

SOBORNOST

St. Thomas the Apostle Orthodox Church

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American Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Diocese

*ECUMENICAL PATRIARCHATE
OF CONSTANTINOPLE*

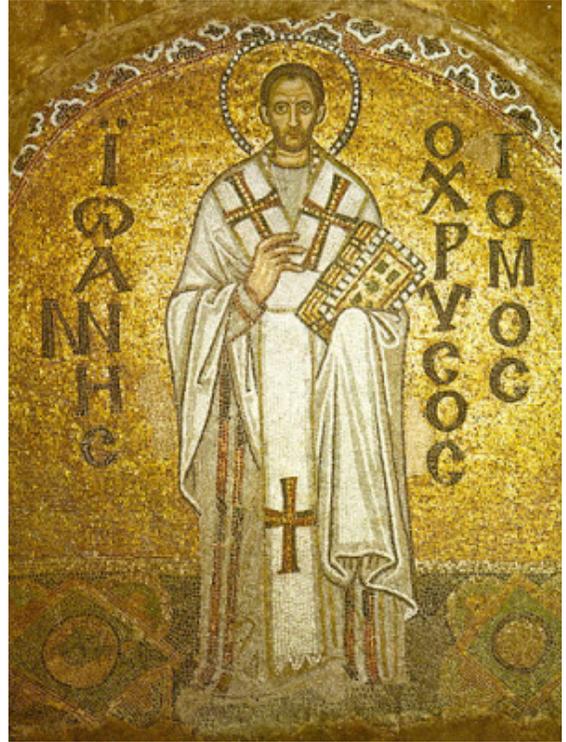
SERVICES

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
Divine Liturgy 10:00 AM.**



November 13, 2016 – 21st Sunday After Pentecost

St. John Chrysostom, Archbishop of Constantinople

Saint John Chrysostom, Archbishop of Constantinople, one of the Three Hierarchs [January 30], was born at Antioch in about the year 347 into the family of a military commander. His father, Secundus, died soon after the birth of his son. His mother, Anthusa, widowed at twenty years of age, did not seek to remarry but rather devoted all her efforts to the raising of her son in Christian piety. The youth studied under the finest philosophers and rhetoricians. But, scorning the vain disciplines of pagan knowledge, the future hierarch turned himself to the profound study of Holy Scripture and prayerful contemplation. St Meletius, Bishop of Antioch (February 12), loved John like a son, guided him in the Faith, and in the year 367 baptized him.

After three years John was tonsured as a Reader. When St Meletius had been sent into exile by the emperor Valens in the year 372, John and Theodore (afterwards Bishop of Mopsuestia) studied under the experienced instructors of ascetic life, the presbyters Flavian and Diodorus of Tarsus. The highly refined Diodorus had particular influence upon the youth.

When John's mother died, he embraced monasticism, which he called the "true philosophy." Soon John and his friend Basil were being considered as candidates for the episcopal office, and they decided to withdraw into the wilderness to avoid this. While St John avoided the episcopal rank out of humility, he secretly assisted in Basil's consecration.

During this period St John wrote his "Six Discourses on the Priesthood," a great work of Orthodox pastoral theology. The saint spent four years struggling in the wilderness, living the ascetic life under the guidance of an experienced spiritual guide. And here he wrote three books entitled, "Against the Opponents of Those Attracted to the Monastic Life", and a collection entitled, "A Comparison of the Monk with the Emperor" (also known as "Comparison of Imperial Power, Wealth and Eminence, with the True and Christian Wisdom-Loving Monastic Life"), both works which are marked by a profound reflection of the worthiness of the monastic vocation.

For two years, the saint lived in a cave in complete silence, but was obliged to return to Antioch to recover his health. St Meletius, the Bishop of Antioch, ordained him deacon in the year 381. The following years were devoted to work on new theological writings: "Concerning Providence" ("To the Ascetic Stagirios"), "Book Concerning Virginitiy," "To a Young Widow" (2 discourses), and the "Book of St Babylos, and Against Julian and the Pagans."

In the year 386 St John was ordained presbyter by Bishop Flavian of Antioch. St John was a splendid preacher, and his inspired words earned him the name "Golden-Mouthed" ("Chrysostom"). For twelve years the saint preached in church, usually twice a week, but sometimes daily, deeply stirring the hearts of his listeners.

