

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

Children's Sunday School 9:30 AM

Divine Liturgy 10:00 AM.

January 7, 2018 – Afterfeast of &

Sunday After Theophany | Synaxis of John the Baptist

In the Orthodox Church it is customary, on the day following the Great Feasts of the Lord and the Mother of God, to remember those saints who participated directly in the sacred event. So, on the day following the Theophany of the Lord, the Church honors the one who participated directly in the Baptism of Christ, placing his own hand upon the head of the Savior.

Saint John, the holy Forerunner and Baptist of the Lord, whom the Lord called the greatest of the prophets, concludes the history of the Old Testament and opens the era of the New Testament. The Church extols Saint John the Baptist as the greatest man born of a woman. He surpasses all the ancient prophets because he baptized the Messiah, Whose coming he foretold. The holy Prophet John bore witness to the Only-Begotten Son of God, incarnate in the flesh. Saint John was accounted worthy to baptize Him in the waters of the Jordan, and he was a witness of the Theophany of the Most Holy Trinity on the day of the Savior's Baptism.

The holy Prophet John was related to the Lord on His mother's side, the son of the Priest Zachariah and Righteous Elizabeth. The holy Forerunner, John, was born



six months before Christ. The Archangel Gabriel announced his birth in the Temple at Jerusalem, revealing to Zachariah that a son was to be born to him.

Through the prayers offered beforehand, the child was filled with the Holy Spirit. Saint John prepared himself in the wilds of the desert for his great service by a strict life, by fasting, prayer and sympathy for the fate of God's people.

At the age of thirty, he came forth preaching repentance. He appeared on the banks of the Jordan, to prepare the people by his preaching to accept the Savior of the world. In church hymnology, Saint John is called a "bright morning star," whose gleaming outshone the brilliance of all the other stars, announcing the coming dawn of the day of grace, illumined with the light of the spiritual Sun, our Lord Jesus Christ.

Having baptized the sinless Lamb of God, Saint John soon died a martyr's death, beheaded by the sword on orders of King Herod at the request of his daughter Salome. (On Saint John the Baptist, see Mt.3:1-16, 11:1-19, 14:1-12; Mark 1:2-8, 6:14-29; Luke 1:5-25, 39-80, 3:1-20, 7:18-35, 9:7-9; John 1:19-34, 3:22-26). The body of Saint John the Baptist was buried in the Samaritan city of Sebaste. The holy Evangelist Luke, who went preaching Christ in various cities and towns, came to Sebaste, where they gave him the right hand of the holy Prophet John, the very hand with which he had baptized the Savior. The Evangelist Luke took it with him to his native city of Antioch.

When the Moslems seized Antioch centuries later, a deacon named Job brought the holy hand of the Forerunner from Antioch to Chalcedon. From there, on the eve of the Theophany of the Lord, it was transferred to Constantinople (956) and kept thereafter.

In the year 1200, the Russian pilgrim Dobrynya, who later became Saint Anthony, Archbishop of Novgorod (February 10), saw the right hand of the Forerunner in the imperial palace. From the Lives of the Saints we learn that in the year 1263, during the capture of Constantinople by the Crusaders, the emperor Baldwin gave one bone from the wrist of Saint John the Baptist to Ottonus de Cichon, who then gave it to a Cistercian abbey in France.

The right hand continued to be kept in Constantinople. And at the end of the fourteenth to the beginning of the fifteenth centuries, the holy relic was seen at Constantinople in the Peribleptos monastery by the Russian pilgrims Stephen of Novgorod, the deacon Ignatius, the cantor Alexander and the deacon Zosimus. When Constantinople fell to the Turks in 1453, sacred objects were gathered up at the the conqueror's orders and kept under lock in the imperial treasury.

In the Lives of the Saints is clear testimony that in the year 1484 the right hand of the holy Forerunner was given away by the son of the Moslem sultan Bayazet to the knights of Rhodes to gain their good will, since a dangerous rival for Bayazet, his own brother, had allied himself with them. A contemporary participant, the vice-chancellor of Rhodes, Wilhelm Gaorsan Gallo, also speaks of this event. The knights of Rhodes, having established their base on the island of Malta (in the Mediterranean Sea), then transferred the sacred relic they had received to Malta.

