

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.

Wednesdays in Great Lent:

Liturgy of Presanctified Gifts 7:00 PM

Fridays in Great Lent:

Moleben to the Theotokos 6:00 AM

April 10, 2016 – Fourth Sunday of Great Lent

St. John Climacus

In the Church services for the fourth Sunday the Holy Church offers us a great example of the life of fasting in the person of the Venerable John of the Ladder, who, "having overcome the flesh through fasting" and "by the sweat of his ascetic efforts quenched the fiery arrows of the enemy" and "renewed the strength of souls" and, "ascending to the height of virtues," "received in his soul the divine wealth of the Spirit, undefiled prayer, chastity, modesty, continuous vigil," "was deified through heavenly glory," "was revealed as a physician to those sick through sin" and was the author of "The Ladder of Paradise." According to the expression of the Holy Church, how the profoundly granted ascetic life of the Venerable John "gives us a pleasure sweeter than honey," and so his "Ladder" "brings to us the ever flowering fruits of his teaching, pleasing the heart with vigilant heeding: for souls are rising up the ladder from earth to heaven and abiding in glory." Approving fasting with the example of the Venerable John, the Holy Church offers us a new consolation in the Gospel and Epistle readings of this Sunday. In the first she shows that fasting and prayer defeats the very spiritual enemy of the salvation of man, and predicted this victory in the circumstances of suffering, the death and the resurrection of Christ; and in the second she reminds us of the inalterability of



God's will for the salvation of man, in order that we have a firm hope. Besides the hymns praising the Venerable John, during the fourth week other hymns are chanted, in which the repentant soul resembles the man, who fell into the hands of the thieves, and whom both the priest and the Levite passed by, not offering help. Testing one's conscience the Holy Church inspires the soul to turn to the Lord with prayer: He cleans off the sinful scabs.

Having concentrated in the hymns of the fourth Sunday on the diverse motives for the zealous bearing of the lenten spiritual struggle, the Holy Church at the end of the Matins service with a tender voice appeals to her children: "Come, let us work in the mystical vineyard, making fruits of repentance work in it, let us not labor for food and drink, but through prayer and fasting let us gain virtue. And the Lord of the vineyard, pleased by our labor, will provide the denarii by which He delivers souls from the debt of sins, for He alone is rich in mercy."

In the Divine Services for the fifth week of Great Lent the Holy Church continues to call us to an active bearing of the Lenten efforts, appealing: "Through abstinence the faithful have a fortress with God, through others let us youthfully run the holy course." "In fervent faith let us burn up the lustful passions with abstinence, and flee from the icy cold of sin; with the streams of our tears let us quench the eternal flame." "Let us make our own pure fasting, tears, meditation on the divine things, and every other virtue; and let us now offer our Lady to Christ."

The general consolation is encouraging to the bearing of the Lenten effort, and the Holy Church presents us the idea that half of the effort is already accomplished and that its end, Christ's Resurrection, is near. "Having passed the middle point," hymns the Holy Church, "in this dedicated way of fasting, let us go forward joyfully to the part that still remains, anointing our souls with the oil of good deeds. So let us be worthy to venerate the divine Passion of Christ our God, to attain His dread and holy Resurrection." Together with this the Holy Church motivates her children to fervent continuation of bearing the Lenten efforts and reminds them about "the most glorious grace" "the most honorable fast, through which the prophet Elijah found the fiery chariot, and Moses received the Tablets; Daniel was magnified, and Elisha raised the dead, the Children quenched the fire, and all men are reconciled to God," and inspires us that "good fasting feeds our hearts, ripening within us thoughts pleasing to God, and causing the abyss of our passions to dry up, and with the rain of compunction it cleanses those who in faith offer praise to the Almighty," and that "the fasting of the ascetics receives their reward" from God: "Peace and illumination and the healing of our broken souls," "mercy on our souls," "a sweetness that grows not old." Such exhortations strengthening us in the ascetic efforts of fasting, the Holy Church inspires us to pray to the Lord that He grant, "The season of Lent will end peacefully." The

intensification at the end of the Lenten expanse of promoting an unrelenting way of life pleasing to God, the Holy Church even during the present week continues to remind us that we have run into sin, similarly to running into robbers, and inspires us to expect mercy from the Lord.

