

# SOBORNOST

**St. Thomas the Apostle Orthodox Church**

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*American Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Diocese*

*ECUMENICAL PATRIARCHATE  
OF CONSTANTINOPLE*

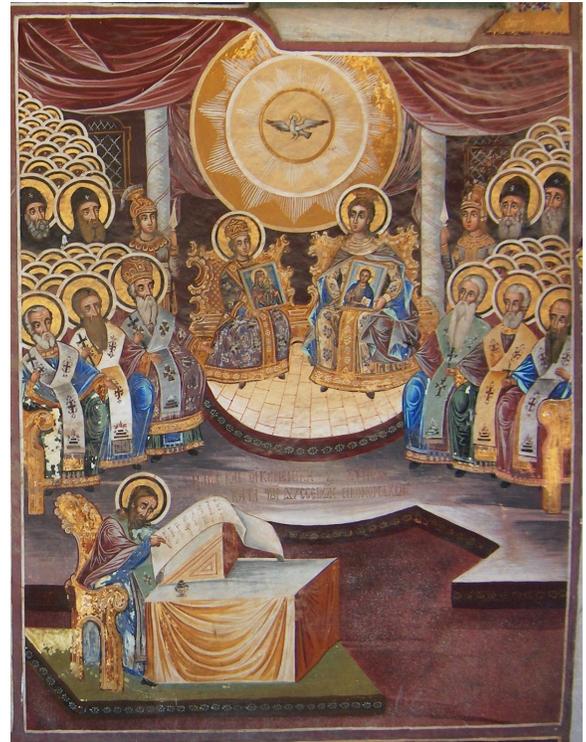
## SERVICES

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

**Friday: Moleben to the Cross 6:00 AM**

**Saturday: Confession 5:00 PM,  
Great Vespers 5:30 PM**

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



**October 16, 2016 – 17<sup>th</sup> Sunday After Pentecost**

## **Commemoration of the Fathers of the 7<sup>th</sup> Ecumenical Council**

On the Sunday that falls on or immediately after the eleventh of this month, we chant the Service to the 350 holy Fathers of the Seventh Ecumenical Council, which gathered in Nicaea in 787 under the holy Patriarch Tarasius and during the reign of the Empress Irene and her son, Constantine Porphyrogenitus, to refute the Iconoclast heresy, which had received imperial support beginning with the Edict issued in 726 by Emperor Leo the Isaurian. Many of the holy Fathers who condemned Iconoclasm at this holy Council later died as Confessors and Martyrs for the holy Icons during the second assault of Iconoclasm in the ninth century, especially during the reigns of Leo the Armenian and Theophilus. The Council was convoked to deal with the iconoclast controversy, which was centered around the use of icons in the Church. The Iconoclasts were suspicious of religious art; they demanded that the Church rid itself of such art and that it be destroyed or broken (as the term "iconoclast" implies). The iconophiles, on the other hand, believed that icons served to preserve the doctrinal teachings of the Church; they considered icons to be man's dynamic way of expressing the divine through art and

beauty. The Iconoclast controversy was a form of Monophysitism: distrust and downgrading of the human side. The Council proclaimed:

"We define that the holy icons, whether in color, mosaic, or some other material, should be exhibited in the holy churches of God, on the sacred vessels and liturgical vestments, on the walls, furnishings, and in houses and along the roads, namely the icons of our Lord God and Savior Jesus Christ, that of our Lady the Theotokos, those of the venerable angels and those of all saintly people. Whenever these representations are contemplated, they will cause those who look at them to commemorate and love their prototype. We define also that they should be kissed and that they are an object of veneration and honor (*timitiki proskynisis*), but not of real worship (*latreia*), which is reserved for Him Who is the subject of our faith and is proper for the divine nature, ... which is in effect transmitted to the prototype; he who venerates the icon, venerated in it the reality for which it stands."

