

# SOBORNOST

**St. Thomas the Apostle Orthodox Church**

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*American Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Diocese*

*ECUMENICAL PATRIARCHATE  
OF CONSTANTINOPLE*

## SERVICES

**Saturdays: Confession 5:00 PM,**

**Great Vespers 5:30 PM**

**Sundays: Matins (Orthros) 8:45 AM | Divine Liturgy 10:00 AM.**

**Wednesdays in Great Lent: Liturgy of Presanctified Gifts 7:00 PM**

**Fridays in Great Lent: Moleben to the Theotokos 6:00 AM**

### **March 13, 2016 – Sunday of Forgiveness (or Cheese Fare)**

On this Sunday the Holy Church focuses on the memory of the exile of our ancestral parents from paradise for disobedience and intemperance in order that through misfortune it more evidently emphasizes the importance of the presented ascetical effort for all, and in the loss of the blessedness of paradise it specifies a subject, worthy of repentance and tears. The example of the ancestral parents shows us the whole weight of sin and its fatal consequences and teaches us to avoid intemperance as the beginning and the source of sin, and to turn to repentance, as to the unique means of deliverance from the anger and judgment of God. "Adam was cast out," sings the Holy Church on this day, "from the sweetness of paradise, when with bitter desire he broke the commandment of the Master, and he was condemned to work the earth from which he himself had been taken, and then to eat his bread with much toil; therefore let us love abstinence, that we may not weep outside of paradise as he did, but enter into it;" "Let us keep the fast offering tears, contrition and alms," "Let us still the passions of our soul, let us subdue the rebelliousness of the flesh;" "Girding ourselves for the good spiritual struggle of the fast" and "Taking up the armor of the cross, let us fight the enemy, having faith as an invincible wall, and prayer as a breastplate, and alms as a helmet, and fasting as a sword, which cuts away all evil from our heart;" "Let us brightly begin the season of fasting preparing ourselves for the spiritual struggle;"



"Now is the favorable time, now is the season of repentance, let us cut off the works of darkness, and clothe ourselves in the armor of light: that having sailed across the great expanse of the Fast, we may reach the three-day Resurrection of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, the Savior of our souls." With this tender, touching voice the Holy Church calls us as her children from the present day to forget everything that up to now occupied our thoughts and feelings and distracted them from "the one thing needful;" to reject everything from itself that serviced temptation and occasion for sin, that raised in us impure thoughts and feelings, that originated in us sinful desires and currents; to postpone for a while even our ordinary affairs and occupations, in so far as they soon distract our thoughts from a reverent deepening in our very selves, they irritate our heart with feelings of anger and envy, dreams of ambition and covetousness; to make itself thirsty for long prayerful vigils, fervent prayers and prostrations; to ignite in oneself an unshakable desire, voluntarily and vigilantly, thanking and glorifying the Lord to now enter the opening door of the saving fast, repentance and spiritual renewal; to kindle in itself a firm determination to pass the holy days of the fast fervently, reverently and joyfully.

In the gospel and epistle readings, the Holy Church presents its final teachings about the spiritual efforts of the actual fast. The Fast should begin with the forgiveness by the people of their trespasses and their rejection of the deeds of darkness consisting of an unfeigned fulfillment of the rules of keeping the fast and not to judge their neighbor. Reconciliation with all, the pardon and remission of all our transgressions, is the first, main and necessary condition of our reconciliation with God, cleansing and correcting our sins. Without this reconciliation with all, without this putting an end to mutual conflicts and enmity among us, it is impossible to draw near to the Lord; it is impossible even to begin the holy journey to Lent and repentance. From here came a custom of Orthodox Christians to ask each other forgiveness, and is the same as when they go to the graves of the dead for this purpose and is why the day is called in popular speech *forgiveness* and *farewell*. It is self-understood, that not only with our mouth, but also mainly with our heart we should utter a full, complete forgiveness not only for something which insults us, but also for all that is hateful and offends us, all that condemns and curses us, all that makes every evil for us. We should try to bow with true Christian humility for reconciliation and for which the devil, according to his evil and slander, had the misfortune to offend us in word and deed. Saint John Chrysostom teaches: "We should not forgive one another only by words, but with a pure heart so that our memory of the evil will not turn the sword against us. Our having been offended will not cause us evil as much as we cause ourselves, feeding the anger in ourselves and exposing ourselves to condemnation by God for that. If we love those who offend us, then evil will be turned on its very head, and it will