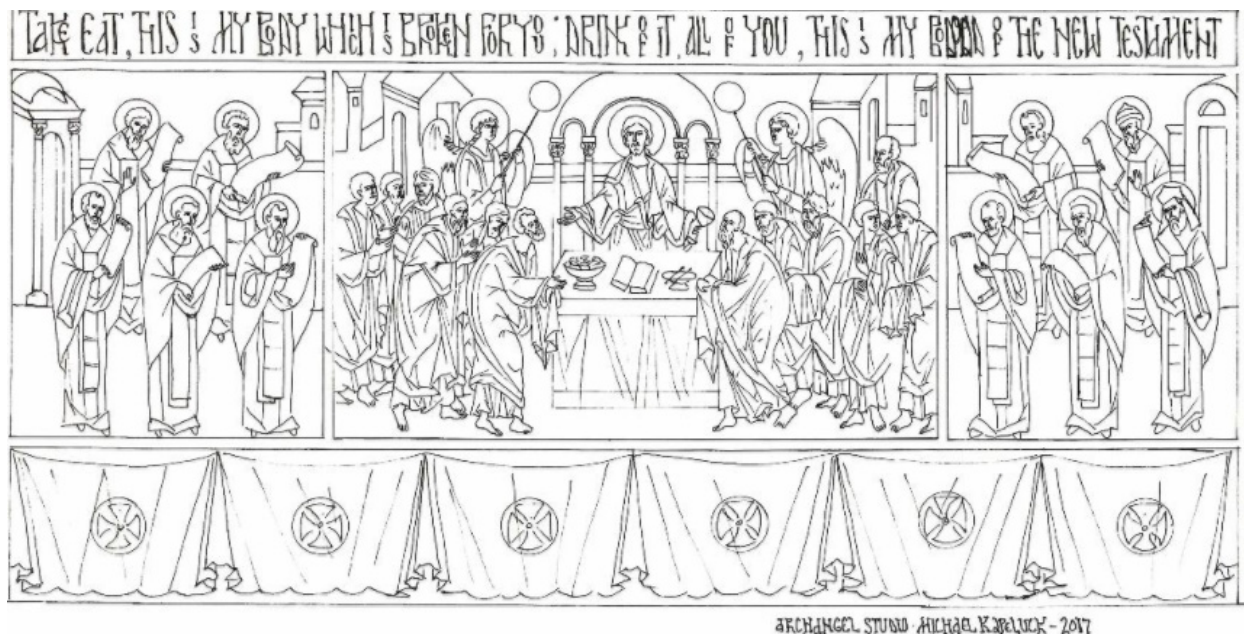
When the Russian Tsar Paul I (1796-1801) became Grand Master of the Maltese Order in honor of the holy Prophet John, the right hand of the Baptist, part of the Life-Creating Cross and the Philermos Icon (October 12) of the Mother of God (from Mt Philermos on the island of Rhodes) were transferred in 1799 from the island of Malta to Russia [because of the Napoleonic threat], to the chapel at Gatchina (October 12). In the same year these sacred items were transferred into the church dedicated to the Icon of the Savior Not Made by Hands at the Winter Palace. A special service was composed for this Feast. (*adapted from oca.org*)

Today's Epistle Lesson – Acts 19:1-8

In those days, it happened, while Apollos was at Corinth, that Paul, having passed through the upper regions, came to Ephesus. And finding some disciples he said to them, “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?” So they said to him, “We have not so much as heard whether there is a Holy Spirit.” And he said to them, “Into what then were you baptized?” So they said, “Into John’s baptism.” Then Paul said, “John indeed baptized with a baptism of repentance, saying to the people that they should believe on Him who would come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus.” When they heard *this*, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke with tongues and prophesied. Now the men were about twelve in all. And he went into the synagogue and spoke boldly for three months, reasoning and persuading concerning the things of the kingdom of God.