(adapted from goarch.org)

### **Today's Epistle Lesson – St. Paul's Second Letter to the Corinthians 6:16-7:1**

BRETHREN, what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will dwell in them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they shall be My people." Therefore "Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you." "I will be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty." Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

### **Today's Gospel Lesson – Saint Luke 8:5-15**

The Lord said, "A sower went out to sow his seed. And as he sowed, some fell by the wayside; and it was trampled down, and the birds of the air devoured it. Some fell on rock; and as soon as it sprang up, it withered away because it lacked moisture. And some fell among thorns, and the thorns sprang up with it and choked it. But others fell on good ground, sprang up, and yielded a crop a hundredfold." When He had said these things He cried, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear!" Then His disciples asked Him, saying, "What does this parable mean?" And He said, "To you it has been given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God, but to the rest *it is given* in parables, that 'Seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not understand.'" "Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. Those by the wayside are the ones who hear; then the devil comes and takes away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved. But the ones on the rock *are those* who, when they hear, receive the word

with joy; and these have no root, who believe for a while and in time of temptation fall away. Now the ones *that* fell among thorns are those who, when they have heard, go out and are choked with cares, riches, and pleasures of life, and bring no fruit to maturity. But the ones *that* fell on the good ground are those who, having heard the word with a noble and good heart, keep *it* and bear fruit with patience.

## *A Word From the Holy Fathers*

The more our mind is withdrawn from the remembrance of God, of death, of future judgment, of the good things in store for the righteous and of the tortures awaiting sinners, of eternal fire and darkness, and of the gnashing of teeth, and the more it turns towards the cares of this life and the world's deceptive charms – I mean riches, glory, and luxury – and the more it lingers fondly upon all the other so-called splendors of this world, is preoccupied with them, and gets involved with things of this kind, the more our mind normally becomes duller, and little by little covers the whole of the soul's organ of sight, and produces in us entire ignorance of good things, together with the forgetting of God's commandments. This indeed was David's experience when he had sinned, and so he said to God: 'Uncover my eyes, and I shall perceive the wonders of your law' (Ps. 118:18 LXX). Do you see how his eyes had a covering over them? Do you see how he cried to God for them to be uncovered? So you too be eager to do the same, and the Lord will not disregard the supplication that comes from your soul, but will give ear to you, and will open the eyes of your heart. Then you will recover your sight, and first of all you will get full knowledge of yourself and your personal affairs, and after that from the deep of our heart you will reckon as holy men and as better than you, not only those monks who are devout and virtuous, but also every single man, both small and great, both righteous and sinful, even those who openly commit sins. This indeed will be a clear sign to you and to everybody else that you have received forgiveness of your sins, your having reached this land – for in it dwells humility, and to those who arrive in it, this is the first gift bestowed upon them, namely not to consider any one of all mankind to be more sinful or more vile than themselves, but with all their spiritual perception to regard only themselves as sinners, and only themselves as doomed to perish and to be delivered up to punishment.

Strive earnestly then to acquire this humility, and do not say: 'For me, this is impossible,' or "This is appropriate for monks, but not for those living in the world." Christ indeed ordained that his commandments were applicable to all alike, and he did not distinguish seculars from monks, and moreover both those who lived before the Law and those under the Law performed them. And listen to Job saying: "I am earth and ashes" (Job 42:6), and to David saying: "I am a worm,

and not a man” (Ps. 21:7 LXX). Do you see his expressions of humility? Do you see his soul reckoning itself as lowest of all, beneath every man, small or great? So imitate David’s repentance, and then you will acquire his humility, because it is through repentance that the cloud of ignorance lying over us is forced to disappear completely and the veil is taken away. When this is done, we then both know ourselves more fully and also see the condition of our personal affairs, and look upon the wounds and stains on our soul.

– St. Symeon the New Theologian

### **Also Commemorated Today: Martyr Longinus the Centurion**



The Holy Martyr Longinus the Centurion, a Roman soldier, served in Judea under the command of the Governor, Pontius Pilate. When our Savior Jesus Christ was crucified, it was the detachment of soldiers under the command of Longinus which stood watch on Golgotha, at the very foot of the holy Cross. Longinus and his soldiers were eyewitnesses of the final moments of the earthly life of the Lord, and of the great and awesome portents that appeared at His death. These events shook the centurion’s soul. Longinus believed in Christ and confessed before everyone, “Truly this was the Son of God” (Mt. 27:54).

