

SOBORNOST

St. Thomas the Apostle Orthodox Church

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American Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Diocese

ECUMENICAL PATRIARCHATE
OF CONSTANTINOPLE

SERVICES

See last pages for this week's schedule

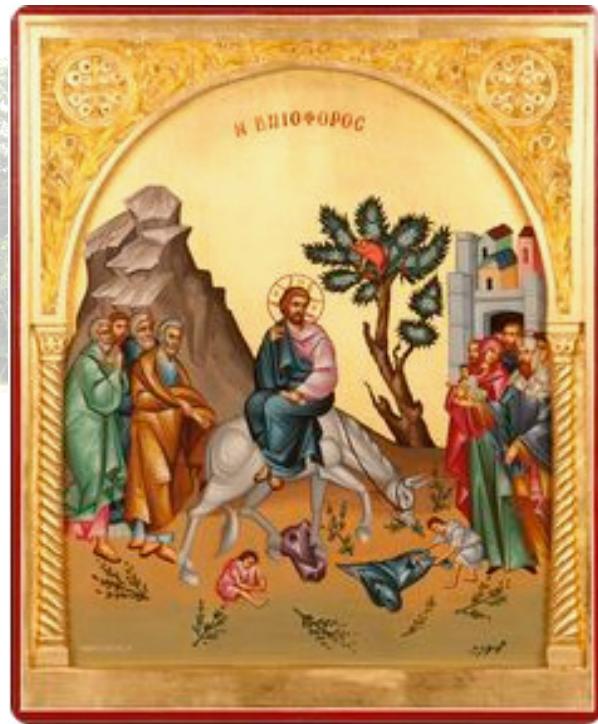
Saturday: Confession 5:00 PM

Great Vespers 5:30 PM

Sunday: Matins (Orthros) 8:45 AM

Children's Sunday School 9:30 AM

Divine Liturgy 10:00 AM.



April 1, 2018 – Palm Sunday

By Bishop Benjamin (Milov) of Saratov and Balashov (+1955)

The Holy Gospel, my beloved brethren, says this in its account of the Lord's Entry into Jerusalem: And when He was come near, He beheld the city, and wept over it (Luke 19:41).

People's hearts are all the same. If someone is weeping, what do we do? We approach him, ask him what he is weeping about, and try to comfort him in some way. Sometimes one becomes so sorry for the person in distress that one feels ready to give up one's soul, if only his grief would be made lighter. Let us now approach the Lord, too, and ask: "Lord, about what are You weeping?"

About what, in fact, was the Lord weeping on the great day of His Entry into Jerusalem? The Lord is everywhere present. Not only the human heart, but even his hidden thoughts, cannot be hidden from His omniscient eyes. And looking upon the people with His eyes – which are said in Scripture to be one hundred times brighter than the sun, foreknowing all the ends of the universe – He foresaw the end of Jerusalem. He knew what was in store for this venerable and ancient city. He knew the inconstancy of the people and crowds that would meet Him rapturously, but soon demand His crucifixion. He saw with His eyes the many

crosses around Jerusalem, upon which His crucifiers would be crucified. He saw the horrors awaiting the city during the invasion of the Emperor Titus in 70 A.D. This is why He wept for Jerusalem, foreseeing the horrors and destruction of the city as He gazed upon it.

But the Gospel tells us that today, too, the Lord is weeping. Why, then, is the Lord now weeping? For now He is not on earth, but in the Heavenly Jerusalem. Instead of a donkey, He sits upon the flaming Cherubim; instead of the earthly Jerusalem, He abides in ineffable glory at the right hand of God; and instead of the modest suite of the Apostles, He is surrounded by a countless multitude of bodiless spirits and heavenly beings. Then about what is the Lord now weeping? He is weeping over how we grieve Him; over how we frequently renounce Him by our terrible deeds; over how thousands of unfaithful people are now shamefully denying Him and mocking Him. He is weeping, too, over how our hearts have become hardened, over how we are losing the truth and cruelly offending Him Who by His Divine Blood redeemed the entire human race.

When the Lord entered Jerusalem, the multitude spread their garments and cut down branches from trees, waving them as the children cried out: Hosanna to the Son of David (Matthew 21:8-9). What can we now do for the Lord, when He is in Heaven, to comfort Him? Now we, too, can spread our garments under the feet of Christ. Upon reaching home, let us open our wretched storehouses and offer at least some spare pay to a needy person. This pay will be our garment cast before the Lord, upon which He will tread when He comes in glory – for, according to His words, that which we do for one of the least of the brethren, we do for Him.

