

# SOBORNOST

## St. Thomas the Apostle Orthodox Church

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*American Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Diocese*

ECUMENICAL PATRIARCHATE  
OF CONSTANTINOPLE

## SERVICES

**Fridays: Moleben to the Theotokos 6:00 AM**

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

**Great Vespers 5:30 PM**

**Sundays: Matins (Orthros) 8:45 AM |**

**Divine Liturgy 10:00 AM.**



## July 10, 2016 – 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday After Pentecost | Ven. Anthony of the Kiev Far Caves | New Martyrs of the Turkish Yoke

Saint Anthony of the Kiev Caves was born in the year 983 at Liubech, not far from Chernigov, and was named Antipas in Baptism. Possessing the fear of God from his youth, he desired to be clothed in the monastic schema. When he reached a mature age, he wandered until he arrived on Mt. Athos, burning with the desire to emulate the deeds of its holy inhabitants. Here he received monastic tonsure, and the young monk pleased God in every aspect of his spiritual struggles on the path of virtue. He particularly excelled in humility and obedience, so that all the monks rejoiced to see his holy life.

The igumen saw in St Anthony the great future ascetic, and inspired by God, he sent him back to his native land, saying, “Anthony, it is time for you to guide others in holiness. Return to your own Russian land, and be an example for others. May the blessing of the Holy Mountain be with you. Returning to the land of Rus, Anthony began to make the rounds of the monasteries about Kiev, but nowhere did he find that strict life which had drawn him to Mt. Athos.

Through the Providence of God, Anthony came to the hills of Kiev by the banks of the River Dniepr. The forested area near the village of Berestovo reminded him of his beloved Athos. There he found a cave which had been dug out by the Priest

Hilarion, who later became Metropolitan of Kiev (October 21). Since he liked the spot, Anthony prayed with tears, "Lord, let the blessing of Mt. Athos be upon this spot, and strengthen me to remain here." He began to struggle in prayer, fasting, vigil and physical labor. Every other day, or every third day, he would eat only dry bread and a little water. Sometimes he did not eat for a week. People began to come to the ascetic for his blessing and counsel, and some decided to remain with the saint.

Among Anthony's first disciples was St Nikon (March 23), who tonsured St Theodosius of the Caves (May 3) at the monastery in the year 1032.

The virtuous life of St Anthony illumined the Russian land with the beauty of monasticism. St Anthony lovingly received those who yearned for the monastic life. After instructing them how to follow Christ, he asked St Nikon to tonsure them. When twelve disciples had gathered about St Anthony, the brethren dug a large cave and built a church and cells for the monks within it.

After he appointed Abbot Barlaam to guide the brethren, St Anthony withdrew from the monastery. He dug a new cave for himself, then hid himself within it. There too, monks began to settle around him. Afterwards, the saint built a small wooden church in honor of the Dormition of the Mother of God over the Far Caves.

At the insistence of Prince Izyaslav, the igumen Barlaam withdrew to the Dimitriev monastery. With the blessing of St Anthony and with the general agreement of the brethren, the meek and humble Theodosius was chosen as igumen. By this time, the number of brethren had already reached a hundred men. The Kiev Great Prince Izyaslav (+ 1078) gave the monks the hill on which the large church and cells were built, with a palisade all around. Thus, the renowned monastery over the caves was established. Describing this, the chronicler remarks that while many monasteries were built by emperors and nobles, they could not compare with those which are built with holy prayers and tears, and by fasting and vigil. Although St Anthony had no gold, he built a monastery which became the first spiritual center of Rus.

For his holiness of life, God glorified St Anthony with the gift of clairvoyance and wonderworking. One example of this occurred during the construction of the Great Caves church. The Most Holy Theotokos Herself stood before him and St Theodosius in the Blachernae church in Constantinople, where they had been miraculously transported without leaving their own monastery. Actually, two angels appeared in Constantinople in their forms (See May 3, the account of the Kiev Caves Icon of the Most Holy Theotokos). Having received gold from the Mother of God, the saints commissioned master architects, who came from

Constantinople to the Russian land on the command of the Queen of Heaven to build the church at the Monastery of the Caves. During this appearance, the Mother of God foretold the impending death of St Anthony, which occurred on July 10, 1073. Through Divine Providence, the relics of St Anthony remain hidden. (*from oca.org*)

### **Today's Epistle Lesson – St. Paul's Letter to the Romans 5:1-10**

Brethren, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only *that*, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope. Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.

### **Today's Gospel Lesson – Saint Matthew 6:22-33**

The Lord said, "The lamp of the body is the eye. If therefore your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great *is* that darkness!

