

# SOBORNOST

**St. Thomas the Apostle Orthodox Church**  
**(301) 638-5035 Church**

**4419 Leonardtown Road, Waldorf, MD 20601**

**Rev. Father Joseph Edgington, Pastor**

**(703) 532-8017 | fredgington@gmail.com | [www.apostlethomas.org](http://www.apostlethomas.org)**

*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.**

**March 25, 2018 – 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Lent | St. Mary of Egypt  
The Annunciation of our Most Holy Lady, the Theotokos  
and Ever-Virgin Mary**

[Due to the Feast of Annunciation falling today, St. Mary of Egypt is not commemorated. She is also ordinarily commemorated on April 1<sup>st</sup>; that being Palm Sunday this year, she is instead commemorated at Compline on a weekday in Lent. – Ed.]

The Feast of the Annunciation is one of the earliest Christian feasts, and was already being celebrated in the fourth century. There is a painting of the Annunciation in the catacomb of Priscilla in Rome dating from the second century.

The Council of Toledo in 656 mentions the Feast, and the Council in Trullo in 692 says that the Annunciation was celebrated during Great Lent.

The Greek and Slavonic names for the Feast may be translated as “good tidings.” This, of course, refers to the Incarnation of the Son of God and the salvation He brings. The background of the Annunciation is found in the Gospel of Saint Luke (1:26-38). The troparion describes this as the “beginning of our salvation, and the revelation of the eternal mystery,” for on this day the Son of God became the Son of Man.

There are two main components to the Annunciation: the message itself, and the response of the Virgin. The message fulfills God’s promise to send a Redeemer (Genesis 3:15): “I will put enmity between you and the woman, between your seed and her seed; he shall crush your head, and you shall lie in wait for his heel.” The Fathers of the Church understand “her seed” to refer to Christ. The prophets hinted at His coming, which they saw dimly, but the Archangel Gabriel now proclaims that the promise is about to be fulfilled.

We see this echoed in the Liturgy of Saint Basil, as well: “When man disobeyed Thee, the only true God who had created him, and was deceived by the guile of the serpent, becoming subject to death by his own transgressions, Thou, O God, in Thy righteous judgment, didst send him forth from Paradise into this world, returning him to the earth from which he was taken, yet providing for him the salvation of regeneration in Thy Christ Himself.”

The Archangel Gabriel was sent by God to Nazareth in Galilee. There he spoke to the undefiled Virgin who was betrothed to Saint Joseph: “Hail, thou who art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Most High: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.”

In contrast to Eve, who was readily deceived by the serpent, the Virgin did not immediately accept the Angel’s message. In her humility, she did not think she was deserving of such words, but was actually troubled by them. The fact that she asked for an explanation reveals her sobriety and prudence. She did not disbelieve the words of the angel, but could not understand how they would be fulfilled, for they spoke of something which was beyond nature.

Then said Mary unto the angel, “How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?” (Luke 1:34).

“And the angel answered and said unto her, ‘The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee: therefore also that which shall be born of you shall be called the Son of God. And, behold, your cousin Elisabeth has also conceived a son in her old age: and this is the sixth month with her, who was called barren. For with God nothing shall be impossible.’ And Mary said, ‘Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to your word.’ And the angel departed from her.” (Luke 1: 35-38)

In his Sermon 23 on the day of the Annunciation, Saint Philaret of Moscow boldly stated that “the word of the creature brought the Creator down into the world.” He explains that salvation is not merely an act of God’s will, but also involves the Virgin’s free will. She could have refused, but she accepted God’s will and chose to cooperate without complaint or further questions.

The icon of the Feast shows the Archangel with a staff in his left hand, indicating his role as a messenger. Sometimes one wing is upraised, as if to show his swift descent from heaven. His right hand is stretched toward the holy Virgin as he delivers his message.