In his pastoral zeal to provide Christians with a better understanding of Holy Scripture, St John employed hermeneutics, an interpretation and analysis of the Word of God (i.e. exegesis). Among his exegetical works are commentaries on entire books of the Holy Scripture (Genesis, the Psalter, the Gospels of Matthew and John, the Epistles of the Apostle Paul), and also many homilies on individual texts of the Holy Bible, but also instructions on the Feastdays, laudations on the Saints, and also apologetic (i.e. defensive) homilies (against Anomoeans, Judaizers and pagans). As a priest, St John zealously fulfilled the Lord's command to care for the needy. Under St John, the Antiochian Church provided sustenance each day to as many as 3,000 virgins and widows, not including in this number the shut-ins, wanderers and the sick.

St John began his commentary on Genesis at the beginning of Great Lent in 388, preaching thirty-two homilies during the forty day period. During Holy Week he

spoke of how Christ was betrayed, and about the Cross. During Bright Week, his pastoral discourse was devoted to the Resurrection. His exegesis of the Book of Genesis was concluded only at the end of October (388).

At Pascha in the following year the saint began his homilies on the Gospel of John, and toward the end of the year 389 he took up the Gospel of Matthew. In the year 391 the Antioch Christians listened to his commentary on the Epistles of the holy Apostle Paul to the Romans and to the Corinthians. In 393 he explained the Epistles to the Galatians, the Ephesians, Timothy, Titus, and the Psalms. In his homily on the Epistle to the Ephesians, St John denounced a schism in Antioch, "I tell you and I witness before you, that to tear asunder the Church means nothing less than to fall into heresy. The Church is the house of the heavenly Father, one Body and one Spirit."

The fame of the holy preacher grew, and in the year 397 with the death of Archbishop Nectarius of Constantinople, successor to St Gregory the Theologian, St John Chrysostom was summoned from Antioch, and elected to the See of Constantinople. At the capital, the holy archpastor was not able to preach as often as he had at Antioch. Many matters awaited the saint's attention, and he began with the most important -- the spiritual perfection of the priesthood. He himself was the best example of this. The financial means apportioned for the archbishop were channeled by the saint into the upkeep of several hospices for the sick and two hostels for pilgrims. He fasted strictly and ate very little food, and usually refused invitations to dine because of his delicate stomach.

The saint's zeal in spreading the Christian Faith extended not only to the inhabitants of Constantinople, but also to Thrace to include Slavs and Goths, and to Asia Minor and the Pontine region. He established a bishop for the Bosphorus Church in the Crimea. St John sent off zealous missionaries to Phoenicia, to Persia, and to the Scythians, to convert pagans to Christ. He also wrote letters to Syria to bring back the Marcionites into the Church, and he accomplished this. Preserving the unity of the Church, the saint would not permit a powerful Gothic military commander, who wanted the emperor to reward his bravery in battle, to open an Arian church at Constantinople. The saint exerted much effort in enhancing the splendor of the church services: he compiled a Liturgy, he introduced antiphonal singing for the all-night Vigil, and he wrote several prayers for the rite of anointing the sick with oil.

The saintly hierarch denounced the dissolute morals of people in the capital, especially at the imperial court, irrespective of person. When the empress Eudoxia connived to confiscate the last properties of the widow and children of a disgraced dignitary, the saint rose to their defense. The arrogant empress would not relent,

and nursed a grudge against the archpastor. Eudoxia's hatred of the saint blazed forth anew when malefactors told her that the saint apparently had her in mind during his sermon on vain women. A court was convened composed of hierarchs who had been justly condemned by Chrysostom: Theophilus of Alexandria, Bishop Severian of Gabala, who had been banished from the capital because of improprieties, and others.

This court of judgment declared St John deposed, and that he be executed for his insult to the empress. The emperor decided on exile instead of execution. An angry crowd gathered at the church, resolved to defend their pastor. In order to avoid a riot, St John submitted to the authorities. That very night there was an earthquake at Constantinople. The terrified Eudoxia urgently requested the emperor to bring the saint back, and promptly sent a letter to the banished pastor, beseeching him to return. Once more, in the capital church, the saint praised the Lord in a short talk, "For All His Ways."

The slanderers fled to Alexandria. But after only two months a new denunciation provoked the wrath of Eudoxia. In March 404, an unjust council was convened, decreeing the exile of St John. Upon his removal from the capital, a fire reduced the church of Hagia Sophia and also the Senate building to ashes. Devastating barbarian incursions soon followed, and Eudoxia died in October 404. Even pagans regarded these events as God's punishment for the unjust judgment against the saint.