Today's Gospel Lesson – John 1:29-34

At that time, John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, “Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! This is He of whom I said, ‘After me comes a Man who is preferred before me, for He was before me.’ I did not know Him; but that He should be revealed to Israel, therefore I came baptizing with water.” And John bore witness, saying, “I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and He remained upon Him. I did not know Him, but He who sent me to baptize with water said to me, ‘Upon whom you see the Spirit descending, and remaining on Him, this is He who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.’ And I have seen and testified that this is the Son of God.”



Beauty Will Save the World (Dostoyevsky, The Idiot)

We are moving forward with the next phase of iconography at St. Thomas, which will complete work in the Narthex (the entry of the church) and in the Holy Place (the curved wall in the altar area). Icons of two Seraphim on the ends of the curved walls will cost \$1,700 each. Icons of the ten Bishops flanking the icon of the Heavenly Banquet in front of the altar (either side of the Banquet already in the Holy Place) will cost \$2,000 each. We will also be moving Gorazd of Prague, a Bishop whose icon currently hangs in the Nave, into the Holy Place with an icon of John of Damascus being put in his place, which can be sponsored for \$600. Four new icons will be completed in the nave, for \$750 each. The writing above the icons, as well as the "tablecloth" below will be completed, and costs have been combined with the sponsorship of the Bishops.

The icons will be installed in 2018. The last time we offered this opportunity to glorify God in His church, the response was tremendous. We are ready to collect funds to complete the project, so if you are interested in participating, please contact Josh Moore by phone at (541) 601-8413 or at jgmoore01@gmail.com.

Please see the Church website for up-to-date sponsorship information and pictures of the icon work to be completed. Any donation of \$500 or more is eligible for a memorial plaque in the social hall. **Currently** we have: Pledged/Received Funds: \$11,517 | Remaining Needed: \$14,883.

The Bishops to be placed in the Holy Place are currently planned to be (\$2,000 to sponsor one): Basil the Great, Gregory the Great, John Chrysostom, Cyprian of

Carthage, Athanasius the Great, Cyril of Alexandria, Leo the Great, Polycarp, Ignatius of Antioch (sponsored), and Peter Moghila.

2 Seraphim in the Holy Place (\$1,700 to sponsor; 1 sponsored).

John of Damascus in the nave (\$600 to sponsor)

In the Narthex: Pr. Daniel, David, Elijah, and Melchizedek. (\$750 to sponsor).

A Word From the Holy Fathers

The Oration on Holy Baptism of Gregory of Nyssa, preached at Constantinople Jan. 6, 381, being the day following the delivery of that on the Holy Lights.

Yesterday we kept high Festival on the illustrious Day of the Holy Lights; for it was fitting that rejoicings should be kept for our Salvation, and that far more than for weddings and birthdays, and namedays, and house-warmings, and registrations of children, and anniversaries, and all the other festivities that men observe for their earthly friends. And now today let us discourse briefly concerning Baptism, and the benefits which accrue to us therefrom, even though our discourse yesterday spoke of it cursorily; partly because the time pressed us hard, and partly because the sermon had to avoid tediousness. For too great length in a sermon is as much an enemy to people's ears, as too much food is to their bodies....It will be worth your while to apply your minds to what we say, and to receive our discourse on so important a subject not perfunctorily, but with ready mind, since to know the power of this Sacrament is itself Enlightenment.

The Word recognizes three Births for us; namely, the natural birth, that of Baptism, and that of the Resurrection. Of these the first is by night, and is servile, and involves passion; but the second is by day, and is destructive of passion, cutting off all the veil that is derived from birth, and leading on to the higher life; and the third is more terrible and shorter, bringing together in a moment all mankind, to stand before its Creator, and to give an account of its service and conversation here; whether it has followed the flesh, or whether it has mounted up with the spirit, and worshipped the grace of its new creation. My Lord Jesus Christ has showed that He honored all these births in His own Person; the first, by that first and quickening Inbreathing; the second by His Incarnation and the Baptism wherewith He Himself was baptized; and the third by the Resurrection of which He was the Firstfruits; condescending, as He became the Firstborn among many brethren, so also to become the Firstborn from the dead....

