

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 20, 2016 – Venerable Gregory the Decapolite Forefeast of the Entrance of the Theotokos into the Temple

The Feast of the Entry of the Most Holy Theotokos into the Temple has only one day of prefeast. The hymns for today praise St Anna for bringing her daughter, the living temple of God, to the Temple in Jerusalem.

The three Old Testament readings at Great Vespers refer to the Temple. The first lesson (Exodus 40:1-5, 9-10, 16, 34-35) refers to the arrangement of the tabernacle of the tent of the congregation (a portable sanctuary which was carried by the Israelites in their wanderings). The second lesson (III Kings/I Kings 7:51; 8:1, 3-7, 9-11) describes the dedication of Solomon's Temple. The third lesson (Ezekiel 43:27-44:4) speaks of the gate of the sanctuary which faces east. God enters through this gate, which is shut so that no one else can enter by it.

Saint Gregory the Decapolite was born in the Isaurian city of Decapolis (ten cities) in the eighth century. From his childhood he loved the temple of God and church services. He read the Holy Scripture constantly and with reverence.

In order to avoid the marriage which his parents had intended for him, he secretly left home. He spent all his life wandering: he was in Constantinople, Rome,

Corinth, and he lived as an ascetic on Olympus for a while. St Gregory preached the Word of God everywhere, denouncing the Iconoclast heresy, strengthening the faith and fortitude of the Orthodox, whom the heretics in those times oppressed, tortured and imprisoned.

Through his ascetic effort and prayer, St Gregory attained the gifts of prophecy and wonderworking. After overcoming the passions and reaching the height of virtue, he was permitted to hear angelic singing in praise of the Holy Trinity. St Gregory left the monastery of St Menas near Thessalonica, where he had labored for a long time, and he went again to Constantinople in order to combat the Iconoclast heresy. At the capital, a grievous illness undermined his strength, and he departed to the Lord in the year 816.

St Gregory was buried at a monastery in Constantinople, and many miracles took place at his tomb. As a result, the monks removed the holy relics of St Gregory and enshrined them in the church where people could venerate them.

When Constantinople fell to the Turks in 1453, the relics of St Gregory were carried to the region of the Danube by a Turkish official. In 1498 Barbu Craiovescu, the Ban of the Romanian Land (Wallachia) heard of the miracles performed by the holy relics and bought them for a considerable sum of money. Barbu Craiovescu placed the relics in the main church of Bistritsa Monastery which he founded in Rimnicu Vilcea, where they remain to the present day. A small book describing the miracles and healings performed by St Gregory the Decapolite in Romania has been written by Abbess Olga Gologan, who reposed in 1972. (*from oca.org*)

Today's Epistle Lesson – St. Paul's Letter to the Galatians 6:11-18

Brethren, see with what large letters I have written to you with my own hand! As many as desire to make a good showing in the flesh, these *would* compel you to be circumcised, only that they may not suffer persecution for the cross of Christ. For not even those who are circumcised keep the law, but they desire to have you circumcised that they may boast in your flesh. But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but a new creation. And as many as walk according to this rule, peace and mercy *be* upon them, and upon the Israel of God. From now on let no one trouble me, for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus. Brethren, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be* with your spirit. Amen.

Today's Gospel Lesson – Saint Luke 12:16-21

Jesus spoke this parable: “The ground of a certain rich man yielded plentifully. And he thought within himself, saying, ‘What shall I do, since I have no room to store my crops?’ So he said, ‘I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops and my goods. And I will say to my soul, ‘Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, *and* be merry.’” But God said to him, ‘Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?’ So *is* he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.”

On Stewardship and the Orthodox Life – Parts 99-100:



Saved

“...*what must I do to be saved?*” (Acts 16:30 RSV)

The 16th chapter of the Book of the Acts of the Apostles relates a story of the Holy Apostle Peter and his partner Silas healing a slave girl from an evil spirit. This healing causes the girl's owners to lose the opportunity to make money from her. After inciting the crowd, the owners have Paul and Silas put in jail. While securely locked up in an inner cell, Paul and Silas sing hymns to God. Suddenly an earthquake looses their chains and opens the jail doors. The responsible jailer, seeing the opportunity for his prisoners to escape, readies to kill himself. Paul reassures him, “*We are all here.*”

Trembling before Paul and Silas, the jailer asks, “*What must I do to be saved?*”

This is a key question for Apostle and Evangelist Luke who writes this story. Back in Luke 10, a similar question to Jesus results in the story of the Good Samaritan. Later in Luke 18, a young ruler asks the same question. “*What must I do to be saved?*” The answer to the jailer's question is short and to the point: “*Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved...*” (Acts 16:31 RSV).

