

# SOBORNOST

## St. Thomas the Apostle Orthodox Church

(301) 638-5035 Church

4419 Leonardtown Road

Waldorf, MD 20601

Rev. Father Joseph Edgington, Pastor

(703) 532-8017

[fredgington@gmail.com](mailto:fredgington@gmail.com)

[www.apostlethomas.org](http://www.apostlethomas.org)

*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.**



**December 4, 2016 – 24<sup>th</sup> Sunday After Pentecost**

### **Great-Martyr Barbara of Heliopolis in Syria**

The Holy Great Martyr Barbara lived and suffered during the reign of the emperor Maximian (305-311). Her father, the pagan Dioscorus, was a rich and illustrious man in the Syrian city of Heliopolis. After the death of his wife, he devoted himself to his only daughter. Seeing Barbara's extraordinary beauty, Dioscorus decided to hide her from the eyes of strangers. Therefore, he built a tower for Barbara, where only her pagan teachers were allowed to see her. From the tower there was a view of hills stretching into the distance. By day she was able to gaze upon the wooded hills, the swiftly flowing rivers, and the meadows covered with a mottled blanket of flowers; by night the harmonious and majestic vault of the heavens twinkled and provided a spectacle of inexpressible beauty. Soon the virgin began to ask herself questions about the First Cause and Creator of so harmonious and splendid a world. Gradually, she became convinced that the soulless idols were merely the work of human hands. Although her father and teachers offered them worship, she realized that the idols could not have made the surrounding world. The desire to know the true God so consumed her soul that Barbara decided to devote all her life to this goal, and to spend her life in virginity.

The fame of her beauty spread throughout the city, and many sought her hand in marriage. But despite the entreaties of her father, she refused all of them. Barbara warned her father that his persistence might end tragically and separate them forever. Dioscorus decided that the temperament of his daughter had been affected by her life of seclusion. He therefore permitted her to leave the tower and gave her full freedom in her choice of friends and acquaintances. Thus Barbara met young Christian maidens in the city, and they taught her about the Creator of the world, about the Trinity, and about the Divine Logos. Through the Providence of God, a priest arrived in Heliopolis from Alexandria disguised as a merchant. After instructing her in the mysteries of the Christian Faith, he baptized Barbara, then returned to his own country.

During this time a luxurious bathhouse was being built at the house of Dioscorus. By his orders the workers prepared to put two windows on the south side. But Barbara, taking advantage of her father's absence, asked them to make a third window, thereby forming a Trinity of light. On one of the walls of the bath-house Barbara traced a cross with her finger. The cross was deeply etched into the marble, as if by an iron instrument. Later, her footprints were imprinted on the stone steps of the bathhouse. The water of the bathhouse had great healing power. St Simeon Metaphrastes (November 9) compared the bathhouse to the stream of Jordan and the Pool of Siloam, because by God's power, many miracles took place there.

When Dioscorus returned and expressed dissatisfaction about the change in his building plans, his daughter told him about how she had come to know the Triune God, about the saving power of the Son of God, and about the futility of worshipping idols. Dioscorus went into a rage, grabbed a sword and was on the point of striking her with it. The holy virgin fled from her father, and he rushed after her in pursuit. His way became blocked by a hill, which opened up and concealed the saint in a crevice. On the other side of the crevice was an entrance leading upwards. St Barbara managed then to conceal herself in a cave on the opposite slope of the hill.

After a long and fruitless search for his daughter, Dioscorus saw two shepherds on the hill. One of them showed him the cave where the saint had hidden. Dioscorus beat his daughter terribly, and then placed her under guard and tried to wear her down with hunger. Finally he handed her over to the prefect of the city, named Martianus. They beat St Barbara fiercely: they struck her with rawhide, and rubbed her wounds with a hair cloth to increase her pain. By night St Barbara prayed fervently to her Heavenly Bridegroom, and the Savior Himself appeared and healed her wounds. Then they subjected the saint to new, and even more frightful torments.

In the crowd where the martyr was tortured was the virtuous Christian woman Juliana, an inhabitant of Heliopolis. Her heart was filled with sympathy for the voluntary martyrdom of the beautiful and illustrious maiden. Juliana also wanted to suffer for Christ. She began to denounce the torturers in a loud voice, and they seized her.

Both martyrs were tortured for a long time. Their bodies were raked and wounded with hooks, and then they were led naked through the city amidst derision and jeers. Through the prayers of St Barbara the Lord sent an angel who covered the nakedness of the holy martyrs with a splendid robe. Then the steadfast confessors of Christ, Sts Barbara and Juliana, were beheaded. Dioscorus himself executed St Barbara. The wrath of God was not slow to punish both torturers, Martianus and Dioscorus. They were killed after being struck by lightning.

In the sixth century the relics of the holy Great Martyr Barbara were transferred to Constantinople. Six hundred years later, they were transferred to Kiev (July 11) by Barbara, the daughter of the Byzantine Emperor Alexius Comnenos, who married the Russian prince Michael Izyaslavich. They rest even now at Kiev's St Vladimir cathedral, where an Akathist to the saint is served each Tuesday.

