

SOBORNOST

St. Thomas the Apostle Orthodox Church

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American Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Diocese

*ECUMENICAL PATRIARCHATE
OF CONSTANTINOPLE*

SERVICES

**Wednesday in Lent: Liturgy of
Presanctified Gifts 7:00 PM**

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 25, 2018 – Sunday of Orthodoxy

St. Tarasius the Archbishop of Constantinople

Today is the first Sunday of Great Lent on which is celebrated two events. The first is the victory of those who venerate images of Christ, His Mother and the Saints (i.e., iconophiles) over those who were suspicious of any Christian art and, therefore, tried to destroy them (i.e., iconoclasts). The second event is the triumph of orthodoxy (i.e., the true, correct faith and the true glorification of God) over heresy.

The dispute over the use of “images” (i.e., icons) in the church was the cause of the Seventh Ecumenical Council, which took place during the eighth and ninth centuries. “The struggle was not merely a conflict between two conceptions of Christian art. Deeper issues were involved: the character of Christ’s human nature, the Christian attitude towards matter, [and] the true meaning of redemption.” The central question posed at the council was: “If we establish that images (i.e., icons) are not idolatrous (which the Council had done) are we to say that they are necessary and essential to the faith?” The short answer is, “yes,” as



Metropolitan Kallistos (Ware) writes, “because icons safeguard a full and proper doctrine of the Incarnation.” He then quotes St. John of Damascus who writes:

Of old God the incorporeal and uncircumscribed was not depicted at all. But now God has appeared in the flesh and lived among men, I make an image of the God who can be seen. I do not worship matter but I worship the Creator of matter, who for my sake became material and deigned to dwell in matter, who through matter effected my salvation. I will not cease from worshipping the matter through which my salvation has been effected.

Matter does not defile the spiritual. What is spiritual is not disconnected from the material. Because of Christ’s incarnation, man’s material body, as well as his soul, will be redeemed, it will be transfigured.

On March 11, 843, the first Sunday of Great Lent, St. Methodius, Patriarch of Constantinople (June 14), and St. Theodora, the Empress of the Byzantine Empire (February 11), restored the veneration of icons. At that time, the Empress and her son gathered with everyone else in the church where a procession began with icons, fragments of the true cross and the Gospel Book. Since then, the Triumph of Orthodoxy has been held on this day. The Sunday of Orthodoxy not only commemorates the restoration of the veneration of icons but also the triumph of all Ecumenical Councils. For this reason, let us now look more closely at some characteristics of the Church’s Ecumenical Councils.

Each Council was convened to address a specific heresy at a particular historical period of the Church. Those whom the Church considers “Fathers of the Church” are best described by Archimandrite Sophrony (Sakharov) who said: they had personal experience of God, had excellent intellectual gifts and they had also acquired the education of their day. “They were, therefore, able, on the one hand, to record this experience and, on the other, to confront the various heretics of their era.” However, they did not imagine themselves able to explain the mysteries of God fully, rather, as Metropolitan Kallistos writes “they merely sought to exclude certain false ways of speaking and thinking about it.” “They drew a fence around the mystery,” which keeps men from falling into heresy. What is meant here by mystery, is the *experience* of the mystery which is different from the *dogma* about it. The personal experience of God that the saints have is the experience of the mystery and cannot be explained. The dogma is a rational formulation concerning the mystery or revelation which can be expressed best by those with “excellent intellectual gifts” who have had experience of God.

Finally, Ecumenical Councils are not the highest authority within the Church. Instead, as Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk writes, “The final criterion for the acceptance or rejection of an ecumenical council was not the fact of its

convocation, but the consensus regarding its ‘acceptance,’ which was achieved only later, when the local churches handed down their verdict on a particular council.” We see this in subsequent Ecumenical Councils which begin with the approval of all the previous Councils.

Metropolitan Kallistos observes in his introduction to the Tridion that not only is there a historical link between the events surrounding the Seventh Ecumenical Council and the celebration of the Triumph of Orthodoxy on the first Sunday of Lent, but there is also a “spiritual affinity.” This spiritual affinity is between the ascetic labours of the first week of Great Lent and the martyric struggles of the defenders of the faith. He writes:

If Orthodoxy triumphed in the epoch of the iconoclast controversy, this was because so many of the faithful were prepared to undergo exile, torture, and even death, for the sake of the truth. The Feast of Orthodoxy is above all a celebration in honour of the martyrs and confessors who struggled and suffered for the faith: hence its appropriateness for the season of Lent, when we are striving to imitate the martyrs by means of our ascetic self-denial.