For some people, this brief statement to “believe” stands as the endpoint of their life of conversion to Christ. Some can even recite the date and time that they were “saved.” But one must read on the Acts 16 to hear the rest of the story: “*And they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all that were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their wounds, and he was baptized at once, with all his family. Then he brought them up into his house, and set food before them; and he rejoiced with all his household that he had believed in God*” (Acts 16:32-34 RSV). St. Paul and St. Silas were too good at being missionaries to leave it for the jailer to just “believe.” They spoke the word of the Lord to the jailer

and his family – and they baptized them all! The response of the jailer was to care for Paul and Silas and invite them to his home for a festive meal.

Christian stewards are well past the point of considering *from what* they are saved. Holy Baptism, Holy Chrismation, Holy Confession, Divine Liturgy, Holy Communion and ongoing study and instruction keep them from all that. Rather, Christian stewards ask a different question, not “What must I do to be saved?” but rather “*For what did God save me?*” God saves us from eternal separation from Him, to be sure. But He saves us for a purpose: to extend God’s Kingdom on earth, now and end ever and unto ages of ages. Salvation is not a simple, one time event that frees us from responsibility. Salvation is the taking on of a partnership with God.

“The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it.” (Genesis 2:15 RSV)

Sometimes I have heard these types of questions about how God works: Why does God put us through the rigor of prayer, study and discipline? Why doesn’t God just write the answer to all things large in the sky so no one will miss it? Why doesn’t God program us to be good, and just, and loving to one another? Why doesn’t God just end terrorism, disease, war, and humans treating other humans badly?

From the time of creation, God has sought out a partnership with humans. He put Adam into the Garden of Eden, not just to lounge around and enjoy the scenery, but “... *to till it and keep it.*” God calls these partners “stewards.” At the basis of all stewardship, therefore of all Christian and Orthodox life, is that God and human stewards work together to manage God’s world. To God belongs all the resources of creation. To us is given the responsibility to manage these resources. Yet it is we ourselves who think we own everything. We think that our ever-growing knowledge and sophistication keep us in control. It seems that more often than not, we humans forget our role and purpose for being placed in God’s creation.

The task for humans is quite simple: care for God’s creation. Such care begins with worship and praise in thanksgiving for all that God has given us in His creation. In so doing, humans can begin to work for the betterment of creation without the worry for personal well-being. That’s right! This is what our Lord and God and Savior Jesus Christ said about that: *“Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you shall eat or what you shall drink, nor about your body, what you shall put on. ...if God so clothes the grass of the field, ... will he not much more clothe you? Therefore do not be anxious, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ ... your heavenly Father knows that you need them all* (Matthew 6:25,31,32 RSV).

It is true that one of the ways all the earth's people are connected is that all of them are partners with God who both celebrate the magnificence of God's creation, but also in preserving the gifts God gives to us through it. What we give back to God in the partnership is good management. We have been given charge to manage all that God has created and prepared for us. We are the managers. We are, like Adam, to "keep" this new garden we call earth. Yes – that's right: a manager is also called a steward. Stewardship is the partnership with God to manage ALL that He has given us. It's still His. *(from acrod.org)*

ALSO COMMEMORATED TODAY: ST. PROCLUS, ARCHBISHOP OF CONSTANTINOPLE



Saint Proclus, Archbishop of Constantinople, from his early years devoted all his time to prayer and the study of Holy Scripture. The Lord granted him the great good fortune to be a disciple of St John Chrysostom (November 13), who at first ordained him as a deacon, and then to the holy priesthood. He witnessed the appearance of the Apostle Paul to St John Chrysostom. St Proclus received from his teacher a profound understanding of Holy Scripture, and learned to elucidate his thoughts in a polished form.