We can also take palm branches into our hands, waving them to greet the Lord. We all see that martyrs are depicted on icons with palm branches. This is a symbol of the victory over the passions and the flesh, a symbol with which the Lord has crowned them. Let us try to defeat something ugly in ourselves. Our age is one of resentment and extreme self-love. Therefore, if we now feel offended by anyone, let us forgive him. Let us restrain ourselves, compelling the passion of self-love to subside. Now a wide wave of fleshly passions has overflowed into the world, and nearly seven-tenths of the world is under the power of Satan and has been seized by the sin of fornication. We need to defeat these passions; we need to refrain from them; we need to overcome the callousness that accompanies them with at least small good deeds. And if we will defeat these evil habits, replacing them with good deeds, we will raise a palm branch to Christ. The Gospel says that the multitude cried out: “Hosanna!” And we, too, can cry out to the Lord “Hosanna!” – but not with our mouths, but with our hearts and our entire lives. What does “Hosanna” mean? It is a praise glorifying God, as the Apostle Paul says: And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and

the Father by Him (Colossians 3:17). Let us do the same, crying out “Hosanna!” with our entire lives.

In order to do this we must have two vigilant guardians: the memory of death and the continual remembrance of God, for it is written in Scripture: Seek ye Me, and ye shall live; Remember thy end, and thou shalt never do amiss (Amos 5:4; Ecclesiasticus 7:36).

Thus, let us offer our pay as garments to the Lord and our victory over the passions as palm branches, keeping hold of the memory of death and the memory of God, and crying out to Him with our entire lives: “Hosanna!” And then we will comfort the Lord and our souls shall live unto the ages of ages. Amen. (*from pravmir.com*)

Today's Epistle Lesson – St. Paul's Letter to the Philippians 4:4-9

Brethren, rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice! Let your gentleness be known to all men. The Lord *is* at hand. Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things *are* noble, whatever things *are* just, whatever things *are* pure, whatever things *are* lovely, whatever things *are* of good report, if *there is* any virtue and if *there is* anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things. The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you.

Today's Gospel Lesson – Saint John 12:1-18

At that time, six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany, where Lazarus was who had been dead, whom He had raised from the dead. There they made Him a supper; and Martha served, but Lazarus was one of those who sat at the table with Him. Then Mary took a pound of very costly oil of spikenard, anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped His feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the oil. But one of His disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, who would betray Him, said, “Why was this fragrant oil not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?” This he said, not that he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief, and had the money box; and he used to take what was put in it. But Jesus said, “Let her alone; she has kept this for the day of My burial. For the poor you have with you always, but Me you do not have always.”

Now a great many of the Jews knew that He was there; and they came, not for Jesus' sake only, but that they might also see Lazarus, whom He had raised from the dead. But the chief priests plotted to put Lazarus to death also, because on account of him many of the Jews went away and believed in Jesus.

The next day a great multitude that had come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, took branches of palm trees and went out to meet Him, and cried out: “Hosanna! ‘Blessed *is* He who comes in the name of the Lord!’ The King of Israel!” Then Jesus, when He had found a young donkey, sat on it; as it is written: “Fear not, daughter of Zion; behold, your King is coming, sitting on a donkey’s colt.” His disciples did not understand these things at first; but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things were written about Him and *that* they had done these things to Him. Therefore the people, who were with Him when He called Lazarus out of his tomb and raised him from the dead, bore witness. For this reason the people also met Him, because they heard that He had done this sign.

A Word From the Holy Fathers

Tell me, O man: Christ, fastened to the wood, is crucified for you, and suffers the death of criminals; out of that, grace and victory over the foe accrue to us; the enemy fails, for the swords of the enemy have failed utterly; our free will has been liberated from the disabilities caused by the transgression; the pacts with God lie before us. Why do we not fulfill our promise? Why do we not repay at least a small part of our debt, but instead increase, and that every day, our obligation with heavy interest, having wretchedly forfeited our body and our very soul? Is it not out of negligence? Is it not from an indolent mind and an inclination prone to passions? If through indolence and negligence we are brought to barter away a wealth of so great and so many goods - the Lord's victory, the foe's defeat, the grace proffered to us, our free will, the covenant itself - then those who have betrayed all these things through the enjoyment of the passions, and considered their safeguarding and maintenance of no account, what room for forgiveness have they left themselves? Have they not shown themselves guilty of a multitude of evils? Are they not the enemies of their own salvation? Are they not the foes of the Cross? He saves, we destroy. Are we not fighting for the enemy? For by doing those things in which his strength against us lies, we are thereby proving to be fighting on his side and, worst of all, against our very selves. Are we not the denouncers of our liberty? For we have made it useless by remaining subservient to the pleasures. Are we not inconsiderate of the grace? Are we not ungrateful for the beneficence? For those who live contrariwise to the grace and the beneficence render a great insult and blasphemy both to that grace and to that beneficence.