Yet in the midst of these struggles are found moments of light and joy as we find at the end of this first week wherein we now celebrate the labours of those who have gone before us. The labours that resulted in the triumph of light over darkness, orthodoxy over heresy. This is summed up well in the *Apostica* sang last night at Vespers which says:

Advancing from ungodliness to the true faith, and illumined with the light of knowledge, let us clap our hands and sing aloud, offering praise and thanksgiving to God; and with due honour let us venerate the holy icons of Christ, of the all-pure Virgin and the saints, whether depicted on walls, on wooden panels or on holy vessels, rejecting the impious teaching of the heretics. For, as Basil says, the honour shown to the icon passes to the prototype it represents. At the prayers of Thine undefiled Mother and of all the saints, we beseech Thee, Christ our God, to bestow upon us Thy great mercy.

AMEN. (from *holycross-hermitage.com*)

St. Tarasius the Archbishop of Constantinople

Saint Tarasius, Patriarch of Constantinople was of illustrious lineage. He was born and raised in Constantinople, where he received a fine education. He was rapidly promoted at the court of the emperor Constantine VI Porphyrogenitos (780-797) and Constantine’s mother, the holy Empress Irene (August 7), and the saint attained the rank of senator.

During these times the Church was agitated by the turmoil of the Iconoclast disturbances. The holy Patriarch Paul (August 30) although he had formerly supported Iconoclasm, later repented and resigned his office. He withdrew to a monastery, where he took the schema. When the holy Empress Irene and her son the emperor came to him, Saint Paul told them that the most worthy successor to him would be Saint Tarasius (who at this time was still a layman).

Tarasius refused for a long time, not considering himself worthy of such high office, but he then gave in to the common accord on the condition, that an Ecumenical Council be convened to address the Iconoclast heresy.

Proceeding through all the clerical ranks in a short while, Saint Tarasius was elevated to the patriarchal throne in the year 784. In the year 787 the Seventh Ecumenical Council was convened in the city of Nicea, with Patriarch Tarasius presiding, and 367 bishops attending. The veneration of holy icons was confirmed at the council. Those bishops who repented of their iconoclasm, were again received by the Church.

Saint Tarasius wisely governed the Church for twenty-two years. He led a strict ascetic life. He spent all his money on God-pleasing ends, feeding and giving comfort to the aged, to the impoverished, to widows and orphans, and on Holy Pascha he set out a meal for them, and he served them himself.

The holy Patriarch fearlessly denounced the emperor Constantine Porphyrogenitos when he slandered his spouse, the empress Maria, the granddaughter of Saint Philaretos the Merciful (December 1), so that he could send Maria to a monastery, thus freeing him to marry his own kinswoman. Saint Tarasius resolutely refused to dissolve the marriage of the emperor, for which the saint fell into disgrace. Soon, however, Constantine was deposed by his own mother, the Empress Irene.

Saint Tarasius died in the year 806. Before his death, devils examined his life from the time of his youth, and they tried to get the saint to admit to sins that he had not committed. "I am innocent of that of which you accuse me," replied the saint, "and you falsely slander me. You have no power over me at all."

Mourned by the Church, the saint was buried in a monastery he built on the Bosphorus. Many miracles took place at his tomb. *(from oca.org)*



Today's Epistle Lesson – St. Paul's Letter to the Hebrews 11:24-26, 30-12:2

Brethren, by faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; for he looked to the reward. And what more shall I say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon and Barak and Samson and Jephthah, also of David and Samuel and the prophets: who through faith subdued kingdoms, worked righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, became valiant in battle, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again. Others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. Still others had trial of mockings and scourgings, yes, and of chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted, were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented — of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts and mountains, in dens and caves of the earth. And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise, God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us. Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Today's Gospel Lesson – Saint John 1:43-51

At that time, Jesus wanted to go to Galilee, and He found Philip and said to him, "Follow Me." Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. Philip found Nathanael and said to him, "We have found Him of whom Moses in the law, and also the prophets, wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." And Nathanael said to him, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Philip said to him, "Come and see." Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward Him, and said of him, "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no deceit!" Nathanael said to Him, "How do You know me?" Jesus answered and said to him, "Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you." Nathanael answered and said to Him, "Rabbi, You are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!" Jesus answered and said to him, "Because I said to you, 'I saw you under the fig tree,' do you believe? You will see greater things than these." And He said to him, "Amen, amen, I say to you, hereafter you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man."

