

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.



November 24, 2019 – 23rd Sunday after Pentecost | Afterfeast of the Entrance of the Theotokos into the Temple | Greatmartyr Catherine

Greatmartyr Catherine was a princess born in Alexandria and was endowed with unusual beauty, learning and wisdom. Possessing brilliant talents, she studied all the then Greco-Roman literature and all the branches which then dominated the rhetorical and philosophical sciences. Even, "having become learned in medical treatises", she was well versed in the books of the physicians". Converted to the Christ by a certain desert-dweller, she was granted a wonderful vision in which Jesus Christ Himself named her as His bride and as a sign of His betrothing presented her a precious ring.

Having completely devoted herself to the holy faith and to her Bridegroom, St. Catherine during the persecution of Maxentius, "afire with the goodness of virginity", appeared before the emperor, exposed the errors of the pagans and confessed Christ before him. Charmed with the beauty of St. Catherine, the emperor tried to convince her to worship the pagan deities. When his personal conversations with her had no success then he ordered that 50 philosophers and orators gather for conversations with St. Catherine. Having appeared at the

meeting, she seemed more powerful than all those philosophers in scientific knowledge, on the height and validity of ideas, in the power of the word and, "with a mighty mind" having shamed their "courageous advocates" "of falsely named knowledge" and "having accused the vanity of earthly wisdom" by her preaching about Christ "to rescue unto salvation many from the frenzy of idols." Seeing the unsuccessfulness of his attempts, the emperor nevertheless would try all the more to involve St. Catherine in his impurity. He began to seduce her with various caresses and slyness, suggesting to divide the empire with her and to give her half of his authority. The chaste virgin refused these offers, saying that "more than any imperial porphyry she wishes the clothes of martyrdom". Then the emperor, filled with anger, ordered her to be stripped naked and beaten with ox-hide straps. They beat the holy martyress for two hours while her virgin body was not torn with wounds. St. Catherine, to surprise of spectators, endured these cruel tortures with unusual courage and patience.

The fierce torturer ordered her imprisoned and without food or drink. But Jesus Christ did not abandon His bride without care and every day sent a dove with food to her in prison, and then He Himself visited her, and inspired into her full courage and a fortress of patience. After two days being led before the judgment seat to the king, St. Catherine was completely sound and strengthened by the previous scourging, with bright joy on her face and with her former beauty. The persuasive effort of the emperor to get her to worship the pagan gods again had no success and he ordered to turn St. Catherine over to the wheel of torture. But she remained unshakable after these most cruel tortures. Finally, the holy sufferer, by command of the torturer, was "beheaded by the sword." Seeing the suffering of St. Catherine, the Empress Augusta (or Basilissa), the wife of Maxentius, Porphyrius the Stratelates (commander) and 200 warriors converted to Christ. All of them were decapitated. Now the relics of St. Catherine are found in the monastery on Mount Sinai. (*from Handbook for Church Servers, 2nd ed., by S. V. Bulgakov (Trans. Archpriest Eugene D. Tarris)*)

Today's Epistle Lesson – St. Paul's Letter to the Ephesians 2:4-10

Brethren, God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised *us* up together, and made *us* sit together in the heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in *His* kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; *it is* the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

Today's Gospel Lesson – Saint Luke 13:10-17

At that time, Jesus was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath. And behold, there was a woman who had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and was bent over and could in no way raise *herself* up. But when Jesus saw her, He called *her* to *Him* and said to her, “Woman, you are loosed from your infirmity.” And He laid *His* hands on her, and immediately she was made straight, and glorified God. But the ruler of the synagogue answered with indignation, because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath; and he said to the crowd, “There are six days on which men ought to work; therefore come and be healed on them, and not on the Sabbath day.” The Lord then answered him and said, “Hypocrites! Does not each one of you on the Sabbath loose his ox or donkey from the stall, and lead *it* away to water it? So ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has bound—think of it—for eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath?” And when He said these things, all His adversaries were put to shame; and all the multitude rejoiced for all the glorious things that were done by Him.