At Matins on Thursday the Canon of St. Andrew of Crete is read in its entirety once a year, which was read in four parts on the first four days of the first week, and the Life of St. Mary of Egypt is read after the Sessional Hymn (Kathisma). According to this feature of the Thursday Matins it is called either the St. Andrew of Crete or the St. Mary of Egypt Thursday. In the Canon are collected and stated all the exhortations to fasting and repentance, and the Holy Church repeats it now in its fullness to inspire us new strength for the successful end to Lent. "Since," it is said in the Synaxarion, "the Holy Forty Day Lent is drawing near the end so that men should not become lazy, or more carelessly disposed to the spiritual efforts, or give up their abstinence altogether," that this Great Canon is offered. It is "so long, and so well-composed, as to be sufficient to soften even the hardest soul, and to rouse it to resumption of the good, if only it is sung with a contrite heart and proper attention." And the church Typikon orders the Great Canon to be read and chanted slowly and "with a contrite heart and voice, making three prostrations at each Troparion." For the same purpose of abstinence and strength, and attention to repentance is the reading of the Life of the Venerable Mary of Egypt. According to an explanation of the same Synaxarion, the Life of the Venerable Mary also "manifests infinite compunction and gives much encouragement to the fallen and sinners," representing itself to us as a paradigm of true repentance, and an example of the unutterable mercy of God. It serves as the continuation of the Canon of St. Andrew of Crete and a transition to the order of the following Sunday. Reading the Canon of St. Andrew and Mary of Egypt on the Thursday of the Fifth Week was established from the time of the Sixth Ecumenical Council. (*from Handbook for Church Servers, 2nd ed., by S. V. Bulgakov (Trans. Archpriest Eugene D. Tarris)*)

Today's Epistle Lesson – St. Paul's Letter to the Hebrews 6:13-20

Brethren, when God made a promise to Abraham, because He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself, saying, "Surely blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply you." And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise. For men indeed swear by the greater, and an oath for confirmation *is* for them an end of all dispute. Thus God, determining to show more abundantly to the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed *it* by an oath, that by two immutable things, in which it *is* impossible for God to lie, we have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before *us*. This *hope* we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and

steadfast, and which enters the *Presence* behind the veil, where the forerunner has entered for us, *even* Jesus, having become High Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.

Today's Gospel Lesson – Saint Mark 9:17-31

At that time, one of the crowd said, “Teacher, I brought You my son, who has a mute spirit. And wherever it seizes him, it throws him down; he foams at the mouth, gnashes his teeth, and becomes rigid. So I spoke to Your disciples, that they should cast it out, but they could not.” He answered him and said, “O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I bear with you? Bring him to Me.” Then they brought him to Him. And when he saw Him, immediately the spirit convulsed him, and he fell on the ground and wallowed, foaming at the mouth. So He asked his father, “How long has this been happening to him?” And he said, “From childhood. And often he has thrown him both into the fire and into the water to destroy him. But if You can do anything, have compassion on us and help us.” Jesus said to him, “If you can believe, all things *are* possible to him who believes.” Immediately the father of the child cried out and said with tears, “Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!” When Jesus saw that the people came running together, He rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it: “Deaf and dumb spirit, I command you, come out of him and enter him no more!” Then *the spirit* cried out, convulsed him greatly, and came out of him. And he became as one dead, so that many said, “He is dead.” But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up, and he arose. And when He had come into the house, His disciples asked Him privately, “Why could we not cast it out?” So He said to them, “This kind can come out by nothing but prayer and fasting.”

Then they departed from there and passed through Galilee, and He did not want anyone to know *it*. For He taught His disciples and said to them, “The Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of men, and they will kill Him. And after He is killed, He will rise the third day.”