Let us cleanse every member, Brethren, let us purify every sense; let nothing in us be imperfect or of our first birth; let us leave nothing unilluminated. Let us enlighten our eyes, that we may look straight on, and not bear in ourselves any

harlot idol through curious and busy sight; for even though we might not worship lust, yet our soul would be defiled. If there be beam or mote, let us purge it away, that we may be able to see those of others also. Let us be enlightened in our ears; let us be enlightened in our tongue, that we may hearken what the Lord God will speak, and that He may cause us to hear His loving-kindness in the morning, and that we may be made to hear of joy and gladness, spoken into godly ears, that we may not be a sharp sword, nor a whetted razor, nor turn under our tongue labor and toil, but that we may speak the Wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden Wisdom, reverencing the fiery tongues. Let us be healed also in the smell, that we be not effeminate; and be sprinkled with dust instead of sweet perfumes, but may smell the Ointment that was poured out for us, spiritually receiving it; and so formed and transformed by it, that from us too a sweet odor may be smelled. Let us cleanse our touch, our taste, our throat, not touching them over gently, nor delighting in smooth things, but handling them as is worthy of Him, the Word That was made flesh for us; and so far following the example of Thomas, not pampering them with dainties and sauces, those brethren of a more baleful pampering, but tasting and learning that the Lord is good, with the better and abiding taste; and not for a short while refreshing that baneful and thankless dust, which lets pass and does not hold that which is given to it; but delighting it with the words which are sweeter than honey....

But one thing more I preach unto you. The Station in which you shall presently stand after your Baptism before the Great Sanctuary is a foretype of the future glory. The Psalmody with which you will be received is a prelude to the Psalmody of Heaven; the lamps which you will kindle are a Sacrament of the illumination there with which we shall meet the Bridegroom, shining and virgin souls, with the lamps of our faith shining, not sleeping through our careless-ness, that we may not miss Him that we look for if He come unexpectedly; nor yet unfed, and without oil, and destitute of good works, that we be not cast out of the Bridechamber. For I see how pitiable is such a case. He will come when the cry demands the meeting, and they who are prudent shall meet Him, with their light shining and its food abundant, but the others seeking for oil too late from those who possess it. And He will come with speed, and the former shall go in with Him, but the latter shall be shut out, having wasted in preparations the time of entrance; and they shall weep sore when all too late they learn the penalty of their slothfulness, when the Bridechamber can no longer be entered by them for all their entreaties, for they have shut it against themselves by their sin, following in another fashion the example of those who missed the Wedding feast with which the good Father feasts the good Bridegroom; one on account of a newly wedded wife; another of a newly purchased field; another of a yoke of oxen; which he and they acquired to their

misfortune, since for the sake of the little they lose the great. For none are there of the disdainful, nor of the slothful, nor of those who are clothed in filthy rags and not in the Wedding garment even though here they may have thought themselves worthy of wearing the bright robe there, and secretly intruded themselves, deceiving themselves with vain hopes. And then, What? When we have entered, then the Bridegroom knows what He will teach us, and how He will converse with the souls that have come in with Him. He will converse with them, I think in teaching things more perfect and more pure. Of which may we all, both Teachers and Taught, have share, in the Same Christ our Lord, to Whom be the Glory and the Empire, for ever and ever. Amen. [The remainder of this oration can be found at <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/310240.htm>]

Individual Assessments for 2018

Dear Fellow Parishioners,

Thanks be to God, we have reached the New Year, and with that comes our responsibility to be good stewards of all that He has entrusted to us; our environment, our parish and our Diocese.

To support our Diocese, each individual age eighteen and older (except for high school and undergraduate college students) is asked to contribute \$70.00 in 2018.