continue to suffer severely; but if we will be indignant, then we shall continue to suffer all the same even in spite of ourselves."

On this day, on the eve of the Holy Forty day Fast, ancient Christians, the inhabitants of monasteries, having done the evening service, and having venerated all the monastic holy things and having been comforted by the general evening meal, solemnly performed the rite of mutual forgiveness, and then left the for the desert to keep silence and fast in deep solitude, to pray and repent and cry for those who sinned for all the past time. From that time on even until now there were also old customs honorably observed in some especially devout old cities and places of Holy Russia, for example, in Moscow and others. There pious Orthodox, on this day of Forgiveness, go to monasteries, to ancient cathedrals; they venerate the holy relics and especially those of the most revered saints; they come to receive the blessing from the bishops, the people present in the churches, the pious monks; they visit the homes of relatives and acquaintances, everywhere asking all for forgiveness and blessings; as a sign of mutual peace, forgiveness and concord, they give each other special breads which are prepared for this day, like the special kulich on Holy Pascha. And in the monasteries, cathedrals, as well as in all churches, the solemn Rite of Mutual Forgiveness is performed everywhere. In monasteries it is not always done and not everywhere in the churches, but after the Vesper Service is completed the farewell meal is served in the refectory, and after the Little Compline is read in the same refectory. During the Forgiveness Rite in some monasteries, cathedrals and churches the irmoi of the Canon of Repentance: "A helper and protector he is for me unto salvation", is sung, reminding all and everyone, that all of us are "sinners, transgressors, unrighteous" before our God, "lower than the keepers of the fast, lower than the creator, as He commanded" us.

And in some places, according to local custom, during the Rite of Mutual Forgiveness they sing the stichera of Pascha with their refrains: "Today a sacred Pascha is revealed to us"; is sung not without purpose, reminding us, and on this day as on the Day of Resurrection, "Let us embrace each other, let us call "brothers" even those that hate us and forgive all" and everything for the sake of our fasting for the sake of the suffering and the resurrection of Christ. (*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 Romans 13:11-14:4**

Brethren, *it is* high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation *is* nearer than when we *first* believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light. Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for

the flesh, to *fulfill its* lusts. Receive one who is weak in the faith, *but* not to disputes over doubtful things. For one believes he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats *only* vegetables. Let not him who eats despise him who does not eat, and let not him who does not eat judge him who eats; for God has received him. Who are you to judge another's servant? To his own master he stands or falls. Indeed, he will be made to stand, for God is able to make him stand.

### **Today's Gospel Lesson – Saint Matthew 6:14-21**

The Lord said, “if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses. Moreover, when you fast, do not be like the hypocrites, with a sad countenance. For they disfigure their faces that they may appear to men to be fasting. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. But you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, so that you do not appear to men to be fasting, but to your Father who *is* in the secret *place*; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you. Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

### **Also Commemorated Today: Martyr Sabinus (Abibas) of Egypt**

The Holy Martyr Sabinus suffered in Egypt in the year 287.

### **Martyr Christina of Persia**

The Holy Martyr Christina of Persia was scourged to death for confessing her faith in Christ, during the fourth century.