In Armenia, the saint strove all the more to encourage his spiritual children. In numerous letters (245 are preserved) to bishops in Asia, Africa, Europe and particularly to his friends in Constantinople, St John consoled the suffering, guiding and giving support to his followers. In the winter of 406 St John was confined to his bed with sickness, but his enemies were not to be appeased. From the capital came orders to transfer St John to desolate Pityus in Abkhazia on the Black Sea. Worn out by sickness, the saint began his final journey under military escort, traveling for three months in the rain and frost. He never arrived at his place of exile, for his strength failed him at Comana. At the crypt of St Basiliscus (May 22), St John was comforted by a vision of the martyr, who said, "Despair not, brother John! Tomorrow we shall be together." After receiving the Holy Mysteries, the hierarch fell asleep in the Lord on September 14, 407. His last words were, "Glory to God for all things!"

The holy relics of St John Chrysostom were solemnly transferred to Constantinople in the year 438. The disciple of St John, the venerable Isidore of Pelusium (February 4), wrote: "The house of David is grown strong, and the house of Saul enfeebled. He is victor over the storms of life, and has entered into heavenly

repose.” Although he died on September 14, St John’s celebration was transferred to this day because of the Feast of the Elevation of the Holy Cross. St John Chrysostom is also celebrated on January 27 (the translation of his relics) and January 30. (*from oca.org*)

Today’s Epistle Lesson – St. Paul’s Letter to the Galatians 2:16-20

Brethren, knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified. “But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, is Christ therefore a minister of sin?” Certainly not! For if I build again those things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor. For I through the law died to the law that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.

Today’s Gospel Lesson – Saint Luke 10:25-37

At that time, a certain lawyer stood up and tested Him, saying, “Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?” He said to him, “What is written in the law? What is your reading of it?” So he answered and said, “‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind,’ and ‘your neighbor as yourself.’” And He said to him, “You have answered rightly; do this and you will live.” But he, wanting to justify himself, said to Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?” Then Jesus answered and said: “A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, who stripped him of his clothing, wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a certain priest came down that road. And when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. Likewise a Levite, when he arrived at the place, came and looked, and passed by on the other side. But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was. And when he saw him, he had compassion. So he went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine; and he set him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. On the next day, when he departed, he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said to him, ‘Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, when I come again, I will repay you.’ So which of these three do you think was neighbor to him who fell among the thieves?” And he said, “He who showed mercy on him.” Then Jesus said to him, “Go and do likewise.”



Office of the Bishop
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Johnstown, PA 15906

NATIVITY FAST 2016

Protocol No. 18/2016

Glory to Jesus Christ!

Dear Beloved Faithful Clergy and Laity of our God-Protected Diocese,

It is hard to believe that this month marks the fourth anniversary of my Consecration and Enthronement as your Bishop. During my visits to the parishes you have heard me preaching on the state of affairs, locally and globally. Conflicts, wars and senseless violence continue to inflict pain and suffering and spill blood everywhere. I am deeply saddened that peace continues to elude us. This lack of peace is the direct result of increased selfishness and hatred throughout the world. Whatever we as inhabitants of this planet are doing it is not working, somehow it is not enough. Obviously we as humans can not achieve peace on our own. We need the help of the Lord.

As we once again enter the Season of the Nativity Fast, I ask you, actually I plead with you, the good faithful people of our Diocese, to join me on a journey to meet the new born King. During these 40 days leading to the Nativity of our Lord let us increase our efforts in church attendance, in prayer, in fasting, in scriptural reading, in almsgiving, in repentance and confession, in receiving the Eucharist.

This year, just like last year, I am challenging everyone, clergy and laity, to offer a special prayer for peace during evening prayers. During the Litany of Fervent Supplication at each Divine Liturgy a special petition is also to be included. The text of these prayers will be provided to the Clergy for distribution. Each household should have sufficient copies so that each young person that can read has one by their bed to use nightly and those who are too young to read may say the prayer with their parents before they go to bed. Of course all the adults should also participate.

To assist with this challenge, a special web page has been created on the Diocesan Website, Praying for Peace, which contains downloadable texts of the special prayers. Other

postings will be made on various social media outlets to encourage maximum exposure and participation.

With all of us united in prayer and laboring for peace this Nativity Fasting Season, I am convinced that we will help to make our lives and that of others throughout the world more peaceful, even if only in a small way.

Working in His Vineyard with much love,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "+ Bishop Gregory". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

+Bishop Gregory of Nyssa

This Archpastoral Letter is to be read in all parishes of the Diocese from the pulpit on the Sunday prior to the beginning of the Nativity Fast (November 13/27), if not then definitely on the first Sunday of the Nativity Fast (November 20/December 4) during the reading of the parish announcements.

