

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.



February 11, 2018 – Meatfare Sunday (Last Judgment) Hieromartyr Blaise, Bishop of Sebaste

Over the previous two Sundays, we have seen how God reveals His compassion to those with a humble heart. On the first Sunday, His compassion was shown to the Publican who would not even lift his eyes up to God but instead cried out, “God be merciful to me a sinner.” On the second Sunday, it was shown when the prodigal son “comes to himself,” presents himself to his father and admits, “I am not even worthy to be called your son.”

Today, for those of us who are hard of heart, the compassion of God gives way to his severity, and we are instructed instead by the Last Judgment. “Behold the goodness of God but also behold the severity of God” (cf. Romans 11:22).

In the *Great Canon* of St. Andrew of Crete, we will soon chant: “The end is drawing near, my soul, is drawing near! But you neither care nor prepare. The time is growing short. Rise! The judge is at the very doors. Like a dream, like a flower, the time of this life passes. Why do we bustle about in vain?”

Why indeed when the Lord will come as a thief in the night (1 Peter 3:10), in the glory of His Father with His angels (Matt. 16:27), on that day when the heavens

shall be rolled together as a scroll (Isa. 34:4), the elements will melt and the earth will burn up (1 Peter 3:10), and the Lord will come with the winnowing fan in His hand to purge the threshing floor (Matt. 3:12), to separate the sheep from the goats and the wheat from the chaff (Matt. 13:24-30); those not wearing the wedding garment will be bound hand and foot and cast into the outer darkness (Matt. 22:1-14). On that day, all nations will be gathered before him (Matt. 25:32) and on that dreadful day all the works of men done secretly or in the light of day, from their birth until death will be revealed as “all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account” (Heb. 4:12-13). As the Apostle Paul says, “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to what he has done, whether it be good or bad” (2 Cor. 5:10). Those who have done good, to the resurrection of life and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation (John 5:29).

Jean-Claude Larchet, summarizing the teaching of the Fathers on this subject, describes three characteristics that reveal this judgment to be dreadful. It is dreadful in that,

1. Man’s entire life will be laid bare, and nothing will be hidden from before Christ, the angels, the saints and all men;
2. On that day there will be no one to help, and only our deeds will be before us. There will be no neighbor, no counsel, no relative, no brother, no father, no sister, no mother, no friend; and
3. The statement decreed from the Lord will be eternal and irrevocable. It is, truly, the “last” judgment.

On what criteria will we be judged? Based on our love towards our neighbor. As our Lord says, when your neighbor, that is when Christ, was hungry, thirsty, a stranger, naked, sick, and imprisoned, did you care for him?

St. John Chrysostom observes that the burden of our requirements is very light, saying:

And in return for what do they receive such [rewards]? For the covering of a roof, for a garment, for bread, for cold water, for visiting, for going into the prison. For indeed in every case it is for what is needed; and sometimes not even for that. For surely, as I have said, the sick and he that is in bonds seeks not for this only, but the one to be loosed, the other to be delivered from his infirmity. But [God], being gracious, requires only what is within our power, or rather even less than what is within our power, leaving to us to exert our generosity in doing more.

Is it simply by a few deeds of charity that the Kingdom is bestowed? No. St. Gregory Palamas says that these deeds of charity are the fruit of one's acquisition of love and the crown of all the other virtues which is only attained through much patience, ascetic effort, and humility.

This is how we also understand St. Symeon the New Theologian's interpretation of today's Gospel reading. He notes that the manifestation of our love through work is not only through seeing our neighbor as Christ but also seeing Christ within ourselves. This is where our work begins and from which love flows to our neighbor. When we love Christ we conduct our own lives in a manner which reveals our love towards Him. For those who are negligent of this, St. Symeon asks: How is it then that we miss seeing Christ within us? He answers by revealing how it is that Christ is in us, saying,

...because I hungered for your repentance and conversion, and you gave Me no food; I thirsted for your salvation, and you gave me no drink; I was naked of your deeds of virtue, and you did not clothe me with them; I existed in the narrow and filthy and dark prison of your heart, and you did not wish to come visit Me and lead Me out to the light; you knew Me to be lying in the infirmity of your laziness and inactivity, yet you did not minister to Me by your good works and deeds. So, go away from Me!