### **Translation of the relics of St Nicephorus the Patriarch of Constantinople**

Saint Nicephorus was a dignitary at the court of the empress Irene (797-802), and then after receiving monastic tonsure, he became known for his piety. In the year 806 he was elevated to the patriarchal throne. The saint was a zealous defender of the holy Icons. When the Iconoclast emperor Leo the Armenian (813-820) came to rule, the saint in 815 was exiled to Prokonnis, where he died in the year 828.

In the year 846 the holy relics of Patriarch Nicephorus were opened, and were found incorrupt and fragrant. They transferred them from Prokonnis to Constantinople and placed them for one day in Hagia Sophia, and then transferred them to the Church of the Holy Apostles. The saint's hands are preserved in the Hilandar monastery on Mount Athos. The saint left behind three writings against Iconoclasm. The main Feast of St Nicephorus is celebrated on June 2, but today we commemorate the finding and transfer of his holy relics. (*from oca.org*)

## On Stewardship and the Orthodox Life – Part 59: Giving Your All Part 1



*“As the LORD the God of Israel lives, before whom I stand, there shall be neither dew nor rain these years, except by my word” (1 Kings 17:1 RSV)*

As a result of King Ahab’s continuing rebellion against God, the Holy Prophet Elias, by the power of God, announced a severe drought to fall on all the land. Sometime thereafter, St. Elias is sent by God to visit a poor widow. She is collecting sticks to build a fire, so that she can build a fire. On that fire she will cook a cake from the last of the meal she has in her storehouse. She and her son, she says, will eat this cake, and then wait to die. There was no more food. There was no more water. The Holy Saint arrived on the very day that the widow had made the decision to give up the struggle to stay alive. When St. Elias arrived he asked the widow for food and drink. She replied, *“As the LORD your God lives, I have nothing baked, only a handful of meal in a jar, and a little oil in a cruse; and now, I am gathering a couple of sticks, that I may go in and prepare it for myself and my son, that we may eat it, and die” (1 Kings 17:12 RSV).* Yet the poor widow made the cake for the Saint, and gave of the last of her water.

No doubt the widow was accustomed to serving strangers and travelers, as this was the custom of the desert-dwelling people. Yet now, regardless of the suffering that might result from this kindness, she trusted the words of the Holy Prophet: *“Fear not; ...for thus says the LORD the God of Israel, ‘The jar of meal shall not be spent, and the cruse of oil shall not fail, until the day that the LORD sends rain upon the earth’” (1 Kings 17:13-14 RSV).* *The widow shared her last food and drink with the stranger. In return, her life and that of her son were preserved. “...she, and he, and her household ate for many days. The jar of meal was not spent, neither did the cruse of oil fail, according to the word of the LORD...” (1 Kings 17:15-16).*

Giving of one’s all is purely a matter of trust. How much do we trust God to provide? How much do we trust God over our own judgment of what we need (or more likely) what we want? It may be our longstanding custom to go to church, the read the Fathers and the Scriptures, to pray daily – but how does this translate into trusting God to provide while we work to provide for the needs of others? God does not change. His love and providence were present at creation. His love and providence were present at the death and Resurrection of Christ. His love and providence are present no less now than in the days of Elijah. *(from acrod.org)*



# DIOCESAN LENTEN RETREATS



## For All Orthodox Christians, Family & Friends

### EASTERN REGION

**LOCATION:** The Conference Center  
at Valley Forge  
Phoenixville, PA

**DATE:** Sat April 16, 2016

**TIME:** 9:00 am – 5:00 pm

#### TOPIC:

#### PRESENTER:

Adults

*The Synergy of Faith and Works for  
Living and Sharing Our Orthodox Faith*

Fr. Michael Chendorain

Ages 12-18

*The Spiritual Life: Prayer in Action*

Fr. William Bennett

Ages 6-11

*We Are The Church: How Am I A Part Of God's Family?*

Fr. William George

**REGISTRATION DEADLINE: 4/2/16**

Come Escape From the  
World For A Day and Be  
Spiritually Renewed!



