

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:

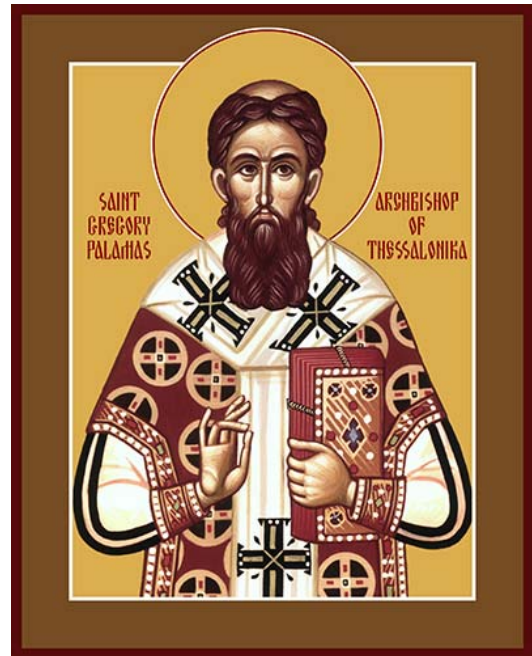
Moleben to the Theotokos 6:00 AM

March 27, 2016 – Second Sunday Great Lent

St. Gregory Palamas

The Holy Church calls the second Sunday of Great Lent the Sunday of the light creating fasts. In its Divine services, in line with the destruction of the sinful condition of man, it is descriptively and touchingly represented in the church hymns, which explains the Gospel parable about the Prodigal son, and praises the fast as a means to the beneficial inner light, and posits in this glorification a new impulse for the ascetic effort of the fast. The Orthodox teaching about fasting as a means for the beneficial inner light is opened with special power in the commemoration on this Sunday of St. Gregory Palamas, Archbishop of Thessalonica and Wonderworker.

St. Gregory is known as the one who exposed the heresy of Barlaam, the Calabrian monk, who rejected the Orthodox teaching about the blessed light, which illuminates the internal person sometimes openly visible (as for example on Tabor and Sinai), and who did not admit the possibility to achieve this inner light through both prayer and fasting and other individual efforts. At the Council in Constantinople called in 1341 concerning this heresy Barlaam, his disciple Akindynos, and their other accomplices were condemned for this false teaching.



And during the subsequent time of his life St. Gregory zealously struggled for Orthodoxy, "not once," but "many times many" through his inspired speeches and writings denying the teachings and compositions of the evil followers of Akindynos and Barlaam. For this ascetic effort for the benefit of the Holy Church, and also for the confession and witness for the faith and Christ's flock, for the sanctity of the strict ascetic life and the deep edification for all ascetics through his works, St. Gregory is also glorified in the service on this day by the Holy Church.

Thus the Holy Church, celebrating on the previous Sunday the triumph of Orthodoxy over all heresies, on the present Sunday celebrates the victory of Orthodox ascetic teachings over all false doctrines opposing it. The first celebration is in general for all Orthodox Christians; the second is for the use of ascetics, the monks. Patriarch Philotheus of Constantinople composed the church service in honor of the originator of this latter celebration, for St. Gregory. In it St. Gregory is also glorified, as "the labor of theology, the flaming mouthpiece of grace, the honorable vessel of the Spirit, the unshakable pillar of the church, the great adornment of the universe," "the sword and arrows for the slanderers" that broke, "the pride of Barlaamites, and any heretical power," "like the web of spiders" he brushed away, "the preacher of the divine light, the initiate of the heavenly mysteries of the Trinity," "the healer of human infirmities," "the most holy father, the good shepherd," "you gave your soul for your sheep," "the firm sufferer and faster," "the advocate of the pious, and the opponent of the impious, the fervent defender of the faith, the great guide and teacher," "the adornment of monastic life, glorified in action and contemplation."