No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.

Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature? So why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, *will He* not much more *clothe* you, O you of little faith? Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall

we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.”

## **On Stewardship and the Orthodox Life – Part 77: Perfection**



*“If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me.” (Mat. 19:21 RSV)*

When a young man approached Jesus and asked Him how to gain eternal life, Jesus’ answer was simple: keep the commandments. The young man told Jesus that he had kept them all. With a look of love, Jesus knew what it was that was a defect in the young man’s pursuit of perfection. He did not love his neighbor as himself – the young man’s love of riches, which if not changed, would not allow him to enter heaven. Then the famous words of Jesus: *“If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me.”*

Jesus requires nothing more than to follow the example that He Himself had set. Jesus left His riches and glory, and became poor so that humanity, through Jesus’ own poverty, might be made truly rich. Jesus requires nothing more than to give up earthly wealth, honor and pleasure. Jesus knew that as long as love for those earthly things are in the world, entrance to eternal life is barred.

Did the young man receive the words of Jesus? Did he rejoice that he had finally found the way to heaven? No. We are told that the young man went away sorrowful. And why? Because he had great possessions – things of this world that he obviously loved more than God and neighbor. To this young man, riches *were* honor and power. To dispose of such wealth was, for him, an impossibility. He may have truly desired eternal life, but he wanted to retain his wealth. He rejected eternal life for his love of money and power.

How many of us believe in our hearts that we are keeping all of the commandments, just like this young man? Yet keeping the commandments is clearly not the entire ticket to heaven. Had this young man truly have kept all the commandments, he would not have been so attached to the things of this world like money, power, and authority.

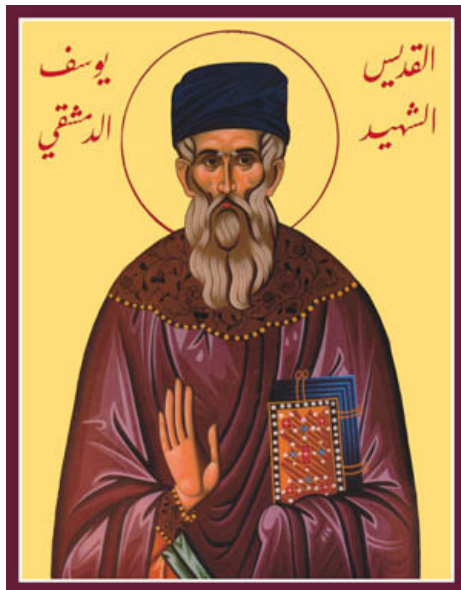
Jesus is clear here. This is nothing uncertain or confusing about what He has to say. Had this young man distributed what he owned to provide the necessities of the poor, he would have been much happier. As well, he would have experienced what Jesus called “*Treasure in heaven.*” Yes – on this earth the young man could experience what he thought was something in the future. For our eternal life begins here, on this earth. And how we deal with what is important to us determines not only how we experience heaven here, but also how we experience heaven in eternity. (from *acrod.org*)

## *A Word From the Holy Fathers*

Let God's people then recognize that they are a new creation in Christ, and with all vigilance understand by Whom they have been adopted and Whom they have adopted. Let not the things, which have been made new, return to their ancient instability; and let not him who has 'put his hand to the plough' forsake his work, but rather attend to that which he sows than look back to that which he has left behind. Let no one fall back into that from which he has risen, but, even though from bodily weakness he still languishes under certain maladies, let him urgently desire to be healed and raised up. For this is the path of health through imitation of the Resurrection begun in Christ, whereby, notwithstanding the many accidents and falls to which in this slippery life the traveler is liable, his feet may be guided from the quagmire on to solid ground, for, as it is written, 'the steps of a man are directed by the Lord, and He will delight in his way. When the just man falls he shall not be overthrown, because the Lord will stretch out His hand'.

– St. Leo the Great

### **Also Commemorated Today: Heiromartyr Joseph of Damascus**



On the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday after Pentecost, we commemorate all those who suffered martyrdom under Ottoman rule. Today, we commemorate Heiromartyr Joseph of Damascus, who suffered martyrdom along with thousands of other Christians during a riot which broke out in Damascus on July 9, 1860. He was born in May 1793, to a poor but pious family. At an early age he obtained some education, so he became acquainted with Arabic, and some Greek. Unable to afford tuition, his father decided to halt his education in favor of putting him to work in the silk industry. His desire for knowledge, however, was not quenched by poverty and destitution, so



he decided to find a solution. He started working all day long and teaching himself at night - necessity created a self-made person. Reaching the age of fourteen, the young man started to read his brother's books, but he was frustrated because he could comprehend just a little from what he was reading. Then, he studied under a Damascene Muslim elder, Mouhamad Al-Attar, who was one of the greatest scholars of his age; he learned from him Arabic, logic, the art of debate and right reasoning. He discontinued his studies, however, because tuition and the cost of books overburdened his father; he was obliged to go back to his old life-style: working all day long, and teaching himself at night.