We (St Thomas Parish) have paid the 2018 assessments in full for each parishioner when we received the bill from the Diocese. We trust that each person in turn will re-pay us during the year. Your assessment are used to support the following basic needs of our Diocese:

- Our Diocesan Bishop Gregory whose Ordination and teachings are directly traceable to our Lord's Apostles. Without our Bishop, we cannot exist as a parish of the Holy Orthodox Church!

- The General Administration of our Diocese.

- Christ the Savior Seminary for the formation of the future Priests of our Diocese.

- The Church Messenger - the production and distribution of our monthly Diocesan Newspaper (If you are not receiving the Messenger, please let us know).

- The Mission Fund, which assists in the establishment and support of new mission parishes (We at St. Thomas have been the beneficiaries of this fund in the form of a generous interest-free loan toward the construction of our new church building).

- The maintenance of our Diocesan Cathedral church in Johnstown, PA, the home parish of our Diocesan Bishop and Chancellor.

If you are unsure whether your 2017 Assessment has been paid in full, please see or call Dana Dewey, Trustee, at (301) 481-3445.

Thank you in advance for your timely and generous support of our God-saved Diocese.

Yours in Christ,

Kari David, Treasurer

Dana Dewey, Trustee

Encyclical of Archbishop Demetrios for The Feast of Saint Basil and the New Year 2018

He has sent me to proclaim... the acceptable year of the Lord. (Luke 4:19)

January 1, 2017 | Feast of Saint Basil and New Year

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

In the Holy Gospel of Luke we read about the beginning of our Lord's earthly ministry. As He traveled throughout Galilee teaching in synagogues, He came to Nazareth where He had been raised. When Christ stood to speak, He read from the book of Isaiah: *The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He has anointed me to preach the good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and the recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord. (Luke 4:18-19)*

At the inception of this New Year of 2018, we affirm as Orthodox Christians that the words above offered by our Lord in reference to His divine work are also the focus of our worship and ministry. In all that we do... we look to Christ as our Savior and Guide, we offer the Gospel of life and truth, and we demonstrate the grace of God in our service to others. We preach the message of salvation. We speak of liberty in Christ to all who are in bondage to sin and the burdens of this life. We offer a witness of the healing and transformation that we find in Him. We proclaim constantly and consistently that this is *the acceptable year of the Lord....*

As we look ahead to a year full of opportunities and blessings, may we join together in praising and thanking God for all that He has given us for our lives, our communities, and for the work of ministry. May this year be acceptable to the Lord through our worship and our offering of service.... May we stay focused on our calling and commitment to share our saving faith and our dynamic heritage, and above anything else *to grow in the knowledge and grace of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ; to Him be the glory to the day of eternity, Amen. (II Peter 3:18)*

Have a blessed and happy New Year.

With paternal love in Christ,

† **DEMETRIOS, Archbishop of America**

Parish News

1. Fr. Joseph is planning a trip to visit the Kardiotissa myrrh-streaming icon of the Mother of God in Taylor, Pennsylvania on Wednesday, January 17th. Contact Fr. Joseph if you are interested in going. If you're planning to drive, the address is 743 S. Keyser Ave, Taylor, PA; it's a good 4½ hour drive from the church. The moleben starts at 6:00 PM.
2. The annual Right to Life March will occur in downtown Washington, DC on Friday, January 19th. We' will meet at the Orthodox for Life banner. See marchforlife.org for further details.
3. Holy water was blessed on Theophany for parish use. If you'd like to take some home, please bring a container. Contact Fr. Joseph to get your house blessed.

VOLUNTEERS WANTED

We are excited to announce that St. Thomas is forming a choir! Rehearsals will start in February in preparation for Easter. All interested men and women in our parish who enjoy singing are encouraged to get in touch with Adina or Bernard Vallandingham at adinavall@yahoo.com or valland.b@gmail.com.

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, 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, Tucker Karl and family, Robert Karpin, Andrew Kinn, Kopan family, Brian, Helen, and Luke Mahony, Valentina Makowelski, Susan Matula, Anna Meinhold, Dn. Henry Middleton, 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.)