In the coming week the Holy Church, as well as in the past weeks, inspires us with the necessity to offer "to Christ our God" "gifts that are pleasing," "a pure fast and abstinence from evil," abstention from "anger, wrath and every sin," "tears and prayer, to works of compassion, and to a contrite way of life, to upright thoughts and a pure way of life." In particular the Holy Church, calling us to avoid food, as "the begetter of passions," and to love fasting as "the mother of virtues;" in detail it opens, "if it is good, if it is great, if it is grace given by God," it is a fast. "Let us love the fast," sings the Holy Church, "it makes the stubborn passions of the soul to wither, and gives us strength to do the works of God; it makes our mind ascend to heaven, and gains for us the forgiveness of our sins." "By fasting Elisha gave back to the Shunnamite her child alive," "Daniel in the den tamed the wild beasts with the muzzle of abstinence: let us also subdue the passions by fasting," "for this strengthens the body, and illuminates the mind and heart." Together with this during all the days of this week the Holy Church prays to the Lord that He grant us to see His cross. "With our flesh cleansed by abstinence," cries the Holy Church, "and our souls enlightened by prayer, O Lord, grant us to look upon Thy holy and

honorable cross" "and to reverence it uncondemned with fear and love," "to kiss it with undefiled lips," "in Psalms and songs let us celebrate the light," "in our illumination." In such a way it follows that the third week is essentially a sort of Forefeast to the cross of the Lord. (*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 Hebrews 1:10-2:3

In the beginning, "You, Lord, in the beginning laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of Your hands. They will perish, but You remain; and they will all grow old like a garment; like a cloak You will fold them up, and they will be changed. But You are the same, and Your years will not fail." But to which of the angels has He ever said: "Sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool"? Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation? Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away. For if the word spoken through angels proved steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just reward, how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard *Him*?

Today's Gospel Lesson – Saint Mark 2:1-12

At that time, Jesus entered Capernaum after *some* days, and it was heard that He was in the house. Immediately many gathered together, so that there was no longer room to receive *them*, not even near the door, and He preached the word to them. Then they came to Him, bringing a paralytic who was carried by four *men*. And when they could not come near Him because of the crowd, they uncovered the roof where He was. So when they had broken through, they let down the bed on which the paralytic was lying. When Jesus saw their faith, He said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven you." And some of the scribes were sitting there and reasoning in their hearts, "Why does this *Man* speak blasphemies like this? Who can forgive sins but God alone?" But immediately, when Jesus perceived in His spirit that they reasoned thus within themselves, He said to them, "Why do you reason about these things in your hearts? Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven you,' or to say, 'Arise, take up your bed and walk'? But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins"—He said to the paralytic, "I say to you, arise, take up your bed, and go to your house." Immediately he arose, took up the bed, and went out in the presence of them all, so that all were amazed and glorified God, saying, "We never saw *anything* like this!"

On Stewardship and the Orthodox Life – Part 61: Giving Your All Part 3



“...they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord...and to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the law of the Lord, ‘a pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons.’” (Luke 2:22,24 RSV)

The Feast of Meeting (February 2) is one of the Twelve Great Feasts of the Church’s Year. The Feast commemorates the fortieth day presentation of the new-born Jesus in the temple. Since the time of Moses, all newborn Jewish males were presented in the temple along with a sacrificial animal. The law required the sacrifice of a lamb in most cases. But: “... if he is poor and cannot afford so much, then he shall take one male lamb for a guilt offering to be waved, to make atonement for him, and a tenth of an ephah of fine flour mixed with oil for a cereal offering, and a log of oil; also two turtledoves or two young pigeons, such as he can afford...” (Leviticus 14:21-22 RSV).

When Jesus was born to the Virgin Mary, the Mother of God, she followed the Jewish laws, and presented Jesus at the temple. The icon of the Feast tells us what was used for the sacrifice at Jesus’ presentation: two turtledoves. Why was not the law kept about the sacrifice of a lamb? For one thing, that sacrifice (of the Lamb of God Himself) would take place later. For another, Mary and Joseph were poor. They did not have enough even to purchase a lamb to give as offering. As the quotation from Leviticus above provides, a pair of turtledoves was an acceptable offering given by the poor. Even the heart of the Jewish Law recognized that not all could afford to make the most expensive sacrifice. But, for Mary and Joseph, a pair of turtledoves was the most affordable sacrifice they could make.

It is the attitude of the heart that makes the gift valuable. The Mother of God brought only an offering of turtledoves, the acceptable sacrifice of the poor. In her heart she held the Lamb of God – THE sacrifice that would be made on Golgotha a generation later. The Mother of God could not give the treasures of the Magi – gold, frankincense and myrrh. Yet she was not rejected because of the seeming smallness of her gift. What the Mother of God gave was her all. She gave the required animal sacrifice of the poor. And she gave her only-begotten Son, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. He was her most precious possession. And the Theotokos gave Him back to God. She sacrificed everything she had – for the salvation of the world! May our sacrificial giving be just that – giving of our all! (*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	<i>The Synergy of Faith and Works for Living and Sharing Our Orthodox Faith</i>	Fr. Michael Chendorain
Ages 12-18	<i>The Spiritual Life: Prayer in Action</i>	Fr. William Bennett
Ages 6-11	<i>We Are The Church: How Am I A Part Of God's Family?</i>	Fr. William George

REGISTRATION DEADLINE: 4/2/16

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



Sponsored By The National A.C.R.Y.