A Word From the Holy Fathers

On this day, my brethren, the holy Church celebrates the solemn Entry into the temple in Jerusalem of the three-year-old child, Mary—the blessed daughter of righteous parents, Joachim and Anna—to be instructed in the Lord. Zacharias—the elder and high priest—meets her with priestly splendor; and as he was instructed to do by the Spirit of God, he brings her, accompanied by young maidens, into the most interior part of the temple, the Holy of Holies, where the high priest himself enters but once a year, and where the Holy of Holies, the Lord Himself dwelt—for she was to become the Mother of His flesh.

How did the most blessed Virgin spend her time in the temple? Taught the Hebrew written language and prayer by the Holy Spirit through the maidens, she spent her time in prayer, reading of the word of God (as you can see on the icon of the Annunciation), in divine contemplation, and handiwork. Her love for converse with God and for reading the word of God was so great that she forgot about food and drink, and an Archangel brought her heavenly food at God's request, as the Church sings in the stichera for today's feast.

What an excellent example for fathers, mothers, and their children; for Christian maidens and youths! They are obligated as followers of the Lord Jesus Christ, as servants of the Heavenly Queen, the Mother of God, and Founder of Spiritual Instruction (meaning the Church to which they belong), to emulate as well as they can her fervent love for God, her zeal for reading the word of God, for prayer, for divine contemplation, self-restraint, and love of labor! If we do not want to be

falsely called spiritual members of Christ's Church—that holy House of God, the Queen and Mother of which is the Most Holy Virgin—then we should also have the same thoughts as She has. May her children by grace be of one spirit with Her! Let them learn from her how to love the Lord, our Creator, more than anything else in the world, more than father and mother, more than anyone dear to us; how to avidly study the word of God—something unfortunately not seen amongst the disciples of Jesus Christ; learn with what warmth of heart and love we must pray to the Lord; how we must dedicate ourselves to him wholeheartedly; how to entrust our fate to His wise and all-good Providence; with what purity, meekness, humility, and patience we must always clothe and adorn ourselves and not with the vain embellishments of this adulterous and sinful world which knows no bounds of luxury and elegance in bodily clothing; how to love a life with God and the saints *more than to dwell in the tents of sinners* (Ps. 83:11).

Since the Most Holy Virgin was brought into the temple to be instructed in the Lord, let us talk now about the benefit and necessity of going to the church of God as the house of God and place where we are raised for the Heavenly Fatherland. We are called Christians, and we are all called by Jesus Christ to the Heavenly Fatherland, to be heavenly citizens, Divine inheritors, co-inheritors with Christ. Our calling is very high, our duties are also just as important; our spirit should be very exalted, holy, meek, and humble.

Who will show us what makes up our Christian calling and duty, of what spirit we must be, and how we should behave ourselves in various life situations? Who will give us the strength to live in the spirit of Christ—holy? The Church gives us all this. We can receive these spiritual powers in the temple of God through the Sacraments. Here a heavenly, unearthly spirit hovers; here is the school of Jesus Christ, in which future heavenly citizens are educated. Here you will receive heavenly lessons from the Divine Teacher, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit in the Gospels. Here is heavenly food and heavenly drink, spiritual, heavenly garments, and spiritual armaments against the enemies of salvation. Here you will receive the peace that is a foretaste of heaven, so necessary to our spiritual activity and education, and strength for spiritual labors and struggle with sin. Here we partake of sweet conversation with our Heavenly Father and the Most Holy Queen and Mother of God, with the angels of the Lord and saints. Here we learn how to pray, and for what to pray. Here you will find examples of all the Christian virtues in the saints who are glorified each day by the Church. Here, gathered together in the house of God, as children of one Heavenly Father, as members of the mystical body of Christ, we learn how to love one another—member loving member, as members of Christ, as Christ Himself.