If we cannot find Christ within us and love Him, how then can we love Christ through our neighbor?

How is one to conclude such matters? With what attention and awareness to death and the Last Judgment which follows it, are we to proceed from this moment in order to live fully in the light of Christ and the expectation of the future judgment? It may best be stated by St. Isaac in a rather lengthy passage. Beginning with sleep as the image of death, wherein we look at our bed each night as this image, he says:

When you approach your bed, say to it, "This very night, perchance, you will be my tomb, O bed; for I know not whether tonight instead of a transient sleep, the eternal sleep of death will be mine." And so, as long as you have feet, run after work, before you are bound with that bond which cannot be loosed again once it is put on. As long as you have hands, stretch them out to Heaven in prayer, before your arms fall from their joints, and though you desire to draw them up, you will not be able. As long as you have fingers, cross yourself in prayer, before death comes, loosing the comely strength of their sinews. As long as you have eyes, fill them with tears before that hour when dust will cover your black clothes and your eyes will be fixed in one direction in an unseeing gaze and you will not know it. Nay, fill your eyes

with tears as long as your heart is controlled by the power of discernment and before your soul is shaken by her departure from it and the heart is left like a house deserted by its owner. O wise man, do not be enticed by expectancy of long life! For just as the rose wilts at a breath of the wind, so at a little puff on even one element of which you are composed your knees will suddenly grow feeble without your expecting it. And while you are thinking it is nothing and you are caring for the ailment, suddenly the stern one will draw nigh, he who ridicules the wise. O the wretchedness of our nature! How are we held fast by the love of this substance wherein God does not wish to leave us!

Fix your departure in your heart, O man, by always saying to yourself: "Behold, the messenger is at the door, he who comes for me. Why am I idle? My going forth is forever; there will be no return." Pass the night in this reflection; muse upon this thought throughout the day. And when the time of departure comes, greet it with gladness, saying: "Come in peace! I knew that you were coming and I have not neglected anything that could prove useful to me on the way."

THROUGH THE PRAYERS OF OUR HOLY FATHERS, LORD JESUS CHRIST, SON OF GOD, HAVE MERCY ON US. AMEN. (*from holycross-hermitage.com*)

Hieromartyr Blaise the Bishop of Sebaste



The Hieromartyr Blaise (Blasius), Bishop of Sebaste, was known for his righteous and devout life. Unanimously chosen by the people, he was consecrated Bishop of Sebaste. This occurred during the reign of the Roman emperors Diocletian (284-305) and Licinius (307-324), fierce persecutors of Christians. Saint Blaise encouraged his flock, visited the imprisoned, and gave support to the martyrs. Many hid themselves from the persecutors by going off to desolate and solitary places. Saint Blaise also hid himself away on Mount Argeos, where he lived in a cave. Wild beasts came up to him and meekly waited until the saint finished his prayer and blessed them. The saint also healed sick animals by laying his hands upon them.

The refuge of the saint was discovered by servants of the governor Agrilaus, who had come to capture wild beasts to loose on the Christian martyrs. The servants reported to their master that Christians were hiding on the mountain, and he gave

orders to arrest them. But those sent out found there only the Bishop of Sebaste. Glorifying God Who had summoned him to this exploit, Saint Blaise followed the soldiers.

Along the way the saint healed the sick and worked other miracles. Thus, a destitute widow complained to him of her misfortune. A wolf had carried off a small pig, her only possession. The bishop smiled and said to her, "Do not weep, your pig will be returned to you..." To the astonishment of everyone, the wolf came running back and returned his prey unharmed.