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 the Sunday of the Veneration of the Holy Cross. Please be generous! [Photo Credit: Nikolaos Manginas]

Bishop Neofitos of Nyeri and Mt. Kenya

In January of this year, his Grace, Bishop Neofitos was given the responsibility for a new diocese in his native Kenya, overseeing 43 priests. Until this year, there was only one bishop for all of Kenya's over 250 priests, and parishioners would go years without seeing their bishop; he is filling a huge need. He is also starting from absolutely nothing; when he set out to go to his new diocesan seat, he didn't even have a place to stay. He jokes that his office is his briefcase. He would like to build an office, but land is expensive in his city and his diocese is largely rural and poor. His priests often cannot hold weekly services because they cannot afford the fare to get to the church and back; his



goal is to equip every priest in his diocese with a motorcycle so they can celebrate liturgy every Sunday. Bishop Neofitos runs an orphanage of 200 children with the assistance of 12 teachers; though their salary is \$250/month, they have not been paid since January because there is no money to pay them. In parts of his diocese, people have to walk for miles to get a glass of water, and it is a struggle to provide food for one meal a day. Our three Lenten disciplines are prayer, fasting, and charity – we are exhorted to do all three. If you would like to assist the Bishop, you can make a check out to OCMC and send it to OCMC, 220 Mason Manatee Way, St. Augustine, FL 32086 with “Bishop Neofitos” on the memo line. You also can donate online through OCMC at https://www.ocmc.org/donate/donation_info.aspx; just *make sure* to type "Bishop Neofitos" in the special instructions field.

Also Commemorated Today: Martyr Matrona of Thessalonica

The Holy Martyr Matrona of Thessalonica suffered in the third or fourth century. She was a slave of the Jewish woman Pautila (or Pantilla), wife of one of the military commanders of Thessalonica. Pautila constantly mocked her slave for her faith in Christ, and tried to convert her to Judaism. St Matrona, who believed in Christ from her youth, still prayed to the Savior Christ, and secretly went to church unbeknownst to her vengeful mistress.

Pautila, learning that St Matrona had been to church, asked, “Why won't you come to our synagogue, instead of attending the Christian church?” St Matrona boldly answered, “Because God is present in the Christian church, but He has departed from the Jewish synagogue.” Pautila went into a rage and mercilessly beat St Matrona, tied her up, and shut her in a dark closet. In the morning, Pautila

discovered that St Matrona had been freed of her bonds by an unknown Power. In a rage Pautila beat the martyr almost to death, then bound her even more tightly and locked her in the closet. The door was sealed so that no one could help the sufferer. The holy martyr remained there for four days without food or water, and when Pautila opened the door, she again found St Matrona free of her bonds, and standing at prayer.

Pautila flogged the holy martyr and left the skin hanging in strips from her body. The fierce woman locked her in the closet again, where St Matrona gave up her spirit to God.

Pautila had the holy martyr's body thrown from the roof of her house. Christians took up the much-suffered body of the holy martyr and buried it. Later, Bishop Alexander of Thessalonica built a church dedicated to the holy martyr. Her holy relics, glorified by many miracles, were placed in this church.

The judgment of God soon overtook the evil Pautila. Standing on the roof at that very place where the body of St Matrona had been thrown, she stumbled and fell to the pavement. Her body was smashed, and so she received her just reward for her sin.

Martyrs Manuel and Theodosius

The Holy Martyrs Manuel and Theodosius suffered for their faith in Christ in 304 in Sirmium. Seeing how the pagans put Christians to death every day, they believed in Christ and resolved to suffer for their faith. They boldly confessed themselves as Christians before the governor. The governor and those around him marvelled at their bravery.

By order of the governor, Sts Manuel and Theodosius were thrown into prison, and a strict watch was set over them. After several days the governor gave orders to bring the saints from prison, and he urged them to renounce Christ and offer sacrifice to the idols. The holy martyrs, however, were steadfast in their confession.

Then the governor ordered Sts Manuel and Theodosius to be suspended from a tree, and scraped with sharp iron hooks. The martyrs were stabbed with a sharp trident, and then beheaded. (*from oca.org*)

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 or 410-535-3005 if you have items that you would like to donate to arrange for item pickup.

