their efforts to become as God has revealed Himself in Christ; to those who have become co-workers with Christ Himself in the Kingdom of God; to those who have taken their talents and made good use of them, it will be said: “*Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a little, I will set you over much; enter into the joy of your master*” (Matthew 25:21, 23 RSV) (*from acrod.org*)

CAMP NAZARETH SUMMER CAMP 2016

The time for Summer Camp is Rapidly Approaching!!! The clock is ticking!!

Dates for the Summer Camping Program

Week 1 -- July 17 - 23, 2016

Pittsburgh, Mid-Atlantic, Tri-State and Washington D.C. Deaneries

Week 2 -- July 24 - July 30, 2016

New England, NY, NJ, Florida and Canada Deaneries

Week 3 -- July 31 - August 6, 2016

Johnstown, Pocono, Southern Tier, Youngstown and Chicago Deaneries

Register Online Starting Feb. 22, 2016

Register at – *campnazareth.org*

From the Home Page, From the 2016 Summer Camp Icon, or From the Diocesan Summer Camp Tab found under the Program & Events Tab and look for Camper Registration.

If you are Clergy or a Volunteer go to the 2016 Summer Camp Icon on the Home Page or the Summer Camp Tab found under the Program & Events Tab and look for the paper forms under Clergy/Volunteers.

\$20 Early Bird Discount Per Child!!!!

(one-time only, not per week)

Register & pay by May 15, 2016!!!!

Online Registration MUST be complete AND payment must be submitted by May 15 in order to qualify for the Early Bird Discount.

Registrations after June 14 will incur an additional \$20 late fee.

- When you register online please note that **you will still need to submit a paper copy of the Medical Examination Form (i.e. Camper Physical)** which must be filled out and signed by a licensed medical professional (licensed physician or physician's assistant). This form will be emailed to you after you complete the online registration process.

Payment by check, money order, or credit card is accepted. Checks and Money Orders are to be made payable to *Camp Nazareth* and sent to *Camp Nazareth at 339 Pew Road, Mercer, PA 16137.*

ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

The annual Parish meeting and Potluck will be held following Liturgy on 06 March. Information to review will be distributed in advance so you can discuss topics with the officers or clergy prior to the meeting. We will review the past year, our financial status, and look ahead at goals for 2016 and beyond. Importantly, we will also adopt a 2016 budget, elect delegates to the Diocesan Sobor to be held in October, and elect officers. Anyone who is interested in a great volunteer/leadership opportunity, consider serving your Parish as an officer. See any current officer or Father Joseph if interested.

Eligibility Requirements for Officers: In accordance with the parish Articles of Incorporation, and for the welfare of the Church, candidates and those eligible to vote must be “members in good standing, at least 18 years old, chrismated into the Orthodox Church, regularly receiving communion, and have pledged to serve the church financially.”

Responsibilities of Officers:

TREASURER (Incumbent: Kari David) – Maintains a record of the receipts and disbursements of all Church funds. Responsible for preparation of checks and payment of parish expenses. Ensures disbursements are within budget guidelines and/or available designated funds. Prepares monthly reports of income and expenses to parishioners. Prepares quarterly reports of income, expenses, and attendance to the diocese. Prepares annual budget for the parish, and periodic reports to the parish and the Finance Committee on the status of actual receipts and expenditures versus budgeted amounts. Furnishes records to auditor upon request. Member of Finance Committee by virtue of office, and attends Finance Committee meetings.

SECRETARY (Incumbent: Olga Dewey) – Records, maintains and distributes to the Pastor and parish officers the minutes of all regular and special parish meetings and all Finance Committee meetings. Presents and provides previous meeting’s minutes at parish meetings and Finance Committee meetings. Signs official Church documents as may be necessary. May also be called upon to prepare parish correspondence.

Member of Finance Committee by virtue of office, and attends Finance Committee meetings.

TRUSTEE (Incumbent: Dana Dewey) – Responsible for the receipt, recording, and deposit of all funds collected by the Church from regular weekly collections and other sources. Prepares a schedule of members to count regular weekly collection receipts. Provides the Pastor and Treasurer with a report of all receipts and deposits. Prepares periodic statements to each parishioner summarizing his/her gifts and status with respect to parish and diocesan obligations. Provides quarterly statements of income and expenses to diocesan bishop. Furnishes records to auditor upon request. Acts as a channel of communication to carry parishioner concerns to the Pastor and/or Finance Committee in cases where a parishioner is uncomfortable communicating his/her concerns directly. Member of Finance Committee by virtue of office, and attends Finance Committee meetings.

AUDITOR (Incumbent: Phyllis Thomidis) – Examines the financial records and procedures of the Church, and when appropriate, recommends adjustments to procedures, which will ensure the responsible stewardship of Church funds. Performs a comprehensive annual audit of Church income and expenditures, and prepares a report of this audit for the pastor and parishioners.