The Virgin is depicted either standing or sitting, usually holding yarn in her left hand. Sometimes she is shown holding a scroll. Her right hand may be raised to indicate her surprise at the message she is hearing. Her head is bowed, showing her consent and obedience. The descent of the Holy Spirit upon her is depicted by a ray of light issuing from a small sphere at the top of the icon, which symbolizes heaven. In a famous icon from Sinai, a white dove is shown in the ray of light.

There are several famous icons of the Annunciation. One is in the Moscow Kremlin in the church of the Annunciation. This icon appeared in connection with the rescue of a prisoner by the Mother of God during the reign of Ivan the Terrible. Another is to be found in the Dormition Cathedral in Moscow (July 8). It was originally located in Ustiug, and was the icon before which Saint Procopius the fool (July 8) prayed to save the city from destruction in 1290. One of the most highly revered icons in Greece is the Tinos icon of the Annunciation (January 30).

The Annunciation falls during Lent, but it is always celebrated with great joy. The Liturgy of Saint Basil or Saint John Chrysostom is served, even on the weekdays of Lent (and even on Great Friday, should it fall then – ed.). It is one of the two days of Great Lent on which the fast is relaxed and fish is permitted (Palm Sunday is the other). (*from oca.org*)



### **Today's Epistle Lesson – St. Paul's Letter to the Hebrews 2:11-18**

Brethren, both He who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified *are* all of one, for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying: "I will declare Your name to My brethren; In the midst of the assembly I will sing praise to You." And again: "I will put My trust in Him." And again: "Here am I and the children whom God has given Me." Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. For indeed He does not give aid to angels, but He does give aid to the seed of Abraham. Therefore, in all things He had to be made like *His* brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things *pertaining* to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted.

### **Today's Gospel Lesson – Saint Luke 1:24-38**

Now after those days his wife Elizabeth conceived; and she hid herself five months, saying, "Thus the Lord has dealt with me, in the days when He looked on *me*, to take away my reproach among people." Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name *was* Mary. And having come in, the angel said to her, "Rejoice, highly favored *one*, the Lord *is* with you; blessed *are* you among women!" But when she saw *him*, she was troubled at his saying, and considered what manner of greeting this was. Then the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end." Then Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I do not know a man?" And the angel answered and said to her, "*The Holy Spirit* will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God. Now indeed, Elizabeth your relative has also conceived a son in her old age; and this is now the sixth month for her who was called barren. For with God nothing will be impossible." Then Mary said, "Behold the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her.



## *A Word From the Holy Fathers*

Joyous is today's festival, and splendid is the joy it conveys to the ends of the earth. The joy it yields scatters old sorrow; the joy it yields banishes the curse of the world, inaugurates the raising of him who fell long ago, and pledges salvation to all of us. An angel converses with a virgin, and the whispering of the serpent is made idle; and the impact of his plot is averted. An angel converses with a virgin, and Eve's deceit fails, and convicted nature, seen to rise above condemnation, as it had been before condemnation, is enriched with the possession of paradise as its portion. He speaks to the Virgin, and Adam receives a pledge of liberty, and the serpent, instigator of evil, is deprived of his tyranny over our kind, and is dispossessed of his authority, and learns now that he had armed himself in vain against Creation. His devices against us weaken, as an incorporeal being brings the message of the invincible trophy against sin; for Christ's cross and willing suffering are death and sin swallowed up in victory, and such also is His suffering through the Incarnation. The angel is now bearing the good tidings of the Incarnation, in which things we are rejoicing today, and whose festival we are celebrating. An angel is being sent to the Virgin, and human nature is renewed; for, having quaffed the tidings like a remedy of salvation, it spits out all the poison of the serpent, and is cleansed from the spots of its disease. An angel is being sent to the Virgin, and the bond of sin is being torn up, and the penalty for the disobedience is abolished, and the universal recall is pledged in advance. Today the tidings of joy have arrived, since the archangel is exchanging words with the virgin maiden, since the commander of the invisible host is conversing with Mary, espoused to Joseph but designated and preserved for Jesus....