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 **by next week** in the back of the church.

Thank you for your support in helping us help others.



A Word From the Holy Fathers

Confession is like a bridle that keeps the soul which reflects on it from committing sin, but anything left unconfessed we continue to do without fear as if in the dark. He who exposes every serpent (at confession) shows the reality of his faith, while he who hides them still walks the trackless wastes. Very often demons manage to

persuade us either to omit confession, or else to confess as though the sins were committed by someone else or else to blame others as responsible for our own sins. Regarding those who have undertaken to care for us in the Lord, we should trust them completely, even when they order us to do something that looks like being contrary to our salvation. That is the time when our faith in them is tested as in a furnace of humiliation, and the sign of the most genuine faith is when we obey our superiors without hesitation, even when we see the opposite happening to what we had hoped. From obedience comes humility, and from humility comes discernment. If we picture for ourselves the face of the superior whenever he happens to be away, if we think of him as always standing nearby, if we avoid every gathering, word, meal, sleep, or indeed anything to which we think he might object, then we have really learned true obedience.

Fight always with your thoughts and call them back when they wander away. God does not demand of those under obedience that their thoughts be totally undistracted when they pray. And do not lose heart when your thoughts are stolen away. Just remain calm, and constantly call your mind back.

Someone with a totally clear conscience in the matter of being obedient to his spiritual father waits each day for death – as though it were sleep, or rather life; and he is unafraid, knowing with certainty that when it is time to go, not he but his spiritual director will be called to render an account.

– St. John Climacus

THE PURPOSE OF GREAT LENT

By Archimandrite Alexios, Abbot of Xenophontos Ivlonastery, Mount Athos

Beloved,

Holy and Great Lent is a spiritual arena for the virtues, a time of repentance and prayer, watchfulness and sorrow, a period of fasting, purification of the soul and forgiveness. This entire blessed period is a sacred journey, which is annually presented by our Holy Church, for every believer who seeks to journey together with Christ the Savior, to rise with Him and share in His eternal divine Kingdom. Our Church is like an affectionate mother, with her salvific Mysteries, her presanctified Divine Liturgies, her solemn Vespers, her popular Salutations to the Most Holy Theotokos, the great Complines, the Great Canon of repentance, and she comes to awaken us and invites us to exercise temperance, prayer and beneficence, on the path of soul-saving repentance.

Great Lent has this sacred purpose and reminds us of these things daily with the sacred hymns of the *Triodion*: "It is time of sorrow and repentance, alienation from wickedness, and temperance of the passions, therefore let us eagerly cut off the works of evil we produce" (*Monday Matins of Cheesefare*). The struggle against

evil and sin requires repentance, the rejection of wickedness, control of the passions and detachment from evil works. Those who long for God will enter into this struggle and thus they will become shareholders of the final victory.

The necessity to "cleanse ourselves of all the filthiness of the flesh and spirit" is a basic desire of every true Christian, and this is given to us by the All-Holy Spirit:

- when we bear fruits worthy of repentance,
- when we provide forgiveness to our brethren,
- when we control our undisciplined thoughts with the power of prayer,
- when we avoid criticism and condemnation of others,
- when we are merciful to the poor and help those who suffer,
- when we partake of the Divine Mysteries and
- when we pray on behalf of all people.

This is how the peace of God comes and awards our hearts and thoughts with the divine presence and grace. Especially these days the hymns of our Church elevate us, being adorned with exquisite and divinely-inspired hymns, which were composed and delivered to the Church by our Holy and God-bearing Fathers with faith and reverence to the glory of the Triune God and the honor and praise of our Saints.

A special place in the hymnological poetry of our Church belongs to the Lady and Mistress of the world, the Most Holy Theotokos Mary. The Theotokia, the Theotokaria, the Supplication Canons to the Theotokos, the hymns of the services of the feasts of the Mother of God, all these compositions of our Holy Fathers who loved the Theotokos and the hymnographers expressed the riches of the Mother of God's supplications on behalf of the human race, as well as the deep reverence, faith and love of the faithful towards the All-Hymned Mother of God and mother of the world.

My Elder would urge us to daily say the Salutations to our Panagia to the glory and honor of her holy name and for our spiritual benefit and comfort. Watchfulness and the invocation of the name of God and His Mother the Panagia is a light-bearing virtue, which generates light and joy in our lives. And all the more our existence becomes fermented with spiritual asceticism and prayer, as much as we prepare ourselves, as much as we endure God's trials, as much as we sense our sins, so much will the grace of God come and dwell within us, and purify our nous and our hearts from an evil conscience. This entire blessed struggle is crowned with the joy of the Resurrection, which is not only a Paschal joy, but we will share in heavenly goods still in this life.