According to Church Tradition, Longinus was the soldier who pierced the side of the Crucified Savior with a spear, and received healing from an eye affliction when blood and water poured forth from the wound.

After the Crucifixion and Burial of the Savior, Longinus stood watch with his company at the Sepulchre of the Lord. These soldiers were present at the All-Radiant Resurrection of Christ. The Jews bribed them to lie and say that His disciples had stolen away the Body of Christ, but Longinus and two of his comrades refused to be seduced by the Jewish gold. They also refused to remain silent about the miracle of the Resurrection.

Having come to believe in the Savior, the soldiers received Baptism from the apostles and decided to leave military service. St Longinus left Judea to preach about Jesus Christ the Son of God in his native land (Cappadocia), and his two comrades followed him. The fiery words of those who had actually participated in the great events in Judea swayed the hearts and minds of the Cappadocians; Christianity began quickly to spread throughout the city and the surrounding villages.

When they learned of this, the Jewish elders persuaded Pilate to send a company of soldiers to Cappadocia to kill Longinus and his comrades. When the soldiers arrived at Longinus's village, the former centurion himself came out to meet the soldiers and took them to his home. After a meal, the soldiers revealed the purpose of their visit, not knowing that the master of the house was the very man whom they were seeking. Then Longinus and his friends identified themselves and told the startled soldiers to carry out their duty.

The soldiers wanted to let the saints go and advised them to flee, but they refused to do this, showing their firm intention to suffer for Christ. The holy martyrs were beheaded, and their bodies were buried at the place where the saints were martyred. The head of St Longinus, however, was sent to Pilate.

Pilate gave orders to cast the martyr's head on a trash-heap outside the city walls. After a while a certain blind widow from Cappadocia arrived in Jerusalem with her son to pray at the holy places, and to ask that her sight be restored. After becoming blind, she had sought the help of physicians to cure her, but all their efforts were in vain.

The woman's son became ill shortly after reaching Jerusalem, and he died a few days later. The widow grieved for the loss of her son, who had served as her guide.

St Longinus appeared to her in a dream and comforted her. He told her that she would see her son in heavenly glory, and also receive her sight. He told her to go outside the city walls and there she would find his head in a great pile of refuse. Guides led the blind woman to the rubbish heap, and she began to dig with her hands. As soon as she touched the martyr's head, the woman received her sight, and she glorified God and St Longinus.

Taking up the head, she brought it to the place she was staying and washed it. The next night, St Longinus appeared to her again, this time with her son. They were surrounded by a bright light, and St Longinus said, "Woman, behold the son for whom you grieve. See what glory and honor are his now, and be consoled. God has numbered him with those in His heavenly Kingdom. Now take my head and your son's body, and bury them in the same casket. Do not weep for your son, for he will rejoice forever in great glory and happiness."

The woman carried out the saint's instructions and returned to her home in Cappadocia. There she buried her son and the head of St Longinus. Once, she had been overcome by grief for her son, but her weeping was transformed into joy when she saw him with St Longinus. She had sought healing for her eyes, and also received healing of her soul. (*from oca.org*)

## On Stewardship and the Orthodox Life – Part 93:

### Self-Denial



*“If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.”*  
(Luke 9:23 RSV)

No one can practice true stewardship without practicing genuine self-denial. Self-denial and the Holy Cross lie directly in the path of every Christian who is truly following Christ. Christian life, thus Christian stewardship, includes self-denial, self-sacrifice, even to the laying down of life itself, if need be, for the sake of Christ who has given His life for the life of the world.