See how beneficial, how necessary it is for a Christian to visit God's church. It is a school of faith and piety founded by God, a sacred treasure *According as His divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness* (2 Pet. 1:3), the treasury of all the Mysteries of Christ! But the benefit and necessity for the Christian of attending God's church is more clearly revealed by comparing the church with the vain world, to which we prefer to go instead of church. What do you find in the world, and what in church?

In the world, at every step there is vanity, delusion, and vice; in the church is truth, sanctity, and every kind of virtue. In the world is corruption, sin, and death; in the church is the incorruption of the saints and eternal life. Outside the church you see objects of worldly vanity that feed on *the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life* (1 Jn. 2:16). You see the things that constantly entice and captivate people, and cause them to neglect the commandments of God, the Creator and Savior of all. For example, here in this building were kept fabrics of every sort and color. Those fabrics are the object of adoration of the daughters of men. They lived for them, were inspired by them, rejoiced over them, but not over God. Here the sparkle of various items of silver and gold stunned and enticed the gaze of those who worship everything glittering and beautiful. In a word—no matter where you direct your attention in the world, you will see only decay, vanity, and sin; everywhere is the earthly and worldly. Empty, vain conversations, vain activity that gives almost no reminder of heaven, God, and the other life. Only in pious homes do the icons of the Lord Jesus Christ, His Most Pure Mother, and His saints remind the thoughtful that we, Christians and members of Christ, members of His kingdom, look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the age to come, in which we shall unite with the Lord and the saints, having cleansed ourselves of all defilement of flesh and spirit.

Thus, do you see what a difference there is between the temple--the house of God, and the world? Do you see how beneficial and necessary it is for a Christian to visit the temple of God in order to educate himself for the Heavenly Fatherland, in order to bring the spirit of Christ into himself, to engender heavenly, saintly manners? For, where else besides God's temple will you hear the word of God; where, beside in church, will you receive the mysteries of faith; where will you obtain the strength to live in a Christian way? All of this is in church and from church.

Love going to God's church, and prepare a temple of your own selves for God: *Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ* (1 Pet. 2:5). Let parents, teachers, and relatives take or send their children to church often, every Sunday and feast day without fail, and not to the theatre, where they will only learn what

the young should not know. In church, they will hear the name of the Lord more frequently; they will learn the great truth of the creation of the world and mankind; they will come to know the Savior, the Mother of God, and the names of the saints. They will learn about the resurrection of the dead, the future judgment, the future life, and the eternal torments of sinners. They will learn from the Spirit of God to be good Christians; and that is more valuable than anything in the world. Amen.

– St. John of Kronstadt, *Homily on the Entrance of the Theotokos into the Temple*

ALL ABOUT THANKSGIVING

Fr. Lawrence Farley

The Christian Faith is all about thanksgiving. Our secular North American society thinks that thanksgiving is moderately important, and so it has a wonderful Thanksgiving Day feast once a year. I love this feast. Every October in Canada—my calendar tells me it is held in November in the US—when the leaves start to turn color and the days become a little cooler, we gather if possible with our extended families and sit down to a turkey dinner. There are no pilgrims and no Plymouth Rock in sight up north, but the rejoicing in family warmth and domestic coziness is the same, I suspect, both north and south of the border. I do love Thanksgiving Day, even if in many secular households not everyone gives thanks to God for the day's bounty. At least once a year our all-too-often self-entitled culture tells us that it is good to give thanks and to be grateful.

It is otherwise in the Church. In the Church, we are to give thanks not just once a year, but always, so that every day is a thanksgiving day. We are taught this at Vespers: “I will sing praises to my God while I have my being!” (from Psalm 104). We are taught this at Matins: “Let every breath praise the Lord!” (from the Praises). We are taught this at Divine Liturgy: “It is meet and right to hymn You, to bless You, to praise You, to give thanks to You, and to worship You in every place of Your dominion” (from the Anaphora). Praise and thanksgiving is what we do as Christians, not just once a year, but all day, every day. Obviously we don't do this as successfully as we should. That is why we need the constant liturgical reminders. But it defines our Christian Faith nonetheless. That is why the main liturgical service, the one that reconstitutes us each week as the Body of Christ and forms the liturgical context for everything else, is called “the Eucharist”—from the Greek *eucharistia*, thanksgiving.