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National  
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## Local Lenten Retreat – Saturday, April 2 in Baltimore

Annunciation Cathedral (24 W. Preston St., Baltimore, [www.goannun.org](http://www.goannun.org)) is conducting a lenten retreat on Saturday, April 2, from 9:00 AM – 3:30 PM. Abbot Tryphon of the All-Merciful Savior Monastery on Vashon Island, WA (host of *The Morning Offering* on Ancient Faith Radio) will speak on the topic: “*I will walk among you: Our participation in the Incarnation of Christ.*” Cost: \$30. Paid registration due March 23. Registration forms are on the back table in the nave. For more info call: Mrs. Jeanne Tsakalos 410-252-6021 or [jeannetsakalos@hotmail.com](mailto:jeannetsakalos@hotmail.com). [This should not be a substitute for our diocesan Lenten retreat – Ed.]

## **Sunday of Orthodoxy Vespers**

His Grace, Bishop GREGORY will preside at and be the guest homilist for the Sunday of Orthodoxy Vespers next Sunday evening, March 20, at 5:30 PM at St. Sophia Greek Orthodox Cathedral on Massachusetts Ave. Come if you can; this is an annual gathering that manifests the unity of the faith as all the Orthodox Churches in our region are represented.

## **Lenten Retreat – Saturday, March 19**

His Grace NEOFITOS, Bishop of the Diocese of Nyeri & Mount Kenya Region (Kenya), will be speaking on the topic "Experiencing Christ in Fasting and Prayer" Born in 1970 as David Kiplagat, His Grace graduated from Holy Cross School of Theology in 2005; he was appointed Deputy Dean of Makarios III Seminary, Nairobi, Kenya, and Director of the Archdiocese Affairs in August 2008. He was elected Bishop of the Diocese of Nyeri & Mount Kenya on November 24, 2015.

Schedule:

Divine Liturgy 10:00 am

Lunch 12:00 pm

Retreat 1 :00-4:00 pm

Location:

St. Katherine Greek Orthodox Church  
3149 Glen Carlyn Rd. Falls Church, VA 22041

Confirm your attendance with your name/email to: Dr. John Demakis at [demakis9931@gmail.com](mailto:demakis9931@gmail.com) Betty Slanta at [slanta@verizon.net](mailto:slanta@verizon.net). A free-will offering will be made for the retreat and lunch.



## **Yard Sale**

Yard sales will be held at St. Thomas on the following Saturdays this year: May 21, June 18, July 9, Sept. 3, Sept. 24, and Oct. 15. Please sign up on the sheet in the fellowship hall if you are able to help. Contact Dennis or Phyllis at [thomidg@comcast.net](mailto:thomidg@comcast.net) or 410-535-3005 if you have items that you would like to donate to arrange for item pickup.

## **St Barbara Sisterhood Meeting**

St. Barbara's Sisterhood will be meeting next Sunday (March 20th) during the social hour to discuss upcoming business.



*Office of the Bishop*

*312 Garfield Street*

*Johnstown, PA 15906*

## **GREAT LENT 2016**

Protocol N. 8/2016

My beloved Faithful Clergy and Laity of our God-Protected Diocese:

As we begin Holy and Great Lent this year on March 14<sup>th</sup>, I want to share with you a few thoughts so that we may journey through this reflective period and arrive at the Great Feast of Feasts, Pascha to receive the Resurrected Christ.

We are reminded that there can be no true fast, no genuine repentance, no reconciliation with God, unless we at the same time reconcile with one another. In this holiest period of the ecclesiastical year, we should honestly examine our relationships with our families, our parish families, friends, neighbors, co-workers, and the Church in general.

After all, a fast without mutual love and forgiveness is “the fast of demons”. Part of our salvation in our daily lives is practicing love and forgiveness. Forgiveness is truly a glimpse of the Heavenly Kingdom in our sinful and fallen world. Only with God’s grace and a repentant heart can we truly return to unity, love, and harmony.