A Word From the Holy Fathers

Remembrance of wrongs comes as the final point of anger. It is a keeper of sins. It hates a just way of life. It is the ruin of virtues, the poison of the soul, a worm in the mind. It is the shame of prayer, a cutting off of supplication, a turning away from love, a nail piercing the soul. It is a pleasureless feeling cherished in the sweetness of bitterness. It is a never-ending sin, an unsleeping wrong, rancor by the hour... A loving man banishes revenge, but a man brooding on his hatreds stores up troublesome labors for himself. – St. John Climacus

Bishop Neofitos of Nyeri and Mt. Kenya

In January of this year, his Grace, Bishop Neofitos was given the responsibility for a new diocese in his native Kenya, overseeing 43 priests. Until this year, there was only one bishop for all of Kenya's over 250 priests, and parishioners would go years without seeing their bishop; he is filling a huge need. He is also starting from absolutely nothing; when he set out to go to his new diocesan seat, he didn't even have a place to stay. He jokes that his office is his briefcase. He would like to build an office, but land is expensive in his city and his diocese is largely rural and poor. His priests often cannot hold weekly services because they cannot afford the fare to get to the church and back; his goal is to equip every



priest in his diocese with a motorcycle so they can celebrate liturgy every Sunday. Bishop Neofitos runs an orphanage of 200 children with the assistance of 12 teachers; though their salary is \$250/month, they have not been paid since January because there is no money to pay them. In parts of his diocese, people have to walk for miles to get a glass of water, and it is a struggle to provide food for one meal a day. Our three Lenten disciplines are prayer, fasting, and charity – we are exhorted to do all three. If you would like to assist the Bishop, you can make a check out to OCMC and send it to OCMC, 220 Mason Manatee Way, St. Augustine, FL 32086 with “Bishop Neofitos” on the memo line. You also can donate online through OCMC at https://www.ocmc.org/donate/donation_info.aspx; just *make sure* to type "Bishop Neofitos" in the special instructions field.

On Stewardship and the Orthodox Life – Part 63: Wearing The Right Clothes



“Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding garment?” (Matthew 22:12 RSV)

In Jesus' Matthew 22 parable of the Great Wedding Feast, He uses an event common to all, a wedding feast, to say something about the Kingdom of God. The king sends out an invitation for everyone to attend his son's wedding feast. Those who outright refuse are destroyed. Then there are the rest. Anyone from the street may come, *“...both good and bad”* (Matthew 22:10 RSV). At the feast, the king visits his guests. It was custom, of course, to be

appropriately dressed for a king's feast. Even if one did not have the right clothes, the king could provide such when the invitation was sent out. But here was a guest without proper wedding feast attire. "*Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding garment?*" Without an answer, the guest is treated just like those who had rejected the invitation in the first place: "*Bind him hand and foot, and cast him into the outer darkness...*" (Matthew 22:13 RSV).

Although the invitation into the Kingdom of God is open to all, it rests upon those invited to respond in an appropriate manner. Yes, the guest had been invited. But he showed disrespect to the king in not wearing appropriate clothes. Those who seek to be faithful stewards in their lives ought to recognize that when we respond to God's invitation, we do so with proper behavior. We do not buy our way into the Kingdom. But entering the Kingdom of God means much more than just showing up. Being created in God's image and likeness means that we have special gifts granted to us by God – gifts that we use and grow in so that when God sees us, He recognizes us as guests who have properly responded to the invitation.

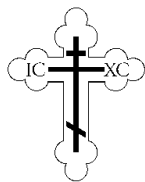
Our Orthodox life of stewardship is always a life in process. From the time of Baptism and Chrismation, we commit ourselves to grow into that image and likeness in which we were first created. To do so takes a decision of the will. It takes a disciplined life of prayer and participation in the Holy Mysteries of the Church. It takes constant self-examination that drives us to the Holy Mystery of Confession. That white garment given to us at Holy Baptism is in actuality the symbolic wedding garment of the Feast that is the Kingdom of God. May we live up to it so that the King can see it, clearly, when visiting us at the Great Feast to come. (*from acrod.org*)

The Nazarene Returns

The second 2016 Spring issue of The Nazarene, the Camp Nazareth newspaper started last summer at Camp, is now available at the Camp website, and a link to it will appear on the Camp's Facebook page. It will also be posted in the social hall. Each weekly issue includes a "Remember When" section from last year as well as a section devoted to what is up and coming this Summer (without spoiling any surprises). In this issue, there is a contest for a Camper scholarship.

St. Thomas Bake Sale

It is time to place your order for rolls, breads, and baklava in anticipation of Pascha. The baking team will meet Friday, April 22 to get everything done. Please contact Olga Dewey at 301-481-2654 or deweyhome@md.metrocast.net if you are interested in helping.