Agrilaus, greeting the bishop with words of deceit, called him a companion of the gods. The saint answered the greeting, but he called the gods devils. Then they beat him and led him off to prison. On the next day, they subjected the saint to tortures again. When they led him back to the prison, seven women followed behind and gathered up the drops of blood. They arrested them and tried to compel them to worship the idols. The women pretended to consent to this and said that first they needed to wash the idols in the waters of a lake. They took the idols and threw them in a very deep part of the lake, and after this the Christians were fiercely tortured. The saints stoically endured the torments, strengthened by the grace of God, their bodies were transformed and became white as snow. One of the women had two young sons, who implored their mother to help them attain the Kingdom of Heaven, and she entrusted them to the care of Saint Blaise. The seven holy women were beheaded.

Saint Blaise was again brought before Agrilaus, and again he unflinchingly confessed his faith in Christ. The governor ordered that the martyr be thrown into a lake. The saint, going down to the water, signed himself with the Sign of the Cross, and he walked on it as though on dry land.

Addressing the pagans standing about on shore, he challenged them to come to him while calling on the help of their gods. Sixty-eight men of the governor's retinue entered the water, and immediately drowned. The saint, however, heeding the angel who had appeared to him, returned to shore.

Agrilaus was in a rage over losing his finest servants, and he gave orders to behead Saint Blaise, and the two boys entrusted to him, the sons of the martyr. Before his death, the martyr prayed for the whole world, and especially for those honoring his memory. This occurred in about the year 316.

The relics of the Hieromartyr Blaise were brought to the West during the time of the Crusades, and portions of the relics are preserved in many of the lands of Europe [and his memory traditionally honored there on February 3]. (*from oca.org*)

Today's Epistle Lesson – St. Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians 8:8-9:2

Brethren, food does not commend us to God; for neither if we eat are we the better, nor if we do not eat are we the worse. But beware lest somehow this liberty of yours become a stumbling block to those who are weak. For if anyone sees you who have knowledge eating in an idol's temple, will not the conscience of him who is weak be emboldened to eat those things offered to idols? And because of your knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died? But when you thus sin against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ. Therefore, if food makes my brother stumble, I will never again eat meat, lest I make my brother stumble. Am I not an apostle? Am I not free? Have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord? Are you not my work in the Lord? If I am not an apostle to others, yet doubtless I am to you. For you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord.

Today's Gospel Lesson – Saint Matthew 25:31-46

The Lord said, "When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides *his* sheep from the goats. And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. Then the King will say to those on His right hand, 'Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; I *was* naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.' Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed *You*, or thirsty and give *You* drink? When did we see You a stranger and take *You* in, or naked and clothe *You*? Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?' And the King will answer and say to them, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did *it* to one of the least of these My brethren, you did *it* to Me.' Then He will also say to those on the left hand, 'Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels: for I was hungry and you gave Me no food; I was thirsty and you gave Me no drink; I was a stranger and you did not take Me in, naked and you did not clothe Me, sick and in prison and you did not visit Me.' Then they also will answer, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to You?' Then He will answer them, saying, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did not do *it* to one of the least of these, you did not do *it* to Me.' And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