I pray that the difficulties of this present time will be turned into blessings for our country and the entire world. And in these sacred days of Great Lent, which begin with the grace of God, we will intensify our prayers to our Merciful God and our Panagia, as we do here on the Holy Mountain, and that each of us will experience our personal transformation through repentance, that we may be provided with a surplus of mercy, as our Lord says, for the humble and simple and obedient faithful, that we may be made worthy of the joy of the Resurrection. A good and blessed Lent! (from www.johnsanidopoulos.com)

THE SACRAMENT OF MARRIAGE AND ITS IMPEDIMENTS

The document is approved by the Synaxis of the Primates of Local Orthodox Churches on January 21 – 28, 2016, in Chambesy, with the exception of representatives of the Orthodox Churches of Antioch and Georgia. It is published by the decision of the Synaxis of the Primates.

1. Orthodox marriage

1) The institute of family is threatened today by such phenomena as secularization and moral relativism. The Orthodox Church asserts the sacral nature of marriage as her fundamental and indisputable doctrine. The free union of man and woman is an indispensable condition for marriage.

2) In the Orthodox Church, marriage is considered to be the oldest institution of divine law since it was instituted at the same time as the first human beings, Adam and Eve, were created (Gen. 2:23). Since its origin this union was not only the spiritual communion of the married couple – man and woman, but also assured the continuation of the human race. Blessed in Paradise, the marriage of man and woman became a holy mystery, which is mentioned in the New Testament in the story about Cana of Galilee, where Christ gave His *first sign* by turning water into wine thus revealing His glory (Jn. 2:11). The mystery of the indissoluble union of man and woman is the image of the unity of Christ and the Church (Eph. 5:32).

3) The Christ-centered nature of marriage explains why a bishop or a presbyter blesses this sacred union with a special prayer. In his letter to Polycarp of Smyrna, St. Ignatius the God-Bearer stressed that those who enter into the communion of marriage “*must also have the bishop’s approval, so that their marriage may be according to God, and not after their own lust. Let everything be to the glory of God*” (Poly. 5). The sacred nature of the God-established union and its lofty spiritual content explain the Apostle’s affirmation: *Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure* (Heb. 13:4). That is why the Orthodox Church condemned any defilement of its purity (Eph. 5:2-5, 1 Thes. 4:4, Heb. 13:4ff).

4) The union of man and woman in Christ constitutes ‘a small church, an image of the Church.’ Clement of Alexandria affirms: “*Who are the two or three gathered*

in the name of Christ in whose midst the Lord is? Does he not by the "three" mean husband, wife, and child?" (Stromata, 3.10, PG 8, 1169 B). Through God's blessing, the union of man and woman is elevated, for communion is above individual existence as it introduces the spouses to a life in the image of the Kingdom of the Holy Trinity. A necessary condition for marriage is the faith in Jesus Christ to be shared by a bridal pair, husband and wife. The foundation of unity in marriage is unity in Christ, so that the marital love blessed by the Holy Spirit may reflect the love of Christ and His Church as a mystery of the Kingdom of God and the eternal life of humanity in the love of God.

5) The protection of the sacral nature of marriage has always been of crucial importance for the preservation of the family which reflects the communion of those tied by conjugal bonds both in the Church and in the whole society. Therefore, the communion accomplished in the sacrament of marriage is not simply a natural conventional relationship but a creative spiritual force realized in the sacred institution of the family. It is the only force that can ensure the protection and education of children both in the spiritual mission of the Church and in the life of society.

6) It was always with necessary strictness and proper pastoral sensibility, in the manner of St. Paul, Apostle of the Gentiles (Rom. 7:2-3; 1 Cor. 7:12-15, 39) that the Church treated both positive conditions (the difference of sexes, legal age, etc.) and impediments (kinship by blood and affinity, spiritual kinship, an already existing marriage, difference in religion, etc.) for the conclusion of a church marriage. Pastoral sensibility is necessary not only because the biblical tradition links marriage with mystery of the Church, but also because the church practice did not exclude certain principles of the Greek-Roman natural law, which stressed that the conjugal bonds between man and woman is "*a communion of the divine and the human law*" (Modestin) and are compatible with the sacred nature attributed by the Church to the mystery of marriage.