But let us reverence Him who has been crucified for us. Let us not be ashamed of the lance, the nails, the stripes, the blows, the buffeting, the spitting, the crown of thorns, which the Lord of all has willingly suffered for our sake, so that by rising

above passions and sin, we may conduct ourselves worthily of our portion in paradise.

– St. Photius the Great, Patriarch of Constantinople, *Homily 6.1-2*
(delivered on Great Friday, probably between 861-866)

Also Commemorated Today: Saint Barsanuphius of Optina

Paul I. Plikhanov was born in the city of Samara on July 5, 1845, the son of John and Natalia Plikhanov. His mother died in childbirth, and his father later remarried so that his son would have a mother. Although his stepmother was very strict, she was a real mother to him, and he loved her very much.

As a descendant of the Orenburg Cossacks, Paul was enrolled in the Polotsk Cadet Corps. He completed his studies at the Orenburg Military School and received an officer's commission. He later graduated from the Petersburg Cossack Staff Officers' School, and also served at the headquarters of the Kazan military district and eventually rose to the rank of colonel.

Once, as he was sick with pneumonia, Paul sensed that he was about to die. He asked his orderly to read the Gospel to him, and passed out. Then he had a vision in which the heavens seemed to open, and he was afraid because of the great light. His whole sinful life passed before him, and he was overcome with repentance. A voice told him he should go to Optina Monastery, but the doctors did not think he would recover. His health did improve, however, and the colonel visited Optina. In August 1889 the Elder of the Monastery was Saint Ambrose (October 10), who told Paul to set his worldly affairs in order. Two years later, Saint Ambrose blessed him to cut all ties to the world and told him to enter Optina within three months.

It was not easy for the colonel to resign his commission within the specified three month period, because obstacles were placed in his way. In fact, he was offered a promotion to the rank of general, and was asked to delay his retirement. Some people even tried to arrange a marriage for him, laughing at his intention to go to the monastery. Only his stepmother was happy that he wished to become a monk. On the very last day of the three months he concluded his affairs and arrived at Optina. However, Saint Ambrose was already laid out in his coffin in the church.

Saint Anatole I (January 25) succeeded Father Ambrose as Elder, and he assigned Paul to Hieromonk Nectarius (April 29) as his cell attendant. He was accepted as a novice in 1892, and tonsured as a rassophore in 1893. Over the next ten years he advanced through the various stages of monastic life, including ordination as deacon (1902), and as priest (1903). The monk Paul was secretly tonsured into the mantiya in December of 1900 because of a serious illness. When they asked him

what name he wished to receive, he said it did not matter. They named him in honor of Saint Barsanuphius of Tver and Kazan (April 11). Although he recovered, they did not give him the mantiya until December of 1902 after the Liturgy when it was revealed that he had been tonsured on his sickbed.

On September 1, 1903 Father Barsanuphius was appointed to assist Elder Joseph, the skete Superior, in the spiritual direction of the skete brethren and the sisters of the Shamordino convent.

At the beginning of the Russo-Japanese war in 1904, Father Barsanuphius was sent to the Far East as a military chaplain, where he ministered to wounded soldiers. The war ended in August 1905, and Saint Barsanuphius returned to Optina on November 1, 1905.

Since Elder Joseph had become too old and frail to administer the skete's affairs, Father Barsanuphius was appointed as Superior of the skete in his place. Father Barsanuphius soon reestablished order and discipline, paid off debts, repaired buildings, etc. As Superior, he combined strictness with paternal concern and tenderness for those under him.

Saint Barsanuphius, like the other Elders of Optina, possessed the gifts of clairvoyance and of healing people afflicted with physical and spiritual ailments. One of his spiritual sons, Father Innocent Pavlov, recalled his first Confession with the Elder. He became fearful because Father Barsanuphius seemed to know his innermost thoughts, reminding him of people and events which he had forgotten. The saint spoke gently and told him that it was God who had revealed to him these things about Father Innocent. "During my lifetime, do not tell anyone about what you are experiencing now," he said, "but you may speak of it after my death."

Saint Barsanuphius loved spiritual books, especially the Lives of the Saints. He often told people that those who read these Lives with faith benefit greatly from doing so. The answers to many of life's questions can be found by reading the Lives of the Saints, he said. They teach us how to overcome obstacles and difficulties, how to stand firm in our faith, and how to struggle against evil and emerge victorious. Although the Lives of the Saints were widely available, it saddened the Elder that more people did not read them.

Saint Barsanuphius commemorated many saints each day during his Rule of prayer, and this was not accidental. Each saint, he once explained, had some particular importance in his life. If, for example, some significant event took place, he would look to see which saints were commemorated on that day, then he would begin to commemorate them each day. Later he noticed that on their Feast Day, they would often deliver him from some danger or trouble. On December 17, 1891, the commemoration of the Prophet Daniel and the three holy youths, he left Kazan

and never returned. That was the day he decided to leave the world, and Saint Barsanuphius felt that God had delivered him from a furnace of passions. Just as the three youths were delivered from the fiery furnace because they would not bow down before idols, the Elder always believed that he left the world unharmed because he refused to bow down before the idols of lust, pride, gluttony, etc.