An angel is sent to a virgin, pledging the Lord's presence, announcing God's coming among men, bringing the good tidings of the re-creation of Creation. An angel is sent to a virgin, disclosing the Lord's descent, and the Lord comes with the message. The former brings the good tidings, and the Lord accompanies the words. The former cries out to the Virgin, "Hail, full of grace," and the Lord fulfills the joy by His action. The former calls out to the Virgin, "Hail, full of grace," and the whole world reaps through her the fruit of joy. He utters the fair salutation to the stainless maid, and the Virgin is troubled by his strange greeting, while the whole Creation leaps with joy at the news of its salvation.

The honored maid is troubled, but she does not reject... What does the Angel say to her? "Fear not, Mary. I am not the servant of the serpent's wickedness, but the delegate of Him who suppresses the serpent. The former, by means of his words, instilled the poison into human nature, and having mixed death into the potion,

poured out the plague on everyone; I come to graft in by means of the Lord's commands unending life to the world, whereby the disease of our kind is removed, and the blessedness in paradise is made free to all. The former, by the deceit of divinization, pushed Adam into disobedience, and made him exchange his painless existence for a toilsome life; I bring you the good tidings that the universal Creator shall truly make man divine in your virginal and stainless womb, and dispel the spurious divinization. Fear not, Mary. I will heal your thoughts with the Lord's commands; I will undo the bonds of your perplexity. You have found favor with God." The Virgin found favor with God because she had made herself worthy before her Creator, because, having adorned her soul with the fairness of her purity, she had prepared herself as an agreeable habitation for Him who by His word has established heaven. She found favor with God not only because she had kept her virginity inviolate, but also because she had maintained her desires unsullied; because since she was a babe she had been sanctified to God as a living and unquarried temple, built for the King of glory, for the stainlessness of her body, the exceeding splendor of her virginity, her undefiled chastity, the great purity of her disposition, her soul unwavering to sin and clinging to the best. "For this reason you shall conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son whom the cherubim praise in fear.

You will conceive in your womb and bring forth a son whom the ranks of the angels tremble to see, and the entire creation is unable to contain. You will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, the Creator of your inviolate womb, not corrupting your virginity, but sealing the bolts of virginity; not destroying the purity of your pregnancy, but showing it uncorrupted by fornication. You will conceive in your womb Him who is present everywhere, but is contained by nothing, whom only your womb is believed to receive and contain without being straitened. You will conceive in your womb the Creator of your first ancestor; for it was about you that the Prophet also cried out, saying, "Behold, a virgin shall conceive in the womb, and bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is 'God with us.'" (Is. 7:14) He is the mighty God, the Prince of peace, and the Father of the future age. The prophecies made concerning you I too announce to you today, and I am not come to offer my own words, but to bring the commands of Him who has sent me. It is He who inspired the prophet Isaiah to prophesy concerning you; it is He again who entrusted me also to announce today the outcome of that prophecy which is soon to be fulfilled: "And behold, you shall conceive in your womb and bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, 'God with us.'" And because through Him they will enjoy salvation, they shall call Him Jesus who has delivered them of their sins.... You will conceive Him in your womb, and you will

be proclaimed His mother; it is He Whom the heavenly vault could not contain, Who holds everything in the hollow of His hand, whose providence is the maintenance and continuance of existent things which your virginal womb receives."

"...You will conceive in your womb and bring forth a son in the same manner as Aaron's rod was budded without cultivation, acting like a rooted plant. As the rain borne down from heaven on the fleece watered that alone but did not refresh the earth (Judges 6:37), thus you too will conceive in your womb and bring forth the Lord. Your ancestor David also announces this in advance, inspired by God of your pregnancy: 'He will come down like rain upon a fleece, like a drop falling upon the earth.' (Ps. 71:6) As the bush received the fire, and feeding the flames was not consumed, thus you will conceive a son, lending Him your flesh, providing nourishment to the immaterial fire, and drawing incorruptibility in return. These things prefigured your conception, announced in advance your delivery, and represented from afar your pregnancy. Those strange things have been wrought that they might confirm your child's ineffable birth. They happened beforehand that they might delineate the incomprehensibility of the mystery; for the flaming bush, and the bedewed fleece, and the rod bearing leaves would not have contributed anything useful to life, nor would they have incited man to praise the Wonder-worker - indeed, the miracle would have fallen to no purpose, unless they had been set down as prefigurations of your giving birth, and been, as it were, the advance proclamations of the Lord's coming. You have, if you desire, your neighbor and kinswoman Elizabeth as an example, for behold, she has also conceived a son in her old age, and this is the sixth month with her, who was called barren; for with God nothing shall be impossible. He who releases the bonds of barrenness can also cause a birth without a man's mediation. He who has renewed a withered root into a fruit-bearing stem shall also change to Himself the unmoistened ground into fertile land."