A Word From the Holy Fathers

For the poor and destitute the very rejection by the rich is sufficient to draw upon them mercy from above; for just as the hardness of heart of the prosperous and their indifference towards their fellow-servants shuts to them the gates of the Lord's compassion, so unmercifulness and disregard of the unfortunate opens to the latter some access to divine acceptance. Let us not therefore open wide the heavenly gates for others and close them for ourselves, nor let us feast others splendidly on our own inconsolable misfortunes and gladden them with our mourning. For those who have not pitied their distraught and needy fellow-men, but showed themselves unfeeling towards them, make the Lord's compassion gush more abundantly for the latter, while diverting it from themselves. Nor let us imitate the foolish virgins, but let us emulate the wise ones. For they were truly foolish who, having quenched the hot coals of the passions and kindled the flame of virginity - a big task requiring great intentness - did not take along the oil, a thing so easy to accomplish, and so simple to procure. Let us not liken ourselves to the senseless virgins, lest, by making the hour of the Kingdom an hour of trafficking, we be sent away from the bridal chamber, lest we hear, "I know you not."

For if we do not feed the poor, nor admit the homeless under our roof, if we do not clothe the shivering, nor receive the stranger in our house, if we do not give even some cold water for the thirsty to drink, if we do not visit the sick or the prisoner, nor join in sympathy for their sufferings, then the Judge shall come upon the throne of glory, and He shall speak saying, "Depart from me, cursed ones, into 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." (Mt. 25:41-43) Let us not place ourselves in this miserable condition, beloved ones, so as not to be submitted to such terrible threats. For even if we answer, "Lord, when did we see you hungry, or thirsty, or a stranger, or in need of clothing, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister to you?", then He shall answer them (but, O Lord, let it not be us!), "Insofar as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me." (Mt. 25:44-45)

Do you hear, O man, that terrible and inexorable threat, and do you still not aid those who beg? You lend to Christ by making them a loan - and do you not do this with great eagerness? You see unmercifulness to be the fuel of the curse, of darkness and of perpetual punishment, and mercy, on the other hand, to be the price for the kingdom of heaven - and do you disregard the latter, while turning to the former? Do not do this if you believe me, or rather if you obey the commands

and injunctions of God our savior; for He says, "The King shall say to those on the right, 'Com you blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for when I was hungry, you gave me food; when I was thirsty, you gave me drink; when I was a stranger, you took me in; when I needed clothing, you gave it to me; when I was sick, you visited me; when I was in prison, you came to me. Insofar as you have done it to the least of these my brothers, you have done it to me.'" (Mt. 25:34-36, 40) Do you see His kindness? Do you see His mercy? Do you see how He takes upon Himself the plight of the poor? Do you see how He transfers the charity towards them to Himself? He does this so that He may alleviate their great shame and distress, and render you more willing to do them good, and offer you manifold and more abundant recompense for having done a service not only to a fellow-servant, but through him, to the common Lord also.

Do you see His condescension? Do you see the Lord's compassion? He is not ashamed to assume the rank and name of your fellow-servants and brothers, that He may prove you to be a companion of the angels. He is not ashamed to acknowledge you His nourisher and provider, He who fills every living thing with pleasure, in order that He may make you a citizen of paradise. "For I was hungry, and you gave me food," and "insofar as you have done it to one of the least of these my brothers, you have done it to me," He cries expressly. (Mt. 25:35,40) "Come, blessed of my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you." (Mt. 25:34) Do you hear His call? Rise up, prepare yourself, and "do not postpone from day to day," as Scripture counsels you, "for the Lord's wrath shall come suddenly, and you will be destroyed in a time of vengeance." (Sir. 5:7)