On Stewardship and the Orthodox Life – Part 98:

A Kingdom of Priests



“Jesus Christ the faithful witness, the first-born of the dead, and the ruler of kings on earth. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood and made us a kingdom, priests...” (Revelation 1:5-6 RSV)

In the Biblical history of God’s dealing with His people in the Old Testament, we see God forming a people by telling them, over and over, what He had done for them and what He will do for them. *“... you shall be my people, and I will be your God”* (Jeremiah 30:22 RSV). God had created them; God had freed them from slavery; God had given them the Law and the way He wanted them to live. In all of this, unfaithful as the people were, God kept on being their God, saving, preserving, and, ultimately, sending His Son for the sake of their eternal salvation.

Having sent His Son, and having raised Him from the dead the focus in the New Testament is not so much on what God has done as it is on what His people can do for Him. What God chooses to do is to form His people into what St. John the Apostle reports to us in Revelation as a “kingdom of priests.”

A priest is one who sacrifices on behalf of some group or individual. Thus, this “kingdom” of priests, this nation of priests, is a collection of people who sacrifice on behalf of others. As early as Exodus 19:6 (RSV) God called Israel to be a *“kingdom of priests and a holy nation.”* This seems to be the plan of God all along. All people, given the nature of Christ, are to become as Christ is: one who sacrifices for others.

This nature of people being priests who sacrifice for others shows up from time to time – but, unfortunately, not often enough. The 2005 hurricanes Katrina and Rita found churches around the country mobilizing to help the devastated residents of Louisiana and Mississippi. They opened their checkbooks and church buildings to help displaced people from these natural disasters. Some churches provided permanent housing and health care for those who had homes no more. This was a kingdom of priests in action, sacrificing of themselves for those in need.

To be a part of that kingdom of priests, Christian stewards offer something that is dear to us. Christian stewards sacrifice not only in times of dire need, but all the time, in every situation, for anyone in need. We give not because someone has lost something, and we think they need it again. We give because God has offered us so much. We, as the people of God, respond to God’s great goodness by our continually being priests: those who sacrifice on behalf of others. *(from acrod.org)*

GUIDELINES FOR THE NATIVITY FAST

The Nativity Fast is one of the four Canonical Fasting Seasons in the Church year. This is a *joyous* fast in anticipation of the Nativity of Christ. Because it begins the day after the commemoration of the Apostle Philip (Nov. 14th), it is often referred to as the Apostle Philip fast. Although it is as long as Great Lent, it is not as severe. From November 15th to December 19th, Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays are strict fasting days; on Tuesdays and Thursdays, wine and oil are permitted; on Saturdays and Sundays, fish is also permitted. From December 20–24, wine and oil are only permitted on Saturdays and Sundays; all other days are strict fasting days. On December 24th, no food is eaten until the first star appears in the sky (unless it is a Saturday or Sunday, in which case a meal is allowed after Divine Liturgy.)

The Purpose of Fasting

The purpose of fasting is to focus on the things that are above, the Kingdom of God. It is a means of putting on virtue in reality, here and now. Through it we are freed from dependence on worldly things. We fast faithfully and in secret, not judging others, and not holding ourselves up as an example.

- Fasting in itself is not a means of pleasing God. Fasting is not a punishment for our sins. Nor is fasting a means of suffering and pain to be undertaken as some kind of atonement. Christ already redeemed us on His Cross. Salvation is a gift from God that is not bought by our hunger or thirst.
- We fast to be delivered from carnal passions so that God’s gift of Salvation may bear fruit in us.
- We fast and turn our eyes toward God in His Holy Church. Fasting and prayer go together.
- Fasting is not irrelevant. Fasting is not obsolete, and it is not something for someone else. Fasting is from God, for us, right here and right now.
- Most of all, we should not devour each other. We ask God to “set a watch and keep the door of our lips.”

Do Not Fast

- if you are pregnant or nursing a newborn;
- during serious illness;
- without prayer;
- without alms-giving;
- according to your own will without guidance from your spiritual father.

(adapted from antiochian.org)

A Word From the Holy Fathers

The time which you lend to God is not lost: he will return it to you with large interest. Whatever difficulties may trouble you the Lord will disperse them. To those who have preferred spiritual welfare, He will give health of body, keenness of mind, success in business, and unbroken prosperity. And, even if in this life our efforts should not realize our hopes, the teachings of the Holy Spirit are none the less a rich treasure for the ages to come. Deliver your heart, then, from the cares of this life and give close heed to my words. Of what avail will it be to you if you are here in the body, and your heart is anxious about your earthly treasure?

– St Basil the Great

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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, Alicia Barosio and family, Jeffrey Carey, Tatyana and Slava Chumak & family, Xenia Chilkowich, Jon Church, Ramius Connour, Cary Cooper, Curtis Cooper, Tina Crull, Ron Dominecki, 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, John Sparks, Dawn & Faith Ulmschneider, Lydia Vita, Christine, Marshall, Nathaniel, Subdcn. Nectarios 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.)