Great Lent involves hard work: on ourselves, our thoughts and feelings, our relationships with those around us. Our Lenten discipline of fasting, prayer, and charity is given to us not as a burden or hardship, but rather as an opportunity for restoring our relationship with God, our neighbors and ourselves. The Church invites us to transform our lives and to receive abundantly both peace and joy. Great Lent is an opportunity to renew our souls, minds, and bodies by entering more fully into a Christ-like life.

Therefore as we begin our Lenten journey together, I am asking you for your forgiveness as I forgive you for any offenses we may have caused each other. In addition let us pray for each other so that on that day of Pascha, we may sing with loud voices the beautiful Hymn of the Resurrection.

I pray that this Great Lenten Season is a spiritually uplifting experience for all.

Working in His Vineyard with much love,

+Bishop Gregory of Nyssa

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

ECUMENICAL PATRIARCHATE OF CONSTANTINOPLE



## *The Rules of Fasting*

On weekdays (Monday to Friday inclusive) during the seven weeks of Lent, there are restrictions both on the *number* of meals taken daily and on the *types of food* permitted; but when a meal is allowed, there is no fixed limitation on the *quantity* of food to be eaten.

On weekdays in the *first week*, fasting is particularly severe. According to strict observance, in the course of the five initial days of Lent, only two meals are eaten, one on Wednesday and the other on Friday, in both cases after the liturgy of the Presanctified.

On the other three days, those who have the strength are encouraged to keep an absolute fast; those for whom this proves impracticable may eat on Tuesday and Thursday (but not, if possible, on Monday), in the evening after Vespers, when they may take bread and water or perhaps tea or fruit-juice, but not a cooked meal. . . . At the meals on Wednesday and Friday *xerophagy* is prescribed. Literally this means 'dry eating'. Strictly interpreted, it signifies that we may eat only vegetables cooked with water and salt, and also such things as fruit, nuts, bread and honey. In practice, octopus and shellfish are also allowed on days of xerophagy; likewise vegetable margarine and corn or other vegetable oil, not made from olives. But the following categories of food are definitely excluded: *Meat; animal products (cheese, milk, butter, eggs, lard, drippings); fish (i.e., fish with backbones); oil (i.e., olive oil) and wine (i.e., all alcoholic drinks).*

On weekdays (Monday to Friday inclusive) in the *second, third, fourth, fifth and sixth weeks*, one meal a day is permitted, to be taken in the afternoon following Vespers, and at this one meal xerophagy is to be observed.

During Holy Week: On the first three days there is one meal each day, with xerophagy; but some try to keep a complete fast on these days, or else they eat only uncooked food, as on the opening days of the first week. On Holy Thursday one meal is eaten, with wine and oil. On Great Friday those who have the strength follow the practice of the early Church and keep a total fast; those unable to do this may eat bread, with a little water, tea or fruit-juice, but not until sunset, or at any rate after [the Burial Service] at Vespers. On Holy Saturday there is one meal after the Liturgy of St. Basil, with wine but not oil.

*[This material is taken from the introduction to The Lenten Triodion. In modern practice, the above rules tend to be somewhat relaxed, and they have always been relaxed for children and the infirm. Fast as you are able, and consult Fr. Joseph as needed. As you eat less physical food, it is important to increase your intake of spiritual food – prayer and reading scripture and the fathers of the Church. Also keep in mind the words of Christ: “When you fast, do not be like the hypocrites,*

*with a sad countenance. For they disfigure their faces that they may appear to men to be fasting. Amen, I say to you, they have their reward. But you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, so that you do not appear to men to be fasting, but to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.” (Mat. 6:16-18) – ed.]*

## **JR ACRY Prepares for their Lenten Project**

Our Jr. ACRY will again be supporting the Safe Night Program by collecting non-perishable foods to be used in making up bagged lunches that will be given to the homeless throughout the year. Last year, with your help, we were able to donate (80) bagged lunches to be given out, which is (20) more than the previous year. We’re hoping to up the ante and beat last year’s total with your help this year.