7) In today's situation so unfavorable for the sacrament of marriage and the sacred institution of family, bishops and priests should actively develop pastoral work to protect the faithful by supporting them, asserting the institution of family on a solid foundation that cannot be destroyed either by rain or streams or winds, since this foundation is the rock which is Christ (cf. Mt. 7:25).

8) Marriage is the heart of the family, and the family is realization of marriage. In today's world, a real threat to Orthodox Christians is constituted by the pressure to recognize new forms of cohabitation. The deepening crisis of marriage is a matter of profound concern for the Orthodox Church not only

because of negative consequences for the whole society and a threat to internal family relationships, the principal victims of which are married couples and, in the first place, children because regrettably they usually begin to martyr innocently from their early childhood.

9) A civil marriage between a man and a woman registered in accordance with the law lacks the sacramental nature and as a legalized cohabitation differs from a marriage blessed by God and the Church. The members of the Church who contract a civil marriage should be treated with pastoral responsibility necessary to make these people become aware of the value of the sacrament of marriage and its blessing.

10) The Church does not deem it possible for her members to contract same-sex unions or enter into any other form of cohabitation except marriage. The Church exerts all possible pastoral efforts so that those of her members who enter into such unions may come to true repentance and love blessed by the Church.

11) The grave consequences brought about by the crisis of the institutions of marriage and family are expressed in the offensive growth in the number of divorces and abortions and in the increase of other problems of family life. These consequences constitute a great challenge to the mission of the Church in the modern world. Therefore, the pastors of the Church should exert all possible efforts to address these problems. The Orthodox Church with love calls upon her faithful, men and women and all people of good will, to safeguard the fidelity to the sacred nature of the family.

2. On impediments to marriage

1. Concerning the impediments to marriage due to kinship by blood, kinship by affinity and adoption and spiritual kinship, the prescriptions of canons (Canons 53 and 54 of the Council of Trullo) and the church practice derived from them are valid as applied today in the autocephalous Local Orthodox Churches and determined and described in their Statutes and respective decisions of their Synods.

2. A marriage that is not completely dissolved or annulled and a third marriage constitute an absolute impediment to the conclusion of marriage in conformance to the Orthodox canonical tradition which categorically rejects bigamy and the fourth marriage.

3. In accordance with the acribia of holy canons, the entering into a church marriage after monastic vows is forbidden (Canon 16 of the Fourth Ecumenical Council and Canon 44 of the Council of Trullo).

4. Priesthood constitutes an impediment to marriage in accordance with the canonical tradition in force (Canon 3 of the Council of Trullo).
5. Concerning mixed marriages of Orthodox Christians with non-Orthodox Christians or non-Christians:
 - a) The marriage of an Orthodox Christian with a non-Orthodox Christian is forbidden in accordance with the canonical acribia and is not celebrated in the Church (Canon 72 of the Council of Trullo). It can be blessed out of indulgence and love of man if the children from this marriage are to be baptized and raised in the Orthodox Church.
 - b) The marriage between Orthodox Christians and non-Christians is categorically forbidden in accordance with the canonical acribia.
6. The practice used in application of the church Tradition with regard to impediments to marriage should take into account the prescription of the state legislation in force without going beyond the limits of the church oikonomia.
7. The Holy Synod of each autocephalous Orthodox Church should practice church oikonomia in conformance with the principles established in church canons, in the spirit of pastoral discernment for the service of the salvation of man.

Chambésy, January 27, 2016

AMAZONSMILE

The on-line shopping store, Amazon.com will donate 0.5% of the price of your eligible AmazonSmile purchases to American Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Greek Catholic Diocese of the USA whenever you shop on AmazonSmile. AmazonSmile is the same Amazon you know – same products, same prices, same service. Simply go to the home page of our Diocesan website (www.acrod.org) and click on the AmazonSmile button in the far left column and then shop as usual.

April Anniversaries and Birthdays



Anniversaries:

Andrew & Shannon McNeil 27th
Dennis & Phyllis Thomidis 24th



Birthdays:

Ryan Harris 3 rd	Christos Kopan 5 th	Liam Cohoon 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

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In Your Prayers – Please Remember... His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch BARTHOLOMEW, His Grace Bishop GREGORY, Fr. Joseph & Family, Greek Orthodox Archbishop Paul Yazigi of Aleppo, Syriac Orthodox Archbishop Yohanna Ibrahim of Aleppo, His Grace Bishop Neofitos of Nyeri and Mt. Kenya, Fr. John & Pani Betty Jean Baranik, Fr. Vincent Saverino, Presbyteria Katie Baker and family, 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.)