By 1908, Saint Barsanuphius seemed to fall ill more frequently, and began to speak of his approaching death. In April of that year, someone sent him a package containing the Great Schema. Father Barsanuphius had long desired to be tonsured into the Great Schema before his death, but he had told no one of this except for the archimandrite. Therefore, he regarded this as a sign that he would soon die.

One night in July 1910, the Elder became so ill that he had to leave church during Vigil and return to his cell. The next morning, July 11, he was so weak that he could not sit up by himself. That evening he was tonsured into the Great Schema.

Father Barsanuphius began to recover, but there were new problems in the monastery. New monks came in from spiritually lax environments. They did not understand the ascetical nature of monasticism or the whole notion of eldership, and so they began to clamor for reform and change. They wanted to assume positions of authority, and to close the skete. Because of their complaints, Father Barsanuphius was removed from Optina and assigned as igumen of the Golutvinsky Monastery. When he arrived to take up his duties, Father Barsanuphius found the monastery in a state of physical and spiritual decline. Nevertheless, he did not lose heart, and soon the monastery began to revive. More people began to visit, once they heard that an Optina Elder had come to Goluvinsky, and the monastery's financial position also began to improve. However, the rebellious brethren caused him great sorrow, and he had to expel some of them.

At the beginning of 1913, Saint Barsanuphius became ill again and asked Metropolitan Macarius of Moscow for permission to retire to Optina, but that was not to be. He fell asleep in the Lord on April 1, and his body remained in the church of Golotvino until April 6 (which was also Lazarus Saturday). After the funeral, his body was placed on a train and sent to Optina for burial. The train arrived at Kozelsk Station on April 8, and the coffin was carried to Optina by clergy.

The Moscow Patriarchate authorized local veneration of the Optina Elders on June 13, 1996. The work of uncovering the relics of Saints Leonid, Macarius, Hilarion, Ambrose, Anatole I, Barsanuphius and Anatole II began on June 24/July 7, 1998 and was concluded the next day. However, because of the church Feasts (Nativity of Saint John the Baptist, etc.) associated with the actual dates of the uncovering of

the relics, Patriarch Alexey II designated June 27/July 10 as the date for commemorating this event. The relics of the holy Elders now rest in the new church of the Vladimir Icon of the Mother of God.

The Optina Elders were glorified by the Moscow Patriarchate for universal veneration on August 7, 2000. (*from oca.org*)



April Anniversaries and Birthdays

Anniversaries:

Dennis & Phyllis Thomidis 24th | Slava & Tatyana Chumak 25th
Richard & Carol Wright 26th | Andrew & Shannon McNeil 27th



Birthdays:

Ryan Harris 3 rd	Christos Kopan 5 th	Isabella Hampton 7 th
Joseph Karbowsky 17 th	Norman Harris 19 th	Ashley McNeil 19 th
Kyle Samson 19 th	Bernie Vallandingham 22 nd	Mary Diane David 24 th
Elizabeth Howl 25 th		Rachel Harris 26 th

Parish News

- ❖ Schedule of services for the coming week (**please carefully note the times**):
 - Today, we will celebrate Bridegroom Matins after social. Please stay if you can.
 - On Tuesday evening, we will celebrate Bridegroom Matins at **7 PM**.
 - On Wednesday evening, we will celebrate the service of Holy Unction at **7 PM**.
 - On Thursday, we will celebrate the Institution of the Eucharist (DL) at **9 AM**.
 - Also on Thursday, we will read the Passion Gospels at **7 PM**.
 - On Friday, we will chant the Royal Hours of Great Friday at **9 AM**.
 - Also on Friday, we will commemorate the Burial Service of our Lord at **7 PM**.
 - On Saturday, we will celebrate the Harrowing of Hell (DL) at **9 AM**.
 - Also on Saturday, we will celebrate Resurrection Matins at **8 PM** (in place of the usual Matins service at 8:45 AM on Sunday).
 - On Holy Pascha, the only service will be Divine Liturgy at **10:00 AM** – and then we will FEAST! (and the cantors will rest!)
 - On Bright Monday, we will celebrate a Divine Liturgy at **9:00 AM**.

On Holy Pascha, we will have a potluck feast after liturgy. Please bring something to share.

MARCH TREASURER'S REPORT

Glory to God! For March we had a total income of \$12,690 with total expenses of \$14,180. Our major expenses for the month included a second payment for the ongoing icon project, a heating oil delivery, and the electric bill for the Church building. Thank you for being such wonderful stewards of God's church!

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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, 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 & 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.)