The project is being done in cooperation with LifeStyles of MD (LaPlata) (<http://www.lifestylesofmd.org>) and the Good Shepherd United Methodist Church (Waldorf), who will be hosting the dinner for the homeless Sunday, April 10, 2016.

We are soliciting the following items that are needed to create the lunch bags:

- ❖ Tuna/Ham/Turkey/Chicken/Hummus Kits (meat/cracker combo found by the canned Tuna)
- ❖ Fruit Cups/Fruit Snacks
- ❖ Cheese/Crackers
- ❖ Granola/Cereal Bars
- ❖ Bottled Water

All items should be of single-serving size, suitable for repackaging into single lunches and can be placed in the Cry Room in the back of the church.

Thank you for your support in helping us help others.



## *A Word From the Holy Fathers*

Do we refuse to forgive? God, too, will refuse to forgive us. As we treat our neighbors, so also does God treat us. The forgiveness or unforgiveness of your sins, then, and hence also your salvation or destruction, depend on you yourself. For without forgiveness of sins there is no salvation. You can see for yourself how serious it is.

– St. Tikhon of Zadonsk

### **THE MISSION OF THE ORTHODOX CHURCH IN TODAY'S WORLD**

*(continued from last week – Ed.)*

#### **5. *The Attitude of the Church Towards Discrimination.***

1. The Lord as King of peace (Heb. 7: 2-3) rejects violence and injustice (Ps. 10: 5) and condemns the inhuman treatment of one's neighbour (Mk. 25: 41-46; James 2:15-16). In his Kingdom, which is reflected in and is present on earth in his Church, there is no place for division, enmity or intolerance (Is. 11: 6; Rom. 12: 10).

2. The Orthodox Church takes up a firm position on this issue. She believes that God 'hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation' (Acts 17: 26) and that in Christ 'there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus' (Gal. 3: 28). To the question 'Who is my neighbour?' Christ replies with the parable of the merciful Samaritan woman (Lk. 10: 25-37), thereby teaching us to reject barriers built up by hatred and prejudice. The Orthodox Church confesses that every person, regardless of the color of his skin, religion, race, gender, nationality and language, is created in the image and likeness of God and is an equal member of the human community. In following this belief, the Orthodox Church rejects discrimination according to the aforementioned reasons which presuppose a difference in dignity between people.

3. The Church, in respecting, the principles of human rights and equal treatment of people, values the application of these principles in the light of her teaching on the sacraments, the family, the position of both genders in the Church and the value of Church tradition as a whole. The Church has the right to bear witness and does bear witness to her teaching in the public sphere.

#### **6. *The Mission of the Orthodox Church As a Testimony of Love in Ministry.***

1. In fulfilling her saving mission in the world, the Orthodox Church actively cares for all people who are in need of help, including the hungry, the poor, the sick, invalids, the elderly, the persecuted, the captives and those in prison, the homeless,

the orphans, the victims of catastrophes and military conflicts, the trade of people and contemporary forms of slavery. The efforts of the Orthodox Church in overcoming need and social injustice are the expression of her faith and ministry to Christ, who identifies himself with each person and more so with those in need: 'Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me' (Mt. 25: 40). In this multi-varied social ministry the Church can co-operate with various public institutions.

2. Conflict and enmity in the world bring with them injustice and inequality for those people and nations laboring for the benefit of God's creation. They deprive millions of people of basic benefits and lead to the degradation of the human person. They cause the mass migration of the population, engender conflict on national, religious and social grounds, which threaten the inner cohesion of society.