Saint Thomas the Apostle Orthodox Church 2016 Easter Bake Sale

Name _____ Phone Number _____

Orders must be in to **Olga Dewey*** by **April 17th, 2015**

All items will be available by Sunday, April 24th

Make checks payable to: St. Thomas the Apostle Orthodox Church.

Payment is due with order.

Nut Rolls	_____ x \$11	= \$ _____
Poppyseed Roll	_____ x \$11	= \$ _____
Apricot Roll	_____ x \$11	= \$ _____
Raspberry-Nut Roll	_____ x \$11	= \$ _____
Pineapple Cream Cheese Roll	_____ x \$11	= \$ _____
Raspberry Cream Cheese Roll	_____ x \$11	= \$ _____
Cherry Cream Cheese Roll	_____ x \$11	= \$ _____
Blueberry Cream Cheese Roll	_____ x \$11	= \$ _____
Large Round Bread	_____ x \$6.50	= \$ _____
Large Braided Bread	_____ x \$6.50	= \$ _____
Small Round Bread	_____ x \$4.50	= \$ _____
Baklava (1 Dozen 1" Pieces/box)	_____ x \$8	= \$ _____
	TOTAL	= \$ _____

*301-481-2654 deweyhome@md.metrocast.net

RELATIONS OF THE ORTHODOX CHURCH WITH THE REST OF THE CHRISTIAN WORLD

Draft document of the Pan-Orthodox Council, adopted by the 5th Pan-Orthodox Pre-Council Conference in Chambésy on October, 10-17, 2015. Published in compliance with the resolution of the Synaxis of Primates of the Local Orthodox Churches, Chambésy, January 21-28, 2016.

1) The Orthodox Church, being the One, Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church, in her profound ecclesiastical consciousness firmly believes that she occupies a central place in matters relating to the promotion of Christian unity within the contemporary world.

2) The Orthodox Church grounds her unity on the fact that she was founded by Our Lord Jesus Christ, as well as on the communion in the Holy Trinity and in the Sacraments. This unity is manifested through the apostolic succession and the patristic tradition and to this day is lived within her. It is the mission and duty of the Orthodox Church to transmit and proclaim the truth, in all its fullness, contained in the Holy Scripture and the Holy Tradition, the truth which gives to the Church her catholic character.

3) The responsibility of the Orthodox Church and her ecumenical mission with regard to the unity were expressed by the Ecumenical Councils. These, in particular, stressed the indissoluble link existing between true faith and the sacramental communion.

4) The Orthodox Church, which unceasingly prays “*for the union of all,*” has always promoted dialogue with those separated from her, both far and near, playing a leading role in seeking ways and means to restore the unity of believers in Christ, participating in the ecumenical movement since its inception, and contributing to its formation and further development. In addition, the Orthodox Church, due to the ecumenical spirit and love for mankind by which she is distinguished and in accordance with the divine dispensation to “*have all men to be saved and to come unto the knowledge of the truth*” (1 Tim 2:4), has always fought for the restoration of Christian unity. Therefore, the Orthodox participation in the movement for the restoration of Christian unity does not run counter to the nature and history of the Orthodox Church. It is the consistent expression of the apostolic faith and Tradition in a new historical context.

5) The bilateral theological dialogues that the Orthodox Church conducts today, as well as her participation in the movement for the restoration of Christian unity, are grounded in her Orthodox consciousness and the spirit of ecumenicity, and are aimed at seeking the lost Christian unity on the basis of the faith and tradition of the ancient Church of the Seven Ecumenical Councils.

6) The unity by which the Church is distinguished in her ontological nature is impossible to shatter. The Orthodox Church acknowledges the existence in history of other Christian Churches and confessions which are not in communion with her, and at the same time believes that her relationships with them should be based on a speedy and more accurate elucidation by them of all ecclesiological topics, especially the teaching on Sacraments, grace, priesthood, and apostolic succession as a whole. Accordingly, for theological and pastoral reasons, she has been favorably disposed to dialogue with various Christian Churches and confessions, and to participation in the present-day ecumenical movement in general, in the belief that she thus bears her active witness to the plenitude of Christ's truth and her spiritual treasures before those who are external to her, and pursuing an objective goal – to tread the path to unity.