We who view Christ on the Cross are bound by our obligation to God in return for that marvelous gift from God. We are to withhold nothing that we possess, no matter how dear it may be to us. If we possess anything that can help with the work of bringing another soul to the Church, no matter how rich or poor, we are to use such possessions for this purpose. Our Lord has employed us as co-workers with Him for the salvation of the world.

If we have professed to be truly Orthodox Christians, that we are truly saved by the Holy Cross and Resurrection of Christ, and then do not let that light shine before others, we are neglecting doing what the words of Christ explicitly command: *“If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.”*

We often find ourselves arguing about how much we should give to the cause of Christ and His Church. Rather, let us consider how much we have kept back from His treasury and rather devoted to the indulgence of self in pleasure-seeking and self-gratification. We often find ourselves arguing about who is going to do the work around our parishes. Let us rather consider how we have closed our own eyes of understanding and not see our own duty to use the talents and abilities we have been given by God.

It is selfishness that keeps funds in our pockets. It is selfishness that keeps talents from being used in the vineyard of the Lord. After all, it was selfishness that caused Adam and Eve to sin in the Garden. They had all they could possibly want – except what they selfishly desired. That selfishness set the history of salvation through Christ into action. Now that our salvation is assured it is time to put away selfishness and practice self-denial: *“If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.”* (from [acrod.org](http://acrod.org))

## **The Diocesan Sobor Wraps Up Business**

"Whatever He says, do it" (Jn. 2:5) was the theme of the 23rd Diocesan Sobor ifrom Oct 9-12 in Johnstown. Decisions and information provided at the Sobor will have a direct effect on the budget and operations of St. Thomas mission parish. St. Thomas was represented at this Sobor by Fr. Joseph and Reader Jim Stiver. To review Sobor activities more closely go to:

<http://acrod.org/diocese/councilsobor/2016-sobor/>

## **The Sense of God's Presence**

By Nicholas Voinescu

The late Metropolitan Theologos Paschalides of Larisa, who reposed in voluntary poverty, like Saint Nektarios, had told us that his father always had in his shirt pocket a piece of paper that read: "The sense of God's presence." This sense or awareness of the omnipresence of God and the thought that God sees me wherever I am is, according to the late Father Athanasios Mytilinaios, of great importance for our lives.

First of all, when I'm aware that God sees me, I don't sin. Of course, I'm not sinless, but I'm careful not to sadden God with my heavy sins, especially the sins of the flesh. Let us remember here the very instructive example of Joseph the All-Comely, whose corrupt mistress tried to seduce him to sin, but he turned away from sinning by saying: "How can I do such an evil deed before God and sin?"

Second, when I think that God sees whatever good deed I may do, I do it secretly. I don't do it for people to say to me "bravo", because then I receive my reward in the praises of people. Christ taught us for our left hand to not know what our right hand is doing and to do good in secret, so God alone will see us and reward us openly before all people on the day of Judgement.

Third, when I think God sees me, I'm not afraid of anything or anyone, because God is AllGood and Almighty. It is written in Psalm 23 (22 LXX): "I will fear no evil, for You are with me." Once in a while, of course, God will allow some people to be abused or killed, such as the martyrs, but God allows this for the greater glorification of His people.

Fourth, when I think God sees me, I never despair or lose hope. As difficult and terrible my problems and sufferings may be, I will not lose hope in God, because God is able with a nod to put everything back in order and correct things.

Fifth, when I think that God sees me, my soul is full of His joy. It doesn't matter if I'm rich or poor, free or a slave, healthy or sick. What is important is to have within me unlimited confidence in the love and providence of God, for which reason my soul is full of joy, which is one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit. A monk of Mount

Athos, who owned nothing except the clothes he wore, experienced this joy, which he expressed in the following words: "I weep with happiness and ask God to keep me in my right mind, so I don't go crazy with happiness."

Sixth, when I think that God sees me, I never feel lonely. Even if every single person abandoned me, acquaintances and friends, parents and siblings, I will never have a sense of loneliness deep within my soul, for God is near me and sees me.