The honored virgin replied, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word."...The holy and uncorrupted Virgin for her part, having shown in such words her obedience to the Lord's ambassador, put an end to the conversation. As for us, what shall we offer to the Virgin? What words of praise shall we weave for her? What other, than those whose beginning Gabriel has first provided to us, saying, "Hail full of grace, the Lord is with you. Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb." Hail, because we see the sun of righteousness rising out of you, illumining both the heavenly and the earthly order, driving away the murk of error, and irradiating the universe with the splendor of grace.... Blessed are you among women, because you have requited the

discomfiture of woman's transgression, having turned the reproach of deceit into a laudation of the sex; because in you, a virgin, He who first molded Adam out of virgin earth today remolds man from your virginal blood; because, having woven the fleshy garment of the Word, you have covered up the nakedness of the first-formed. Why should I enumerate each count? Hail, full of grace, because super-human things were wrought in you, and the blessing of all good things has bloomed for us through your pregnancy.

O Virgin and Mother - this new and strange thing under the sun - extend to us now also your intercession for our protection. Send us your help to guard us.... May we all win the kingdom of Christ, our true God, your Son and Master, through His grace and compassion, conceived without seed, unutterably gestated, and inexplicably born. For it is He who has made us, and we are His people, and the sheep of His pasture, and to Him we send up praise and worship, together with the co-eternal and consubstantial Father, and the life-giving, conjoined and co-everlasting Spirit, now and ever and forever. Amen.

– St. Photius the Great, Patriarch of Constantinople, *Homily 5*

*God's plan... your plan*

*Will it ever make sense?*

**Keynote Speakers:**  
His Grace Bishop Gregory of Nyssa  
and Steven Christoforou

**Young Adult Spring Retreat**  
Fri, May 4 - Sun, May 6, 2018  
Camp Nazareth  
Mercer, PA

Open to Young Adults (ages 19-35) of all Jurisdictions. Fee: \$75. Online Registration: [pittsburgh.goarch.org/ya](http://pittsburgh.goarch.org/ya) Financial-need Scholarships available.  
Sponsored by the American Carpatho-Russian Diocese, the Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Pittsburgh and the Ukrainian Orthodox League.  
[acrod.org](http://acrod.org) - [pittsburgh.goarch.org/ya](http://pittsburgh.goarch.org/ya) - [uocoyouth.org](http://uocoyouth.org)  
Questions/more info: [youngadultretreats@gmail.com](mailto:youngadultretreats@gmail.com) Phone: 724.662.4840 or 412.621.8543

## Camp Nazareth

Camp Nazareth is eagerly awaiting and preparing for the arrival of the Summer Camping Season, and registration is now open. Apostle Thomas campers will be attending Week 3, July 29 – August 4, 2018. May 15<sup>th</sup> is the deadline for clergy and volunteer applications, and is the last day for registrants to receive the \$20 early bird discount. For more information, please visit the Camp website – [CAMPNAZARETH.ORG](http://CAMPNAZARETH.ORG).

## Patriarchal Pence – Support Patriarch Bartholomew



During this season of increased prayer, fasting, and charity all the parishes in our Diocese send a token of our affection to support the work of the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew. To this end we will take a special collection on Palm Sunday (April 1<sup>st</sup>). Please be generous! [Photo Credit: Nikolaos Manginas]

### 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 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.)