3. The Church cannot remain indifferent to the economic processes which have a negative impact on all humanity. She insists on the need not only of structuring the economy on moral principles, but also by means of actively ministering to the human person, following the (*continued on pg 7*)

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(*continued from page 6*) teaching of St. Paul: 'How that so laboring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive' (Acts 20: 35). St. Basil the Great writes that 'each person should make it his business to help those in need and not satisfy his own needs' (Moral Rules, 42. PG 31, 1025A).

4. The gap between the rich and the poor is dramatically increasing as a result of the economic crisis. It is a result of unconstrained speculation by representatives of financial circles, the concentration of wealth in the hands of the few and a perverted financial activity which is devoid of justice, humanity and responsibility and which ultimately does not serve to satisfy the true needs of the human race. The only viable economy is that which combines efficiency with justice and social solidarity.

5. In these tragic circumstances the Church believes it to be her great responsibility to overcome hunger and all manifestations of poverty in the world. The fact that this is taking place in our time, when countries are living in conditions of a globalized economy, testifies to the serious crisis of identity in the modern world. Hunger not only poses a threat to the divine gift of life of whole peoples, but also offends the lofty dignity of the human person and thereby throws down a challenge to God. Therefore, if concern for the need to feed ourselves is a material issue, then the concern for feeding our neighbor is a spiritual issue (James 2:m 14-18). Consequently, the task of all the Orthodox Churches is to bear witness to their solidarity in relation to those brothers in need and help them in an effective way.

6. The Holy Church of Christ, which unites many peoples of the earth in her Catholic body, supports the idea of pan-human solidarity and closer co-operation of peoples and countries for the sake of resolving conflicts peacefully.

7. At the same time, the Church is concerned at the ever increasing imposition upon people of a the consumerist lifestyle, uprooted from Christian moral values. Consumerism, together with secular globalization, leads to the loss of peoples' spiritual roots, to historical loss of memory and the consigning to oblivion of traditions.

8. Modern-day mass media often comes under the control of the ideology of liberal globalism and in this way becomes the instrument for spreading consumerism and immorality. Especial concern is caused by the instances of a disrespectful and at times blasphemous attitude towards religious values, which provoke in society conflict and disorder. The Church warns her children of the danger of influencing consciousness through the media, when it is not used for the purpose of bringing people and nations together but to manipulate them.

9. The Church often encounters on her path to preaching and to fulfilling her saving mission of ministering to humanity the manifestation of secular ideology. Rooted in the experience of faith and recalling her true mission in relation to people by way of proclaiming the Kingdom of God and educating the consciousness of the unity of her flock, the Church of Christ is called with renewed force to express the content of her prophetic witness and reveal it to the world. In this way a broad field of activity is opened up to her, since as an essential element of her ecclesiological teaching she reveals to the divided world Eucharistic communion and unity.

10. The striving for a constant growth in prosperity and the immoderate growth of consumption inevitably leads to a disproportionate exploitation and exhaustion of natural resources. Nature, created by God for man to work and preserve it (cf. Gen. 2: 15), experiences the consequences of human sin: 'For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope, because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now' (Rom. 8: 20-22).

The ecological crisis, harnessed to climate change and global warming, makes it incumbent upon the Church to do everything within her spiritual power to aid the protection of God's creation from the consequences of human greed.

Greed, manifested in the gratification of material needs, leads to the spiritual impoverishment of the human person and the destruction of the environment. We ought not to forget that natural resources are the property not of man but of the



Creator: 'The earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein' (Ps. 23: 1).

It is in this way that the Orthodox Church emphasizes the need to protect God's creation by means of inculcating responsibility in the human person for the God-given environment, by means of discovering the value of the virtues of moderation and self-limitation. We ought to recall that not only today's but also future generations have the right to the natural wealth that the Creator has granted to us.