Joseph dedicated his evenings wholeheartedly to study the Torah, the Psalms and the New Testament, comparing the Greek text of the Septuagint with the Arabic translation, until he gained mastery in translating to and from Greek. He was able to memorize a greater portion of the Bible. He persisted in seizing every opportunity to gain more education with great yearning. After he began teaching from his home, he learned Hebrew from one of his Jewish students.

His tenacious endeavor kindled the fear of his parents, so they tried to dissuade him from learning and teaching, for fear that he might face the same fate of his brother, who had died after wearing himself out from study. Unsuccessful in their efforts, they tried another solution: They gave him in marriage to a Damascene young woman whose name was Mariam Al-Kourshi, while he was still nineteen years of age (1812). Marriage, however, did not turn him away from his pursuit of knowledge; his biography tells us that even at the night of his wedding he persisted in reading and learning.

### **JOSEPH AS AN ARCHPRIEST**

Becoming aware of his honorable reputation, the parish in Damascus requested Patriarch Seraphim (1813-1823) to ordain him as their pastor. Since the Patriarch had a high admiration of him, he ordained him a deacon, then a priest within one week while he was still twenty-four years old (1817). When his successor, Patriarch Methodios (1824-1850), became acquainted with his fervor, godliness, knowledge and intrepidity, he elevated him to archpriest. Preaching for many years from the pulpit of the Patriarchal Cathedral, he achieved excellent results. Some people regarded him as the successor of Chrysostom. In his sermons he was distinguished by his proofs and his convincing and irrefutable answers. He had a quiet voice that could be heard from a distance. People used to listen to his words with longing and enjoyment, and to emulate his advice and keep his commandments. Four decades later, people were still reiterating his sermons. Along with his sermons, he was diligent in comforting the heartbroken, in consoling the grieving, in helping the destitute and in strengthening the feeble. In

1848, when yellow fever spread in Damascus, Father Joseph manifested a great fervor in ministering to the sick, and in burying the dead, without being troubled by the possibility of catching this infectious fever, because he had a profound faith in God. Although he lost one of his children by this contagious disease, he was tireless in doing his pastoral duty. His fervor, his steadfastness and his compassion increased. He was highly respected by the Damascene people; they saw in him the image of Saint Paul who said: "We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus Christ, so that the life of Jesus may also be made visible in our bodies," (2 Cor. 4:8-10).

Father Joseph took charge of the Patriarchal school in Damascus in 1836; he spared no effort to develop it, by appointing a board of administration and giving the teachers regular salaries, until it attracted students from all Syria and Lebanon. Father Joseph's concern was to educate the minds of Orthodox young men, and to "prepare them for priesthood and to serve the flock in a useful way." The expenses of education were covered by the faithful and by the Patriarchate. His vision was to make interest in theological studies increase. In 1852, Father Joseph took the initiative to open a department of theological studies, striving to elevate it to the level of the other theological seminaries in the Orthodox world. Twelve students were enrolled in it, and all of them became bishops in the Church. He breathed in his students the spirit of peace and success, which can be found among the saints, until this godly spirit spread like a chain beyond his students and graduates to reach all their acquaintances, colleagues and friends. Thus, his teaching became widespread, and his education bore the fruit of righteousness.

### **CHARACTERISTICS OF A MAN OF GOD**

One of the main characteristics of this archpriest and teacher was his poverty. Some sources mention that his ministry to the Church was without payment. Money never tempted him. He was a true worshiper, fervent in his faith, exceedingly patient, righteous, meek, quiet, humble, compassionate, and a friendly person; he hated to talk about himself, he felt embarrassed by the praise of others, not knowing how to answer them. He was wise and patient in his pastoral care; he used to confute the scholars by speaking their language and to convince the simple people by using their language. When a few simple-minded people left the Church for an insignificant reason, Patriarch Methodios asked him to bring them back. After he met them he did not manifest any resentment from their behavior, but he treated them with kindness; they came back repentant after he had touched their hearts.