Thanksgiving not only defines us as Christians, but also as human beings—not surprisingly, if the soul (as the second century Christian apologist Tertullian noted) is “naturally Christian.” That is, what separates us from the animals is the ability to transcend ourselves and the realm of the senses and appetites through thanksgiving. My cat, lovely thing that she is, was not made in the image of God,

and so cannot transcend the realm of the appetites and the senses in which she lives. She might love me (or might not; with cats it's sometimes hard to tell), but even if she does love me, she never expresses it in thanksgiving. When I fill her food dish, she never stops, looks up at me and meows a word of doxology or gratitude. She simply chows down as if I do not exist. That's okay. She's just an animal. But we are not just animals, but strange and glorious amalgams of the animal and the spiritual, a kind of amphibian, living in both of the physical world and the angelic realm. As such we can transcend the merely physical in which we usually live, and rise up to God. Man is, as Father Alexander Schmemmann once reminded us, *homo adorans*—"worshiping man"—and this capacity to worship is what constitutes the divine image in us.

Our annual secular reminder of this in the autumn is wonderful. Yet even more wonderful is our weekly reminder every Sunday. For there we are not simply reminded to give thanks, but through our weekly liturgical *eucharistia* are able to rise above the world, and commune with God, and find healing for our broken and ailing hearts. Family and turkey are great. The Kingdom of God is even better. *(from oca.org)*

Also Commemorated Today: Great-martyr Mercurius

St. Mercurius suffered for Christ during the reign of Emperors Decius and Valerian in Caesarea, Cappadocia. "The armor of faith" and "strengthened by the power of Christ", he underwent "every kind of visible illness, gladly", and, after the most horrible tortures, was beheaded by the sword. The head of the holy great martyr and most of his relics are now in Mainz. . *(from Handbook for Church Servers, 2nd ed., by S. V. Bulgakov (Trans. Archpriest Eugene D. Tarris))*



December Anniversaries and Birthdays



Anniversaries:

Ramius & Anna Connour 1st

Birthdays:

Victor Barzykin 1st
 Luke Cooper 5th
 Andrew Dewey 11th
 Gabriela Howl 14th

Katrina Robinson 2nd
 Tatyana Chumak 8th
 Jocelyn Gray 12th
 Andrew (AJ) McNeil 16th
 James Stiver 27th

Ronnie Robinson 2nd
 Kara David 9th
 William Howl 14th
 Tina Harris 26th

Social Team for December 1

Team 2 is up next week – Cooper, Dewey, Hanbury, Kish. Thank you!

Office of the Chancellor

312 Garfield St., Johnstown, PA 15906



November 13, 2019

St. Thomas the Apostle Church
Father Joseph Edgington
and Parish Trustees
4419 Leonardtown Road
Waldorf, Maryland 20602

Glory to Jesus Christ!
Dear Father Joseph and Trustees:

It is our pleasure to congratulate St. Thomas the Apostle Church on satisfying your original Diocesan interest-free loan of \$65,000, commencing on December 15, 2007. The Chancery is in receipt of your parish check #995117 in the amount of \$13,000.

Your final monthly payment was originally scheduled for November 15, 2022. Congratulations on your early fulfillment of this financial responsibility.

We pray for your continued success at St. Thomas the Apostle Church. May God bless all of you with peace, health and spiritual happiness for Many Years!

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Very Rev. Protopresbyter Frank P. Miloro
Chancellor

The American Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Diocese of the U.S.A.

ECUMENICAL PATRIARCHATE OF CONSTANTINOPLE

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In Your Prayers – Please Remember... His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch BARTHOLOMEW, His Eminence Metropolitan 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, Presbytera Katie Baker and family, Dn. Steve Hall, Santiago Alzugaray, 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, Alexander Shostko, Bernie Takabayashi & family, Dawn & Faith Ulmschneider, Lydia Vita, Christine, Marshall, Nathaniel, Dcn. 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.)