Many pious Orthodox Christians are in the habit of chanting the Troparion of St Barbara each day, recalling the Savior's promise to her that those who remembered her and her sufferings would be preserved from a sudden, unexpected death, and would not depart this life without benefit of the Holy Mysteries of Christ.

Troparion, in Tone 8: Let us honor the holy martyr Barbara, / for as a bird she escaped the snares of the enemy, / and destroyed them through the help and defense of the Cross. (*from oca.org*)

### **Today's Epistle Lesson – St. Paul's Letter to the Ephesians 2:14-22**

Brethren, He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, *that is*, the law of commandments *contained* in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man *from* the two, *thus* making peace, and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity. And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near. For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father. Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief *cornerstone*, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.

## Today's Gospel Lesson – Saint Luke 17:12-19

At that time, as He entered a certain village, there met Him ten men who were lepers, who stood afar off. And they lifted up *their* voices and said, “Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!” So when He saw *them*, He said to them, “Go, show yourselves to the priests.” And so it was that as they went, they were cleansed. And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, returned, and with a loud voice glorified God, and fell down on *his* face at His feet, giving Him thanks. And he was a Samaritan. So Jesus answered and said, “Were there not ten cleansed? But where *are* the nine? Were there not any found who returned to give glory to God except this foreigner?” And He said to him, “Arise, go your way. Your faith has made you well.”

## On Stewardship and the Orthodox Life – Part 102:

### Passions prevent Stewardship



*“But I say, walk by the Spirit, and do not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the desires of the flesh are against the spirit...[and] prevent you from doing what you would.”*  
(Galatians 5: 16-17 RSV)

We were all born in the image of Christ, as were Adam and Eve. As they were spiritual children, not fully matured into the likeness of Christ, so too are we. Along that journey to attaining the image AND likeness of Christ – Theosis – there are pitfalls, as Adam and Eve discovered. These pitfalls are the desires of the material world (fleshly desires), which we ALLOW to capture our soul, our nous, and turn the pure passions that God placed into us into something dark and vile.

Once your nous is darkened, according to Metropolitan Hierotheos (Vlachos) of Nafpaktos in his book, *Orthodox Psychotherapy*, you cannot be in communion with God. If we live for the world and not for God then we become self-love, the root of all sin. When we love ourselves, our personal comforts and our desires become the priority.

Instead of giving generously *from what God has given us*, we then ask and become of mind, “What does the Church need?” That should never be a question an Orthodox Christian asks. There is only one question that should be asked and it should be: “How on earth are we going to spend all this money?!” - or - “How can I use all these people who are volunteering their time and talents?!” If the preceding questions are asked our Church is embodied with God's beauty and love.

People often ask how much I should give, ten percent? That would be wonderful! It is the Old Testament teaching; Christ wants everything, your time, your talents and your wealth. He wants you to love him more than anything else; *Philotimo* is a powerful Greek word, a nearly indescribable word, of great indebtedness. It is an inner disposition of love, words, and deeds. God wants you to think *of* Him, to be *with* Him, every minute of every day. So profound is God's love for man, that is why we were created, to be in constant communion with Him.

What keeps us from communion with God are the passions that darken the nous and lead us to self-love and sin.

God does not seek all you possess, but only that you give in proportion to what God has given you. Is that asking too much? Imagine a world in which everyone gave of their time, talents and treasure in proportion to what God has given them! There would never be a cry for help from the Church. It would be quite the reverse. In its abundance the Church would reach out to the world.

There are times when the passions of our heart have allowed us to foolishly believe that we can control the Church (and the priest!) by keeping them asking for more – more talent and more treasure. The pursuit of power, for the sake of power, is inherently evil. The pursuit of the passion of power, embodied in the lack of generosity, makes heaven a miserable place for us. In contrast, God's heaven and love is a "ridiculously generous place" (as stated by Fr Barnabus Powell, GOA and AFR).

I pray we all understand that God loves us so much that He wants us to be His sons and daughters. He gave us eternal life and *we cannot give it back!* Eternal life is ours, whether we want it or not. The only question begged is: What will our eternal life be?!

We sing at Pascha, "*Christ has risen from the dead, trampling down death by death and to those in the tomb restoring life.*" He gave life and will continue to give life to those in the tomb. We are going to live for eternity! Will we be miserable or joyful? I pray for all it is the latter. While I pray, I know the choice is yours to make.

Don't let the desires of this world and the passions associated with them turn your eternity into a hell. Shed the passions of self-love and greed, let the Church through its Spiritual Medicine restore your nous to its natural state and be illumined with the love of Christ. Practice true Christian generosity which Christians have practiced for over 20 centuries; a "normal Christianity." Be a good steward of your time, talent, and treasure and give generously to God's Holy Church. (*from acrod.org*)

## ALSO COMMEMORATED TODAY: ST. JOHN OF DAMASCUS



Saint John of Damascus was born about the year 680 at Damascus, Syria into a Christian family. His father, Sergius Mansur, was a treasurer at the court of the Caliph. John had also a foster brother, the orphaned child Cosmas (October 14), whom Sergius had taken into his own home. When the children were growing up, Sergius saw that they received a good education. At the Damascus slave market he ransomed the learned monk Cosmas of Calabria from captivity and entrusted to him the teaching of his children. The boys displayed uncommon ability and readily mastered their courses of the secular and spiritual sciences. After the death of his father, John occupied ministerial posts at court and

became the city prefect.