After the exile and death of St John Chrysostom, the holy Patriarch of Constantinople Sisinius (426-427) consecrated St Proclus as bishop of the city of Kyzikos, but under the influence of Nestorian heretics he was expelled by his flock there. St Proclus then returned to the capital and preached the Word of God in the churches of Constantinople, strengthening listeners in the Orthodox Faith and denouncing the impiety of the heretics. He once preached a sermon before Nestorius in which he fearlessly defended the title "Theotokos" in speaking of the holy Virgin. Upon the death of the Patriarch St Sisinius, St Proclus was chosen to take his place. Having thus been made Patriarch of Constantinople, he guided the Church over the course of twelve years (434-447). By the efforts of St Proclus, the relics of St John Chrysostom were transferred from Comana to Constantinople in the time of the holy emperor St Theodosius II (408-450).

When St Proclus was Patriarch, the Empire suffered destructive earthquakes, lasting for several months. At Bithynia, in the Hellespont, and in Phrygia cities were devastated, rivers disappeared from the face of the earth, and terrible flooding occurred in previously dry places. The people of Constantinople came out of the city with the patriarch and emperor at their head and offered prayers for an end to the unprecedented calamities.

During one prayer service, a boy from the crowd was snatched up into the air by an unseen force and carried up to such a height that he was no longer to be seen by human eyes. Then, whole and unharmed, the child was lowered to the ground and he reported that he heard and he saw the angels glorifying God singing: "Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal." All the people began to sing this Trisagion Prayer, adding to it the refrain, "Have mercy on us!" Then the earthquakes stopped. The Orthodox Church sings still this prayer at divine services to this very day.

The Constantinople flock esteemed their Patriarch for his ascetic life, for his concern about the downtrodden, and for his preaching. Many works of the saint have survived to the present day. Best known are his discourses against the Nestorians, two tracts of the saint in praise of the Mother of God, and four tracts on the Nativity of Christ, setting forth the Orthodox teaching about the Incarnation of the Son of God. The activity of the holy patriarch in establishing decorum in all the church affairs gained him universal esteem. Surrounded by love and respect, St Proclus departed to the Lord after serving as Patriarch for twenty years. (*from oca.org*)

ST. SOZOMENOS OF KARPASIA

Saint Sozomenos lived as hermit in a cave on Mount Kompsa in the Karpas peninsula. The biographer of the Saint, Monk Akakios, who wrote his divine service mentions the following in his synaxarion about the Saint:

"The hermitage where this Saint Sozomenos lived as a hermit, in a cave on a mountain near the villages of Tavrou, Galatia, Livadi and other villages, in a plateau, is called Kompsa, and over there, his holy church is built, and inside it is the cave where he lived as an ascetic life. Some of the remains of the Saint still survive, and they issue forth a very pleasant scent, and the Christians venerate them, all those who go there for their illnesses to be cured. This holy Saint works so many miracles, as much as to the faithful Christians as to the Agarene [Muslim] unbelievers, who go with their wives and quickly get well, if they have faith and a longing for God and for the Saint. And inside the church towards the north, there is an arch, and in there, the Saint has been painted as an old man and not as a hierarch, and there are letters

saying "Agios Sozomenos" (like I read them when I was a child and still lived with my parents, during the year of Christ 1670).

There were still some remains of the Saint left at that time, and they were inside the holy cave, where he passed away. But now [1733], I don't know if some of his remains still survive, because during the time of the Christhater and cursed from God Markoullis, who took the census, namely the population inventory, Cyprus was devastated and many Christians of the island were killed. Some became Muslims and were Turkified, others left and went to other places, like my relatives who left at that time, and we went to the lands of Cilicia and stayed there for 50 years, and when my parents died, I came again back to Cyprus during the year of Christ 1731.

And I stayed at the city of Karpasia [of Rizokarpaso] and wrote the divine service for a few new saints. Saint Sozomenos, I believe, lived during the Christian era [314-1191] and because he is a new Saint and is not found in the books of the Holy [Orthodox] Church of Christ, I took the initiative, because of the many miracles that the Saint performs and does, and composed these few verses [which are to be found in his divine service], and I hope that they will be found by Christians in future years, and copy them, and read them, and chant them during his feast day."