A Word From the Holy Fathers

“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 form the breath of spring, so does every man, regardless of how arid and darkened by sin, becomes 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, gives 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.

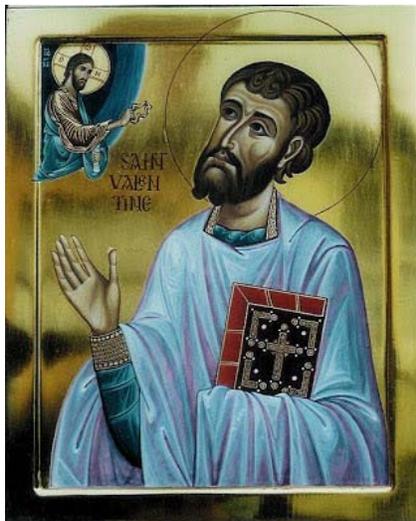
“Today, salvation has come to this house” said the Lord upon entering the house of Zacchaeus the sinner. Christ was the salvation that came and Zacchaeus was the house into which He entered. Brethren, each one of us is a house in which sin dwells as long as Christ is distant and to which salvation comes 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, 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.

Draw near to us O Lord, draw near and bring to us Your eternal salvation. To You be glory and thanks always.

– St. Nikolai Velimirovich

Also Commemorated Today: Martyr Valentine



The ancient martyrology of the Church of Rome marks February 14th as the remembrance of "the martyr Valentine, presbyter of Rome" (Valentinus means "vigorous" in Latin). Unfortunately the historical data for the Saint is incomplete. Saint Valentine lived in Rome in the third century and was a priest who helped the martyrs during the persecution of Emperor Claudius II the Goth. The great virtue and catechetical activities of the Saint had become known. For this he was arrested and brought before the imperial court.

"Why, Valentine, do you want to be a friend of our enemies and reject our friendship?" asked the Emperor. The Saint replied: "My lord, if you knew the gift of God, you would be happy together with your empire and would reject the worship of idols and worship the true God and His Son Jesus Christ." One of the judges stopped the Saint and asked him what he thought about Jupiter and Mercury, and Valentine boldly replied: "They are miserable, and spent their lives in corruption and crime!" The judge furiously shouted: "He blasphemes against the gods and against the empire!"

The Emperor, however, continued his questions with curiosity, and found a welcome opportunity to finally learn what was the faith of Christians. Valentine then found the courage to urge him to repent for the blood of the Christians that was shed. "Believe in Jesus Christ, be baptized and you will be saved, and from this time forward the glory of your empire will be ensured as well as the triumph of your armory." Claudius became convinced, and said to those who were present:

"What a beautiful teaching this man preaches." But the Mayor of Rome, dissatisfied, began to shout: "See how this Christian misled our Prince."

Then Claudius brought the Saint to another judge. He was called Asterios, and he had a little girl who was blind for two years. Listening about Jesus Christ, that He is the Light of the World, he asked Valentine if he could give that light to his child. St. Valentine put his hand on her eyes and prayed: "Lord Jesus Christ, true Light, illuminate this blind child." Oh the great miracle! The child could see! So the judge with all his family confessed Christ. Having fasted for three days, he destroyed the idols that were in the house and finally received Holy Baptism. When the Emperor heard about all these events, he initially thought not to punish them, thinking that in the eyes of the citizens he will look weak, which forced him to betray his sense of justice. Therefore St. Valentine along with other Christians, after they were tortured, were beheaded on 14 February in the year 268 (or 269).

After the martyrdom some Christians salvaged the body of the Saint and put a bit of his blood in a vial. The body of the martyr was moved and buried in the Catacombs of St. Priscilla, a burial place of most of the martyrs. Over the years somehow he was "forgotten" since almost every day there were buried in these catacombs new martyrs for several decades. The memory of Valentine's martyrdom however remained robust, particularly in the local Church of Rome. Officially the memory of St. Valentine was established in 496 by Pope St. Gelasius.

Fifteen centuries pass and we arrive at 1815, at which time the divine intention was to "disturb" the eternal repose of the Saint. Then the relics were donated by the Pope to a gentle Italian priest (according to the custom of the time). After this the relics are "lost" again until 1907 where we find them in Mytilene in the Roman Catholic Church of Our Lady. It seems that after the death of the priest that a descendant of his had inherited the relics and had migrated to Mytilene, which was then a thriving community of West-European Catholic Christians. There they remained until 1990 when they were moved to Athens in the Church of Saints Francis and Clara's Italian community, where they are today.