Hopefully with the holy prayers of the late Metropolitan Theologos Paschalides of Larisa and the late Father Athanasios Mytilinaios we will all acquire a deep sense that God sees us. *(from johnsanidopoulos.com)*

### **Holy New Martyr John of Tourkoleka**



The neomartyr and childmartyr Saint John of Tourkoleka was born in 1805 in the village of Tourkoleka in Arcadia. His family was distinguished for their devotion to God, love for the motherland and their heroism. His father was Stamatelos Stamatelopoulos Tourkoleka, a famous fighter in the area of Leontarion, and his mother Sophia was the sister of the wife of Theodoros Kolokotronis. Among his four brothers was the wellknown chieftain Nikitas, known as Nikitaras the TurkEater, and the teacher of military tactics and erudite captain Nicholas.

In 1816 John, eleven years old then, together with his father and the Reader, son of the fighter Parnonas Zacharias, while traveling to Kythira, due to rough seas they ended up in Neapolis of Lakonia. The Aga of that region was Hussein, who fraudulently arrested them and sent them to the uppermost Turkish ruler of Monemvasia. There the arrested were imprisoned in the castle. The ruler of Monemvasia then requested instructions from the voivode of Mystras, who ordered for the decapitation of the three prisoners. The Reader and the father of the Saint were beheaded. Regarding the confession, martyric end and wondrous sign given by God after the beheading of the childmartyr, we have the written testimony of the brother of the Saint, Nikitaras, who writes: "They suggested to my brother to change his faith. Showing to him his slain father they told him to 'sit down so we can make you a Turk'. The child then did his cross and

responded: 'Where my father has gone I am going also.' They said to him again: 'Become a Turk'. The child however did his cross again. By his blood he became a cross. They took their heads to Tripolitsa."

The slaughter of the three took place on 16 October 1816, outside of the Sacred Church of Christ in Chains, in old Monemvasia. There, on the floor of the courtyard of the church, the blood of the childmartyr and neomartyr John formed a Cross, and in this way was revealed the glorious entrance of the Saint into the Kingdom of God and his induction into the chorus of Martyrs. The heads of the neomartyr John, his father and the Reader were sent to the Pasha of Tripoli, and their bodies were buried in Monemvasia, and until today the place of their burial as well as of their heads and bodies remain unknown. The sign of the Cross, which is on the floor of the courtyard of the Church, was formed by the martyric and pure blood of Saint John, and became a source of strength for the enslaved Christian Greeks and a sacred place of pilgrimage for the faithful. (*from johnsanidopoulos.com*)

### Follow Our Diocese On-Line

**Diocesan Website:** <http://www.acrod.org>

**Camp Nazareth:** <http://www.campnazareth.org>

**Facebook:** <https://www.facebook.com/acroddiocese>

**Twitter:** <https://twitter.com/acrodnews>

**You Tube:** <https://youtube.com/acroddiocese>

***In Your Prayers – Please Remember...*** His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch BARTHOLOMEW, His Grace Bishop GREGORY, Fr. Joseph & Family, Greek Orthodox Archbishop Paul Yazigi of Aleppo, Syriac Orthodox Archbishop Yohanna Ibrahim of Aleppo, His Grace Bishop Neofitos of Nyeri and Mt. Kenya, Fr. John & Pani Betty Jean Baranik, Fr. Vincent Saverino, Presbytera Katie Baker and family, Alicia Barosio and family, Jeffrey Carey, Tatyana and Slava Chumak & family, Xenia Chilkowich, Jon Church, Ramius Connour, Cary Cooper, Curtis Cooper, Tina Crull, Ron Dominiacki, 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, John Sparks, Dawn & Faith Ulmschneider, Lydia Vita, Christine, Marshall, Nathaniel, Rdr. Nectarios and Ia, the Syrian Christians displaced by war, Mother Virginia Marie and the Carmelite Nuns of Port Tobacco, the newly departed handmaidens of God Millie Borys and Daria Virvan, and all those in need of our prayers. (Please advise Fr. Joseph of changes.)