11. For the Orthodox Church the ability to research scientifically the world is a gift of God to the human person. At the same time, the Church points out the dangers that are hidden in the use of some scientific achievements. She proposes that the scientist is not only endowed with the freedom to research, but also the duty to stop his research when basic Christian and humane principles are violated. 'All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient' (I Cor. 6: 12). 'Goodness is not goodness if it is not done with a good disposition' (St. Gregory the Theologian, 1st Homily on Theology, 4, PG 36, 16C). This viewpoint of the Church is for many reasons necessary for a correct definition of the limits of freedom and the application of the fruits of science from which in almost all areas, and especially in biology, both success and dangers are expected. Simultaneously, we emphasize the undoubted sacred nature of human life from the moment of conception until natural death.

12. Recent years have been marked by the headlong development of the biological sciences and the biotechnologies connected to them; while many of these achievements have been considered to be beneficial for the human person, others are linked to moral dilemmas and may even be rejected. The Orthodox Church affirms that the human person is not merely a collection of cells, fibers and organs; it is wrong to believe that he can be defined simply by biological factors. The human person is created according to the image of God (Gen. 1: 27). The recognition of this fundamental principle leads us to the conclusion that during the process of scientific investigation, as well as in the practical application of the results of new discoveries and inventions we ought to observe the absolute right of the human person to be respected at all stages of his life. It is essential also to respect the will of God as made manifest in his creation. When research is being conducted, it is necessary to bear in mind moral and spiritual principles and Christians precepts. Appropriate respect is to be shown towards all of God's creation as when the human person uses it and when it is being researched, according to the commandment given to man by God (Gen. 2: 15).

13. In our present time of secularization faced with a spiritual crisis characteristic of modern-day civilization, there is an especial need to highlight the meaning of sanctity. The mistaken understanding of freedom as the right to do what one

pleases has led to a growth in crime, the destruction and vandalism of holy objects, to disrespect for the freedom of one's neighbor and the sacred nature of life. Orthodox Tradition, formed by the embodiment in life of Christian truths, is the bearer of spirituality and is distinguished by its asceticism, which must be especially emphasized and demonstrated in our time.

14. The Church does not cease to be pastorally concerned in a special way for children and young people and for their upbringing in the Church. Of course, the pastoral responsibility of the Church extends to the divinely created institution of the family, which has always and immutably been rooted in the sacred mystery of Christian matrimony as a union between a man and a woman reflecting the union of Christ and the Church (Eph. 5: 22-32). This is especially relevant in view of the attempts to legalize in some countries and theological justify in some Christian communities forms of human cohabitation which go against Christian teaching and tradition.

15. In modern times, as throughout history, the prophetic and pastoral voice of the Church is addressed to the heart of the human person, calling upon him to accept and embody in life, according to St. Paul, 'whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report' (Phil. 4: 8), and even more so the sacrificial love of the crucified Lord as the only way which leads the world to peace, justice, freedom and love between peoples and nations.

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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, Fr. John & Pani Betty Jean Baranik, Fr. Vincent Saverino, Presbyteria Katie Baker and family, Alicia Barosio and family, Millie Borys, Jeffrey Carey, Xenia Chilkowich, Jon Church, Ramius Connour, Curtis Cooper, Tina Crull, Ron Dominiecki, Linda A. Georgiev, Heather Himler, Alex Holthus, John Homick, Cameron Houk, Helen Janowiak, John M. Janowiak, Deanna Jarrett, Tucker Karl and family, Robert Karpin, Andrew Kinn, Kopan family, Brian, Helen, and Luke Mahony, Alex & Valentina Makowelski, Susan Matula, Anna Meinhold, Dn. Henry Middleton, David & Kathryn Newman, Bobby Nutter & Family, Henry & Lisa Osborne, Westin Perry & Parents, Mary Reed, Chris & Kaitlin Rixey, Jerry Von Ronne, Anne Rosario, James, Theodore and Christina Ristas, Samson Family, Sharon Sheptak, Daria Virvan, Lydia Vita, Christine, Marshall, Nathaniel, 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.)