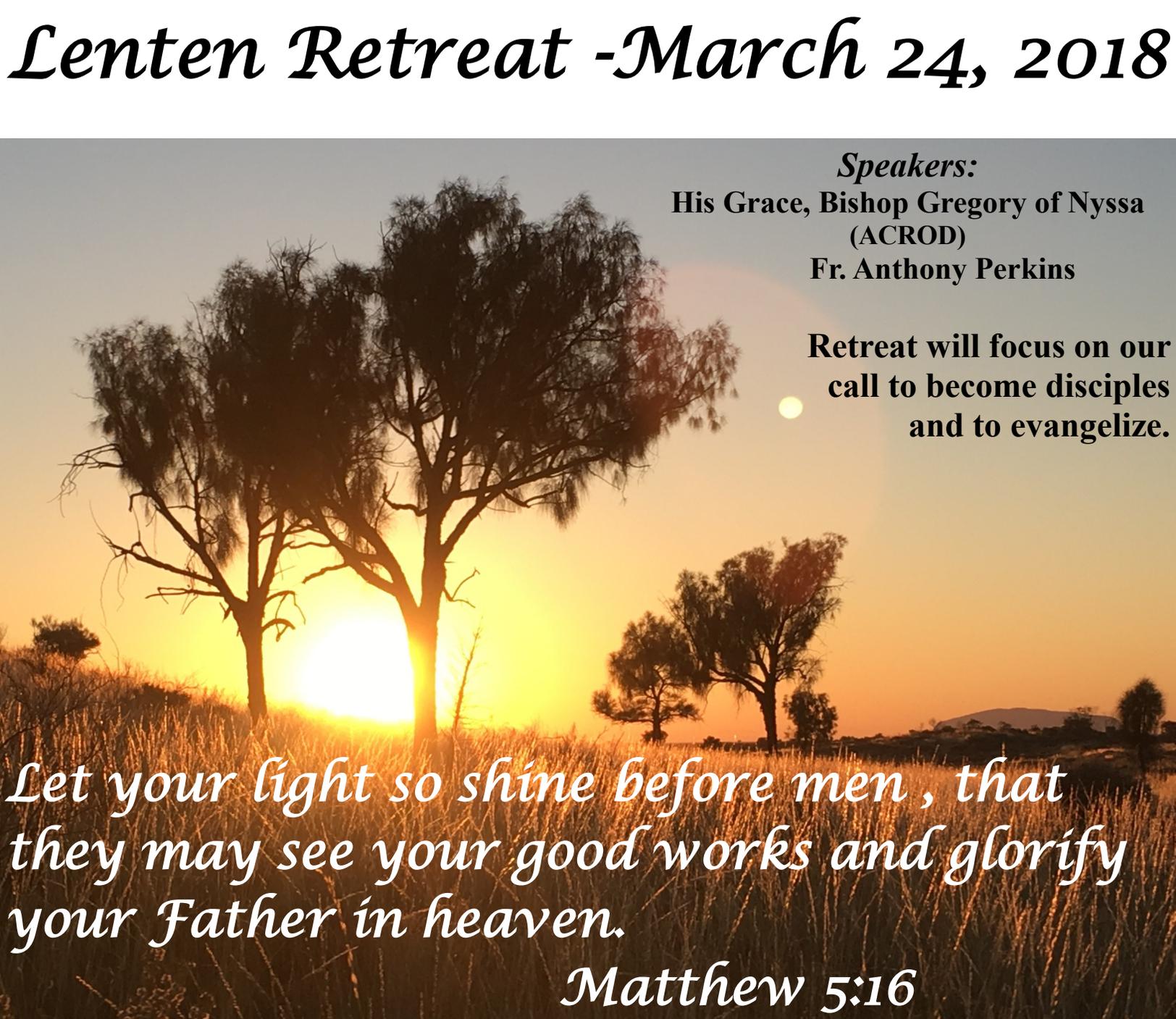
Lenten Retreat - March 24, 2018

Speakers:

**His Grace, Bishop Gregory of Nyssa
(ACROD)**

Fr. Anthony Perkins

**Retreat will focus on our
call to become disciples
and to evangelize.**



*Let your light so shine before men, that
they may see your good works and glorify
your Father in heaven.*

Matthew 5:16

***St. Francis Center for Renewal
395 Bridle Path Road
Bethlehem, PA***

Retreat registration: Adults ACROD \$35 (late fee \$20)

Adolescents \$20 (late fee \$10)

Children (under 12) \$7

***Registration includes all meals, breakfast, lunch and dinner.
For more information contact: Oleh or Natalie Bilynsky at
nsufler@aol.com call - 610-892-7315***

LENTEN RETREAT
SATURDAY, March 24, 2018

9:00 AM TO 6:30 PM

ST. FRANCIS CENTER FOR RENEWAL
395 BRIDLE PATH ROAD BETHLEHEM, PA

REGISTRATION FORM

– To Be Filled Out For Each Participant –

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____ E-mail _____

Parish _____

Age (Youth ages 7-18 only) _____

Name of Parent(s)/Adult Chaperone Attending With _____

Cell Phone of Parent/Adult Chaperone _____

\$35 for adults ACROD (prior to deadline)

\$20 for adolescents (aged 13 to 18)

\$7 for children 7 to 12

Appropriate Registration fee is enclosed: Yes _____ No _____ *Amount _____

Check made for total of all family members to: Ukrainian Orthodox League of the USA.

