

# 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.**



## **September 10, 2017 – Sunday Before Elevation of the Cross Afterfeast of the Nativity of the Theotokos | Martyrs Menodora, Metrodora, and Nymphodora of Bithynia**

The Holy Virgins Menodora, Nymphodora, and Metrodora (305-311), were sisters from Bithynia (Asia Minor). Distinguished for their special piety, they wanted to preserve their virginity and avoid worldly associations. They chose a solitary place for themselves in the wilderness and spent their lives in deeds of fasting and prayer.

Reports of the holy life of the virgins soon spread, since healings of the sick began to occur through their prayers. The Bithynia region was governed at that time by a man named Frontonus, who ordered that the sisters be arrested and brought before him. At first he tried to persuade them to renounce Christ, promising great honors and rewards. But the holy sisters steadfastly confessed their faith before him, rejecting all his suggestions. They told him that they did not value the temporal things of this world, and that they were prepared to die for their Heavenly Bridegroom, for death would be their gateway to eternal life.

Flying into a rage, the governor took out his wrath on Saint Menodora, the eldest sister. She was stripped of her clothes and beaten by four men, while a herald

urged her to offer sacrifice to the gods. The saint bravely endured the torments and cried out, “Sacrifice? Can’t you see that I am offering myself as a sacrifice to my God?” Then they renewed their torments with even greater severity. Then the martyr cried out, “ Lord Jesus Christ, joy of my heart, my hope, receive my soul in peace.” With these words she gave up her soul to God, and went to her Heavenly Bridegroom.

Four days later, they brought the two younger sisters Metrodora and Nymphodora to the court. They showed them the battered body of their older sister to frighten them. The virgins wept over her, but remained steadfast. Then Saint Metrodora was tortured. She died, crying out to her beloved Lord Jesus Christ with her last breath. Then they turned to the third sister, Nymphodora. Before her lay the bruised bodies of her sisters. Frontonus hoped that this sight would intimidate the young virgin. Pretending that he was charmed by her youth and beauty, he urged her to worship the pagan gods, promising great rewards and honors. Saint Nymphodora scoffed at his words, and shared the fate of her older sisters. She was tortured and beaten to death with iron rods.

The bodies of the holy martyrs were to be burned in a fire, but a heavy rain extinguished the blazing fire, and lightning struck down Frontonus and his servant. Christians took up the bodies of the holy sisters and reverently buried them at the so-called Warm Springs at Pythias (Bithynia).

Part of the relics of the holy martyrs are preserved on Mt. Athos in the Protection cathedral of the Saint Panteleimon Russian monastery, and the hand of Saint Metrodora is on the Holy Mountain in the monastery of the Pantocrator. (*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 John 3:13-17**

The Lord said, “No one has ascended to heaven but He who came down from heaven, *that is*, the Son of Man who is in heaven. And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.”

### *A Word From the Holy Fathers*

It seems to me, indeed, that Christ, who is also our God, the Sovereign and Lord of the universe, for reasons that are not only beyond understanding but many other inexplicable ones as well, fully effected salvation for the whole world rather through His willing passion and not by despotic and absolute power. Nonetheless, exactly for this reason I believe that he has left an especially great and clear consolation to those who endure hardships in life and suffer the worst in the example of His personal sufferings and His own shameful death.

Having these things in mind, you too should rather rejoice in the fact that you, the servant, happen to be imitating the Master. But do not be concerned over the question of crowns as though you have been educated by the enemies of truth, and the unwilling. – St. Photius the Great, Patriarch of Constantinople, *Epistle 149, to Ioannes, Metropolitan of Heraklia*

### **National ACRY Mission Project**

At the National ACRY Convention this past Labor Day Weekend, the ACRY proposed a Mission Project in order to help the IOCC replenish their supplies of Emergency Clean-Up Buckets (which have been depleted due to Hurricane Harvey, and are needed due to Hurricane Irma). Representatives from the IOCC have noted that these kits are what they are *most in need of*. As a Chapter or a Parish, we are asking churches to put together Clean-Up Buckets that will then be donated to the IOCC (flyers with details are available in the social hall; one is also being sent with the bulletin by email). Deanery representatives will help coordinate efforts for their specific deanery (if you're interested in volunteering for this, contact Fr. Peter Zarynow).

## On Stewardship and the Orthodox Life – Part 151: Giving Away the Kingdom



*“Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a nation producing the fruits of it.” (Matthew 21: 43 RSV)*

The New Testament is full of parables which Christ attempts to teach us using common day examples. We see in Matthew, Chapter 21, several parables. The parable of the two sons (21:28-32) and the parable of the wicked tenants (21:33-41) both teach us that we are not guaranteed a place in the Kingdom of God. Eternal life is truly a gift that God has given us but how we experience that gift depends entirely on how we use the gifts that God has given us as well as expressing our gratitude for those gifts.

In the first parable, we see one son promising his father that he will go into the fields and work while the second son states that he will not go into the field to work but changes his mind and does. Christ asks which of the sons obeyed his father? Are we like the first son who talked the game but that is all or like the second son who initially refused but then realized the errors of his ways and went to do what the father requested finally realizing all the father has given him.

The second parable concerns a landowner who cleared the land, planted vines, makes a wine press and then turn it over to tenants to work. When the owner sends servants and his son, the tenants beat them and in the case of the son, kills him. He asks the question to the religious leaders, “what will he do to those tenants?” The religious leaders say that he should put them to death not realizing they in their self-righteousness are condemning themselves. God has given them every spiritual advantage, instructions, liturgy, wisdom, the prophets and still, they missed the mark of the Messiah. They rejected the message. What was the result of all this, the Jews had their kingdom taken away, and God gave to another, who heard the message, accepted it and changed the world.

What do you think will happen if the message is again rejected? WE must use the time, talents and treasure that God has given us to produce the fruits of the message, the fruits of the vineyard. We have been given so much and have done so little with it. It is not too late to start. Use the gifts that God has given you for the glory of God and for a good accounting at the awesome judgment seat by being good stewards. *(from acrod.org)*

## September Schedule Changes

1. Beginning on September 10, immediately after Divine Liturgy, Fr. Joseph will be out of town until September 24. While away, he can be contacted by e-mail and text (send texts to Pani's cellphone (571-225-4700)). If a priest is needed, Fr. Peter Zarynow will be available at 301-299-5120. On September 22 and 23 Fr. Nectarios Trevino will be available while Fr. Peter is away. He can be reached at 703-629-0414. During Fr. Joseph's absence, we won't have any of our usual weekly services.
2. On Sunday, Sept. 17 at 9:30 AM, Deacon Stephen Hall will serve Third and Sixth Hours, followed by a Deacon service with Eucharist at 10:00.
3. God willing, both Deacon and Priest will serve Matins and Liturgy together on the 24th--just like the old days!

### Follow Our Diocese On-Line

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, Presbyteria Katie Baker and family, Santiago Alzugaray, Alicia Barosio and family, Jeffrey Carey, Tatyana and Slava Chumak & family, Xenia Chilkowich, Jon Church, Ramius Connour, Curtis Cooper, Luke Cooper, Tina Crull, Mary Diane David, Ron Domieniecki, Linda A. Georgiev, Heather Himler, 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, Valentina Makowelski, Susan Matula, Anna Meinhold, Dn. Henry Middleton, Josh Moore, David & Kathryn Newman, Bobby Nutter & Family, Henry & Lisa Osborne, Westin Perry & Parents, John Reece, Mary Reed, Chris & Kaitlin Rixey, Jerry Von Ronne, Anne Rosario, James, Theodore and Christina Ristas, Samson Family, Sharon Sheptak, 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.)