His writings were numerous: he compared the book of Psalms, the Breviary, the Liturgikon, and the book of Epistles to their original Greek. He translated into Arabic the catechetical book of Philaret, Metropolitan of Moscow. In copying the manuscripts, he used to compare them with other manuscripts and correct them; his versions were accurate like "the unforged silver coin." In theology, literature and scholarship his seal was a seal of trust. We have no knowledge about his own writings, except for a few articles. Apparently, he did not consider himself worthy to keep pace with the great Fathers of the Church; he confined himself to translating, editing, and presenting their writings to the faithful as a pure, intact and unblemished heritage.

Father Joseph was the key factor in the 19<sup>th</sup>-century renaissance of the Antiochian Church. At that time, Antioch was in a pathetic situation. The schism of the Melkites led to very critical repercussions on different levels, especially on the pastoral level. Protestant missionaries were very active and aggressive, while the Church was impotent and feeble, ignorant and poor. Starting from 1724, the hierarchs were foreign to the land and to the struggle of its people. Antioch lived under custodianship, under the pretext that she was going to disintegrate gradually and become Roman Catholic. In the name of Orthodoxy, both Constantinople and Jerusalem distributed among themselves the authority of appointing Antiochian bishops, trying to determine her destiny. At that time there were no competent priests, no pastoral care. The Antiochian Church could be described as a ship stricken by waves, and ready to sink. In the midst of those challenges and dangers, Father Joseph bloomed as a new godly branch, having a great fervor toward God and the Church of Christ in the land. His life, fervor, godliness, poverty, love of knowledge, persisting pastoral care, preaching, guidance, writings, translations, school and vigilance created an atmosphere of revival, motivated the spirits, moved the hearts, and strengthened the determination of the Orthodox people. A new generation, a new thinking, and a new direction bloomed. "The bones came together, bone to its bone... and breath came into them, and they lived," (Ezekiel 37:7-10).

### **HIS MARTYRDOM**

On July 9, 1860, when the massacre in Damascus started, many Christians took refuge in the Patriarchal; Father Joseph went there as well, strengthening and encouraging the Christians to face the situation, for the attackers can kill the body but cannot kill the soul (Matthew 10:28); the crowns of glory have been prepared for those who committed themselves to God through Jesus Christ. In relating to them the martyrdom of some saints, he called them to emulate their life. On Tuesday morning, July 10, the persecutors belligerently attacked the Cathedral, robbing, killing and burning everything. Many martyrs were slaughtered, others



went out on the streets and alleys; one of them was Father Joseph. As he walked on the streets, a religious scholar, who was one of the attackers, recognized Joseph, because the latter had confuted him in a debate between them. Seeing him he shouted: "This is the leader- of Christians. If we kill him, we will kill all the Christians!" When he heard these words, Father Joseph knew that his end had come. He took out his communion kit, and partook of the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ. The persecutors attacked him with their hatchets, as if they were woodcutters, and disfigured his body. Binding his legs with ropes, they dragged him over the streets until he was dashed into pieces.

Although he died as a martyr, his life, his vigilance, and his sufferings were a witness of his holiness. By "becoming like Him in His death" (Phil. 3:10), he was crowned with His glory. He became an example to be emulated, and a blessing to be acquired, and an intercessor to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, to Him be the glory forever. Amen. (*adapted from antiochianarch.org.au*)

### **June Treasurer's Report**

Glory to Jesus Christ! For the month of June our income/expenses were:

Operating income \$31,357.95 | Operating Expenses \$31,723.17

Over/Under income \$-365.22

It is my great pleasure to inform you that in June we managed to pay off the second mortgage on our new church from County First Bank. This was made possible by your financial support, and the income generated for the building fund by the hard work of St. Barbara's Sisterhood (bake sales and quilt raffle) and Phyllis and Dennis Thomidis along with those parishioners who donated and came out to support the Yard Sales over the years. Please continue your stewardship of God's House so that we can continue to grow and as we pray each Sunday to be "fishers of men" and bring the true faith to our community. If you have not paid your diocesan assessment please do so as soon as possible. Thank you for being good Stewards of God's House.

Carol Vallandingham, Treasurer

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**Holy & Great Council:** <http://www.orthodoxcouncil.org>

***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, Cary Pesek, Mary Reed, Chris & Kaitlin Rixey, Jerry Von Ronne, Anne Rosario, James, Theodore and Christina Ristas, Samson Family, Sharon Sheptak, Dawn & Faith Ulmschneider, Daria Virvan, Lydia Vita, Christine, Marshall, Nathaniel, Rdr. Nectaros and Ia, the Syrian Christians displaced by war, Mother Virginia Marie and the Carmelite Nuns of Port Tobacco, for the newly departed handmaiden of God Hope Stephanadis and the newly departed servant of God Peter Tatsis, and all those in need of our prayers. (Please advise Fr. Joseph of changes.)