Return registration w/payment to: Oleh Bilynsky 703 Pine Ridge Rd. Media, PA 19063

Please submit registration by March 14, 2018. After this deadline late fees of \$20 for adults and \$10 adolescents is applied.

Pictures from the Retreat can be used for publicity. Please indicate if you do not want pictures of you and/or your child used.

CAMP NAZARETH SUMMER CAMP 2018

The time for Summer Camp is Rapidly Approaching!!! The clock is ticking!!

REGISTER ONLINE STARTING MAR. 1, 2018!!!

Dates for the Summer Camping Program

Week 1 -- July 15 - 21, 2018

New England, NY, NJ, Florida and Canada Deaneries

Week 2 -- July 22 - July 28, 2018

Johnstown, Pocono, Southern Tier, Youngstown and Chicago Deaneries

Week 3 -- July 29 - August 4, 2018

Register Online Starting March 1, 2018

Register at – *campnazareth.org*

From the Home Page, From the 2018 Summer Camp Icon, or From the Diocesan Summer Camp Tab found under the Summer Camp Tab and look for Camper Registration.

If you are Clergy or a Volunteer go to the 2018 Summer Camp Icon on the Home Page or the Diocesan Summer Camp Tab found under the Summer Camp Tab and look for the paper forms under Clergy/Volunteers.

\$20 Early Bird Discount Per Child!!!!

(one-time only, not per week)

Register & pay by May 15, 2018!!!!

Online Registration MUST be complete AND payment must be submitted by May 15 in order to qualify for the Early Bird Discount.

Registrations after June 15 will incur an additional \$20 late fee.

- ❑ When you register online please note that **you will still need to submit a paper copy of the Medical Examination Form (i.e. Camper Physical)** which must be filled out and signed by a licensed medical professional (licensed physician or physician's assistant). This form will be emailed to you after you complete the online registration process.
- ❑ **Payment by check, money order, or credit card is accepted.** Checks and Money Orders are to be made payable to *Camp Nazareth* and sent to *Camp Nazareth at 339 Pew Road, Mercer, PA 16137.*

A Word From the Holy Fathers

In whatever work we engage patience gives birth to courage, courage to commitment, commitment to perseverance, perseverance to an increase in the work done. Such additional labor quells the body's dissolute impulses and checks the desire for sensual indulgence. Thus checked, desire gives rise to spiritual longing, longing to love, love to aspiration, aspiration to ardor, ardor to self-galvanizing, self-galvanizing to assiduousness, assiduousness to prayer, prayer to stillness. Stillness gives birth to contemplation, contemplation to spiritual knowledge, knowledge to the apprehension of the mysteries. The consummation of the mysteries is theology, the fruit of theology is perfect love, of love humility, of humility dispassion, of dispassion foresight, prophecy and fore-knowledge. No one possesses the virtues perfectly in this life, nor does he cut off evil all at once. On the contrary, by small increases of virtue evil gradually ceases to exist.

– St. Gregory of Sinai

Sunday of Orthodoxy Vespers

Sunday of Orthodoxy Vespers will be held at St Sophia Greek Orthodox Cathedral on Sunday 25 February at 5pm. Guest speaker will be Constantine (Dean) Triantafilou, Executive Director of IOCC.

Parish News

1. Lenten reading – we meet after Pre-Sanctified Liturgy on Wednesday evenings in Lent to discuss reading material to help deepen our spiritual lives. This year, we will be reading *On Living Simply: The Golden Voice of John Chrysostom* by Robert Van de Weyer. It's a collection of short extracts from St. John's homilies. It can be found on Amazon or www.abebooks.com for less than \$10.

2. Holy water was blessed on Theophany for parish use. If you'd like to take some home, please bring a container. Contact Fr. Joseph or Pani Stacey to get your house blessed.

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.)