7) It is in this spirit that today all the Holy Local Orthodox Churches take an active part in official theological dialogues, and most of them participate in the work of various national, regional and international inter-Christian organizations, despite a serious crisis in the ecumenical movement. Such manifold activities of the Orthodox Church derive from the sense of responsibility and from the conviction that mutual understanding, cooperation and common efforts towards Christian unity are of fundamental importance, so as not to “*hinder the gospel of Christ*” (1 Cor 9:12).

8) While conducting dialogue with other Christians, the Orthodox Church by no means underestimates the difficulties arising from it, but is aware of the obstacles lying on the path to a common understanding of the tradition of the ancient Church. It is her hope that the Holy Spirit Who “*welds together the whole institution of the Church*” (Stichera at Vespers of Pentecost) “*will heal what is infirm*” (a prayer during ordination). In this regard, the Orthodox Church, in her relations with the rest of the Christian world, relies not only on the human efforts of those involved in the dialogue, but, by the grace of God who prayed “*that... all may be one*” (Jn 17:21), first and foremost, on the help of the Holy Spirit.

9) The participation in the current bilateral theological dialogues announced at the Pan-Orthodox Conferences is the result of a unanimous decision of all Holy Local Orthodox Churches whose duty is to always take an active and lasting part in their work so as not to interfere in the unanimous witness of Orthodoxy to the glory of the Triune God. In the event that a certain Local Church resolves not to send her representatives to a dialogue or its session, the dialogue continues, provided that this decision is not Pan-Orthodox. Prior to the dialogue or its session, an Orthodox commission must discuss the absence of the Local Church, thus expressing the solidarity and unity of the Orthodox Church.

10) The problems arising during theological discussions within joint theological commissions are not always sufficient grounds for a Local Orthodox Church's unilateral recall of its representatives and withdrawal from dialogue. As a rule, it is necessary to avoid a Church's withdrawal from dialogue and to make the necessary efforts on the inter-Orthodox level to ensure that the Orthodox theological commission participating in the dialogue is fully represented. Should one or more Orthodox Churches refuse to take part in the sessions of the joint theological commission of a certain dialogue for serious ecclesiological, canonical, pastoral and moral reasons, this Church, or these Churches, shall notify the Ecumenical Patriarch and all the Orthodox Churches in written form of their refusal, in compliance with pan-Orthodox practice. In the course of a subsequent pan-Orthodox discussion, the Ecumenical Patriarch shall seek a consensus of the Orthodox Churches as to what actions to follow, including the possibility of reevaluating the progress of that theological dialogue, should it be unanimously found necessary.

11) The methodology of conducting theological dialogues is aimed at overcoming traditional theological differences or at revealing possible new disagreements and seeking the common ground of the Christian faith. These methods imply that the entire Church is kept informed of the dialogue's progress. In the event that it is impossible to overcome some theological difference, the theological dialogue may continue, while the discovered difference shall be recorded and brought to the notice of all the Local Orthodox Churches for further necessary action.

12) It is evident that the goal of all theological dialogues is the complete restoration of unity in true faith and love. However, the existing theological and ecclesiological differences make it possible to reveal a certain hierarchy of difficulties lying on the path towards attaining the objectives set at the pan-Orthodox level. The specificity of the problems of any bilateral dialogue points to the differentiation of applied methods, but not of goals, for all dialogues pursue one common goal. (*continued next week – Ed.*)

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.

Great Canon of St. Andrew of Crete

In addition to the usual Lenten services this week, St. Thomas parish will read the Great Canon of St. Andrew of Crete with the reading of the Life of St Mary of Egypt on Thursday evening at 7:00. Come if you can – it's a great way to reinvigorate your Lenten askesis in the midst of the Fast.

March Treasurer's Report

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

Operating income \$11,187.00 | Operating Expenses \$8,727.01

Over (Under) income for the month: \$2,086.99 | for the year: \$2,117.05

This month's major expense was the heating Oil Delivery (\$427.93).

Good news: The Geo-thermal units in the church had their spring checkup and they are in good health. As of date 76% of our parishioners have paid their assessments for the year. If you did not, please remember to pay your diocesan assessment. Thank you for being good Stewards of God's House.

Kari David, Treasurer (Emeritus)

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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, Presbytera 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, Susan Matula, 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.)