Many raise the objection that St. Valentine is not mentioned anywhere in the calendar of the Orthodox Church. Indeed on 14 February in the calendar of the Church there are commemorated Saints Auxentios, Maron and the martyrs Nicholas and Damian. The explanation is simple: in ancient times hagiographic directories, biographies and martyrologia were written to be primarily used locally in their own character, and the fame and reputation of a saint locally does not mean that it extended also throughout the Church. So there may be saints honored widely in one region and completely unknown in another, as for example St. Demetrios,

who is famous throughout the Eastern Church, yet in the West is not honored at all, and is almost unknown, but this does not mean that he is not a saint. Another example of the modern Church: St. Chrysostomos of Smyrna (+1922) who in Greece is known, yet in Russia is completely unknown, but this does not mean that he is not a saint.

We honor our saints and St. Valentine when we imitate their courage to proclaim their faith in Christ the Savior, who did so even at the cost of their lives. We honor them when we beseech them to appeal to God to have mercy on us and forgive our many sins. We honor them when they are our models of the life in Christ. We do not honor the saints when we measure their 'worth' by worldly amusements and festivities in the best circumstances ... Honor Martyrs - Imitate Martyrs! (*adapted from johnsanidopoulos.com*)

Synaxis of Primates of the Orthodox Churches

Chambésy, 21-28 January 2016

At the invitation of His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, the Synaxis of Primates of the Orthodox Autocephalous Churches took place at the Orthodox Center of the Ecumenical Patriarchate in Chambésy, Geneva, from 21st to 28th January, 2016. The following Primates attended: Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, Patriarch Theodore of Alexandria, Patriarch Theophilos of Jerusalem, Patriarch Kirill of Moscow, Patriarch Irinej of Serbia, Patriarch Daniel of Romania, Patriarch Neophyte of Bulgaria, Patriarch Ilia of Georgia, Archbishop Chrysostomos of Cyprus, Archbishop Anastasios of Albania, and Archbishop Rastislav of the Czech Lands and Slovakia. The following Primates were unable to attend: Their Beatitudes Patriarch John X of Antioch and Metropolitan Sawa of Warsaw and All Poland, for health reasons, and Archbishop Ieronymos of Athens and All Greece, for personal reasons. Nevertheless, all three were represented by official delegations of their Churches.

The Primates of the Orthodox Churches convened to finalize the texts for the Holy and Great Council. In the framework of the Synaxis, on Sunday, 24th January, a Divine Liturgy was held at the Holy Stavropegic Church of St. Paul. Along with the Ecumenical Patriarch, who presided, Their Beatitudes and Heads of the delegations of the Orthodox Churches concelebrated the Liturgy, with the exception of the Head of the delegation of the Patriarchate of Antioch.

During the Synaxis, whose sessions were held in the apostolic spirit of “speaking the truth in love” (Eph. 4.15), in concord and understanding, the Primates affirmed their decision to convene the Holy and Great Council. The Council will be held at the Orthodox Academy of Crete from June 16th to 27th, 2016. To this end, the Primates humbly invoke the grace and blessing of the Holy Trinity and fervently

invite the prayers of the fullness of the Church, clergy and laity, for the period leading to and the sessions of the Holy and Great Council.

The items officially approved for referral to and adoption by the Holy and Great Council are: *The Mission of the Orthodox Church in the Contemporary World, The Orthodox Diaspora, Autonomy and its Manner of Proclamation, The Sacrament of Marriage and its Impediments, The Significance of Fasting and its Application Today, and Relations of the Orthodox Church with the Rest of the Christian World.* By decision of the Primates, all approved documents will be published. [I will publish these as they become available. – Ed.]

The Primates also discussed and determined the establishment of a Panorthodox Secretariat, the by-laws of the Council, the participation of non-Orthodox observers in the opening and closing sessions, and the budgetary costs related the Council. Moreover, the Primates expressed their support for the persecuted Christians of the Middle East and their ongoing concern for the abduction of the two Metropolitans, Paul Yazigi of the Patriarchate of Antioch and Gregorios Yohanna Ibrahim of the Syriac Archdiocese.

The proceedings of the Synaxis of the concluded on Wednesday evening, January 27th, 2016, with the closing address by its President, His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew.

At the Orthodox Center of the Ecumenical Patriarchate in Chambésy-Geneva, 27th January, 2016

From the Secretariat of the Sacred Synaxis

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, Fr. Vincent Saverino, Presbyteria Katie Baker and family, Alicia Barosio and family, Millie Borys, Jeffrey Carey, Xenia Chilkowich, Jon Church, Ramius Connour, Curtis Cooper, Tina Crull, Ron Dominiecki, Linda A. Georgiev, Heather Himler, Alex Holthus, John Homick, Cameron Houk, Helen Janowiak, John M. Janowiak, Deanna Jarrett, Tucker Karl and family, Robert Karpin, Andrew Kinn, Kopan family, Brian, Helen, and Luke Mahony, 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, 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.)