

# 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 17, 2017 – Sunday After Elevation of the Cross**

**Martyrs Sophia & Her Daughters Faith, Hope, & Love of Rome**

Martyrs Saint Sophia and her Daughters Faith, Hope and Love were born in Italy. Their mother was a pious Christian widow who named her daughters for the three Christian virtues. Faith was twelve, Hope was ten, and Love was nine. Saint Sophia raised them in the love of the Lord Jesus Christ. Saint Sophia and her daughters did not hide their faith in Christ, but openly confessed it before everyone.

An official named Antiochus denounced them to the emperor Hadrian (117-138), who ordered that they be brought to Rome. Realizing that they would be taken before the emperor, the holy virgins prayed fervently to the Lord Jesus Christ, asking that He give them the strength not to fear torture and death. When the holy virgins and their mother came before the emperor, everyone present was amazed at their composure. They looked as though they had been brought to some happy festival, rather than to torture. Summoning each of the sisters in turn, Hadrian urged them to offer sacrifice to the goddess Artemis. The young girls remained unyielding.

Then the emperor ordered them to be tortured. They burned the holy virgins over an iron grating, then threw them into a red-hot oven, and finally into a cauldron with boiling tar, but the Lord preserved them.

The youngest child, Love, was tied to a wheel and they beat her with rods until her body was covered all over with bloody welts. After undergoing unspeakable torments, the holy virgins glorified their Heavenly Bridegroom and remained steadfast in the Faith.

They subjected Saint Sophia to another grievous torture: the mother was forced to watch the suffering of her daughters. She displayed adamant courage, and urged her daughters to endure their torments for the sake of the Heavenly Bridegroom. All three maidens were beheaded, and joyfully bent their necks beneath the sword.

In order to intensify Saint Sophia's inner suffering, the emperor permitted her to take the bodies of her daughters. She placed their remains in coffins and loaded them on a wagon. She drove beyond the city limits and reverently buried them on a high hill. Saint Sophia sat there by the graves of her daughters for three days, and finally she gave up her soul to the Lord. Even though she did not suffer for Christ in the flesh, she was not deprived of a martyr's crown. Instead, she suffered in her heart. Believers buried her body there beside her daughters. The relics of the holy martyrs have rested at El'zasa, in the church of Esho since the year 777. (*from oca.org*)

## **Today's Epistle Lesson – St. Paul's Second Letter to the Corinthians 4:6-15**

Brethren, it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us. *We are* hard-pressed on every side, yet not crushed; *we are* perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed — always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. For we who live are always delivered to death for Jesus' sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. So then death is working in us, but life in you. And since we have the same spirit of faith, according to what is written, "I believed and therefore I spoke," we also believe and therefore speak, knowing that He who raised up the Lord Jesus will also raise us up with Jesus, and will present *us* with you. For all things *are* for your sakes, that grace, having spread through the many, may cause thanksgiving to abound to the glory of God.

## Today's Gospel Lesson – Saint Matthew 22:35-46

At that time, one of them, a lawyer, asked *Him a question*, testing Him, and saying, “Teacher, which *is* the great commandment in the law?” Jesus said to him, ““You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is *the* first and great commandment. And *the* second *is* like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.”

While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, saying, “What do you think about the Christ? Whose Son is He?” They said to Him, “*The Son of David.*” He said to them, “How then does David in the Spirit call Him ‘Lord,’ saying: ‘The Lord said to my Lord, “Sit at My right hand, Till I make Your enemies Your footstool”’? If David then calls Him ‘Lord,’ how is He his Son?” And no one was able to answer Him a word, nor from that day on did anyone dare question Him anymore.

## On Stewardship and the Orthodox Life – Part 152: Bad Excuses



*“Honor the Lord with your substances and with the first fruits of all your produce; then your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will be bursting with wine.”*  
(Proverbs 3: 9-10 RSV)

We tend to shy away from a discussion involving money when it comes to stewardship. The reason lies in the fact that the Western church has put such an emphasis on it in America that even the Orthodox Church has adopted the “westernization of stewardship.” We have tried very hard to present the true biblical connotation of stewardship through the Diocesan Stewardship Commission. Stewardship of your treasure/wealth is an important factor in the church. Without it, the church cannot pay the mortgage, priest salary, utilities and most importantly, outreach efforts. Excuses for not giving in proportions to what God has given to you are usually based on the **misunderstanding of scriptures** and **misunderstanding their church**.

There are **five bad excuses** for not giving to the church. First, “**God doesn’t tell us to give!**” What? The scriptures are full of verses about generosity, look at Proverbs 3:9 or 1 Timothy 6: 17-19 and then try to use the excuse that God does not tell us to give.

I hear the next excuse all the time, “**I don’t make enough money.**” Did you ever notice that there is no “**exclusion clause**” in the scriptures! Show me where it says that if you don’t make enough money, you are excluded from giving to God. Read

Luke 21: 1-4, where Christ commends the poor woman for giving in poverty and not of surplus.

Next is the excuse that "***I am in debt.***" Remember you made the choices to put yourself in that position through your self-centered desires and although you should meet the obligations you committed yourself to, do not make the mistake of not giving to God in gratitude for what He has already given you.

The fourth excuse is a dandy. This one states, "***My money won't make a difference!***" You feel that your contribution is too small to have an impact. **NONSENSE!** It is amazing what God can do when a lot of people contribute a small amount in cheerfulness and gratitude. That small amount helps pay the priest who administers the sacraments, helps counsel and mend marriages, counsel those addicted, feeds the poor and all because you gave!

And final we get the granddaddy of all excuses, "***I know how to manage money better than the church.***" Everybody is a financial whiz, how is that working for you? Have you taken the time to talk to your priest about how the money is spent and what impact it has in the parish? Have you taken the time to get involved with the parish and help impact the lives of others without being critical of everything that is being done? Have you tried to work in the church without being sensitive to who gets credit for successes or initiatives?

If you are not giving to God (the Church) in proportion to what He has given you as the first fruits of what He has given you then you need to reread the scriptures and talk to your priest about how this may affect your salvation. **Be a servant steward for our Lord.** (*from acrod.org*)

## *A Word From the Holy Fathers*

The temptations of those being tempted become trials; but, if they are not tried, they do not become recipients of crowns and prizes.

– St. Photius the Great, *Epistle 257, to Elias, protospatharios*

There is no entrance for you to the gate of the Kingdom of God because the love of money has blocked this for you. If, however, you break down the barrier through love of the poor, living by almsgiving will more quickly make you acceptable.

– *Epistle 138, to Anastasios the Tax Collector*

## **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). St. Thomas parish will be assembling these kits next Sunday. Thank you to all who donated items – we have everything we need!

## *September Schedule Changes*

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. God willing, both Deacon Steve 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/acroddioocese>

**Twitter:** <https://twitter.com/acrodnews>

**You Tube:** <https://youtube.com/acroddioocese>

**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 Neophytos of Nyeri and Mt. Kenya, Fr. John & Pani Betty Jean Baranik, Fr. Vincent Saverino, Presbytera 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 Dominiecki, 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.)