And Monk Akakios continues writing that according to the tradition of the residents of the region, Saint Auxentios, who lived as a hermit farther north, not very far, to the north of the village of Eftakomi, used to leave his hermitage each Saturday evening and came and met Saint Sozomenos at his hermitage, and they prayed and chanted together until Sunday evening, when at which time he left and returned back to his own hermitage after receiving forgiveness. Thus, all week they lived and prayed alone as hermits and during the weekends they met and prayed together. From the above tradition, the conclusion is given that this Saint must have been one of the 300 Christians that reached Cyprus from Palestine after the persecutions of the Arabs.

Near the village of Davlos in the Karpas peninsula, to the east, next to the sea, there is a picturesque chapel dedicated to Saint Sozomenos, which today is under Turkish occupation. It has been sacked by the Turks. Most likely, this chapel is dedicated to Saint Sozomenos, the hermit who lived on Mount Kompsa because in distance Davlos is near enough to this Saint's hermitage, around 12 kilometres, and not to the hermitage of Saint Sozomenos of Potamia which is very far away, at the province Nicosia. This chapel of Saint Sozomenos must have been built many years ago, most likely by somebody from the village of Davlos who suffered from some kind of illness and in order for it to be cured by the Saint, he promised to build a church in his name. It appears that after the Saint cured his illness, the



patient built this church for the Saint. However, in Davlos Saint Sozomenos is celebrated by the residents of the village on the 7th of August, the day on which the Orthodox Church celebrates the memory of the Saint and Martyr Dometios.

The last known miracle made by Saint Sozomenos took place a few years before the 1974 Turkish invasion of Cyprus and it

happened as follows: A faithful Christian who honored Saint Sozomenos, happened to have a wound on one of his legs which was caused by infection, and which in the Cypriot dialect is called limpourka which means "ant-hive" in English. He went to many doctors in many countries of the world. The result was zero, and while feeling distressed, as he was in the bed of pain in England, because it was said to him by the doctors that there was no other treatment other than to cut his leg in order to save his life, he began to plea to Saint Sozomenos in order to find an exit from the impasse that he was found in. In his despair he called out: "My God help me, Saint Sozomenos save me." Afterwards, he fell into a light drowsiness and during that time he saw an aged and revered man approaching and saying to him: "What happened to you, man of God, and you are laid down sick and distressed?" The man showed him his leg and said: "This is what happened to me." The Saint said: "What did the doctors say to you?" The patient answered that the doctors wanted to cut his leg. And the Saint said to him: "Don't accept it; I will heal you by the grace of Christ. I do not want anything from you other than to make (the celebration) of my feast day." And after he made the sign of the Cross on the patient's leg, he was immediately healed, and right after, the Saint disappeared. When the patient woke up, he saw that his leg was truly cured. From then on, up until the time he died, he celebrated the feast of the Saint on the 7th of August of each year. The name of the cured man is Konstantinos Koumantaris from the village of Davlos, Famagusta. Is it also reported by Monk Akakios that Saint Sozomenos served as bishop of Karpasia (of Rizokarpaso). The memory of Saint Sozomenos of Karpasia is celebrated on the 20th of November, where thousands of faithful gather to celebrate his memory. *(from johnsanidopoulos.com)*

A Word From the Holy Fathers

We fast by abstaining from wine and flesh, not because we abhor them as abominations, but because we look for our reward; that having scorned things sensible, we may enjoy a spiritual and intellectual feast; and that having now sown in tears we may reap in joy in the world to come. Therefore, do not despise those

who eat, and because of the weakness of their bodies partake of food; likewise, do not blame these who use a little wine for their stomach's sake and their often infirmities, nor condemn the men as sinners, nor abhor the flesh as strange food; for the Apostle knows some of this sort, when he says: forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe. In abstaining then from these things, do not abstain as from things abominable, or you will gain no reward: but as being good things disregard them for the sake of the better spiritual things set before you.

– St Cyril of Alexandria

Giving Good Gifts

In this Nativity season, we have an opportunity to help establish a young family in their first apartment. So, if you have beds, couches, chairs, tables, TVs, microwaves, and other working furniture and household items, please let us know who you are and what you have on the sign-up sheet in the social hall. The need is imminent so don't delay!



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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 Dominiacki, 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. Nectaros and Ia, the Syrian Christians displaced by war, Mother Virginia Marie and the Carmelite Nuns of Port Tobacco, and all those in need of our prayers. (Please advise Fr. Joseph of changes.)