Therefore, let us make haste, brethren; let us prepare ourselves. Let us call together the poor, and buy the oil from them, that we may keep our lamps unextinguished, and hearken to that blessed voice, and be deemed worthy of the blessing. Do good to the poor, even if it is not for the inborn compassion due to your fellow-creature, but that you may receive the recompense, or if not for that, then, that you may escape hell and be delivered from that fire. What is more profitable or easier than to pity the poor man, and through him make Christ your debtor? What is more blessed than to take him as your table-companion, and to dine with Christ, and be judged worthy of the bridal chamber? Who is this senseless and wretched man, that when he is so easily and readily thought fit for such company at table, is shown to hare in the endless glory and salvation, yet passes these things by, swept away by the tide of pitilessness, and is borne down into the snare of hell, as the saying goes? Is he not wretched who does not understand that all ephemeral things must be dismissed on account of the lasting happiness hereafter, lest he be driven away ignominiously from the portion of the

saved? When, moreover, the ephemeral things required of us are so small - food and drink, a garment, a roof, a movement of the limbs, sharing pain with sufferers, that we may receive in return the kingdom of heaven, yet we do not choose so - does this leave room for greater folly or wretchedness? Do we not rather vote for our own condemnation, and bring into court a deed that renders ourselves undeserving of all sympathy?

...Do you not know that we have abjured in the presence of the angels the acts of the Evil one, and have parted with him, but have made a covenant with God to live according to His commandments? How then do you set the covenant at naught, and do not shrink from doing again what you had spat upon? How do you shun the merciful Lord, and take refuge with the tyrant? The latter, if he takes you under his sway, will give you darkness, worms and the gnashing of teeth, and he is pleased, that he may not be alone in suffering hell, while the King of glory and the Guardian of the universe apports you paradise, and grants you most splendid light, and enrolls you in the choir of the angels. Do you neglect the latter and desire the former? Do you not even move a limb for those things which are rich in reward for you, but contract for and wretchedly pursue those which are followed by hell and condemnation? Do you see into what evils we are tossed, and what things we exchange for what? Not gold for brass, as the students of Homer would say, but we let go the incorruptible for the corruptible, and the eternal for the perishable. Indeed, we abandon things that are truly fair, good and blessed for painful pleasures and foul passions when we take no thought of beggars, nor care for the poor, nor succor the indigent, if we do not support the weak, or are arrogant toward our fellow-servants, if we glut ourselves beyond need, but do not bend down to those who ask for food.

– St. Photius, Patriarch of Constantinople, *Homily 2.5-9*

~ **Librarian's Picks of the Week** ~

Thirsting for God by Matthew Gallatin – The author expresses many of the struggles that a Protestant will encounter in coming face to face with Orthodoxy and gives readers a more thorough understanding of the Church.

Metropolitan Phillip, His life and his Dreams by Peter Gillquist – Biography of Metropolitan Phillip Saliba who stands at the forefront of Orthodox Christian unity in the U.S. and Canada.

Great Lent by Alexander Schmemmann – Former dean and professor at St. Vladimir's gives short explanations for those who desire a better understanding of the Church and a more conscious participation in her life. (*I can vouch for this one; highly recommended!* – Ed.)

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.

Sunday of Orthodoxy Vespers

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

Parish News

There will be a St. Barbara's meeting on March 11 during lunch. Ladies, please attend as several topics will be discussed, including cleaning of the house and church, fundraising and use of funds.



March Anniversaries and Birthdays

Anniversaries:

None.

Birthdays:

Ciaran Richardson 1st

Joshua Keeran 15th

Alexander Wright 19th

Tyler Vallandingham 25th

Kristen McNeil 10th

Heather Wright 16th

Nancy Hall 21st

Jared Karbowsky 26th

Wyatt Sticht 14th

Nicole Nicolaus 16th

Adam Roberts 25th

Lynn Hampton 27th



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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, 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 Dominiacki, Linda A. Georgiev, Heather Himler, John Homick, Cameron Houk, Helen Janowiak, John M. Janowiak, Tucker Karl and family, Robert & Pam 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.)