In Constantinople at that time, the heresy of Iconoclasm had arisen and quickly spread, supported by the emperor Leo III the Isaurian (717-741). Rising up in defense of the Orthodox veneration of icons [Iconodoulia], St John wrote three treatises entitled, "Against Those who Revile the Holy Icons." The wise and God-inspired writings of St John enraged the emperor. But since the author was not a Byzantine subject, the emperor was unable to lock him up in prison, or to execute him. The emperor then resorted to slander. A forged letter to the emperor was produced, supposedly from John, in which the Damascus official was supposed to have offered his help to Leo in conquering the Syrian capital. This letter and another hypocritically flattering note were sent to the Saracen Caliph by Leo the Isaurian. The Caliph immediately ordered that St John be removed from his post, that his right hand be cut off, and that he be led through the city in chains.

That same evening, they returned the severed hand to St John. The saint pressed it to his wrist and prayed to the Most Holy Theotokos to heal him so that he could defend the Orthodox Faith and write once again in praise of the Most Pure Virgin and Her Son. After a time, he fell asleep before the icon of the Mother of God. He heard Her voice telling him that he had been healed, and commanding him to toil unceasingly with his restored hand. Upon awakening, he found that his hand had been attached to his arm once more. Only a small red mark around his wrist remained as a sign of the miracle.

Later, in thanksgiving for being healed, St John had a silver model of his hand attached to the icon, which became known as "Of the Three Hands." Some unlearned painters have given the Mother of God three hands instead of depicting

the silver model of St John's hand. The Icon "Of the Three Hands" is commemorated on June 28 and July 12.

When he learned of the miracle, which demonstrated John's innocence, the Caliph asked his forgiveness and wanted to restore him to his former office, but the saint refused. He gave away his riches to the poor, and went to Jerusalem with his stepbrother and fellow-student, Cosmas. There he entered the monastery of St Sava the Sanctified as a simple novice. It was not easy for him to find a spiritual guide, because all the monks were daunted by his great learning and by his former rank. Only one very experienced Elder, who had the skill to foster the spirit of obedience and humility in a student, would consent to do this. The Elder forbade John to do anything at all according to his own will. He also instructed him to offer to God all his labors and supplications as a perfect sacrifice, and to shed tears which would wash away the sins of his former life.

Once, he sent the novice to Damascus to sell baskets made at the monastery, and commanded him to sell them at a certain inflated price, far above their actual value. He undertook the long journey under the searing sun, dressed in rags. No one in the city recognized the former official of Damascus, for his appearance had been changed by prolonged fasting and ascetic labors. However, St John was recognized by his former house steward, who bought all the baskets at the asking price, showing compassion on him for his apparent poverty.

One of the monks happened to die, and his brother begged St John to compose something consoling for the burial service. St John refused for a long time, but out of pity he yielded to the petition of the grief-stricken monk, and wrote his renowned funeral troparia ("What earthly delight," "All human vanity," and others). For this disobedience the Elder banished him from his cell. John fell at his feet and asked to be forgiven, but the Elder remained unyielding. All the monks began to plead for him to allow John to return, but he refused. Then one of the monks asked the Elder to impose a penance on John, and to forgive him if he fulfilled it. The Elder said, "If John wishes to be forgiven, let him wash out all the chamber pots in the lavra, and clean the monastery latrines with his bare hands." John rejoiced and eagerly ran to accomplish his shameful task. After a certain while, the Elder was commanded in a vision by the All-Pure and Most Holy Theotokos to allow St John to write again.

When the Patriarch of Jerusalem heard of St John, he ordained him priest and made him a preacher at his cathedral. But St John soon returned to the Lavra of St Sava, where he spent the rest of his life writing spiritual books and church hymns. He left the monastery only to denounce the iconoclasts at the Constantinople Council of 754. They subjected him to imprisonment and torture, but he endured everything, and through the mercy of God he remained alive. He died in about the

year 780, more than 100 years old. St John of Damascus was a theologian and a zealous defender of Orthodoxy. His most important book is the Fount of Knowledge. The third section of this work, "On the Orthodox Faith," is a summary of Orthodox doctrine and a refutation of heresy. Since he was known as a hymnographer, we pray to St John for help in the study of church singing. (*from oca.org*)

## **GLORIFICATION OF THE PRIESTMARTYR ALEXANDER HOTOVITZKY**

The New Martyr of Russia Alexander Hotovitzky was born on February 11, 1872 in the city of Kremenetz, into the pious family of Archpriest Alexander, who was Rector of the Volhynia Theological Seminary and would later be long remembered in the hearts of the Orthodox inhabitants of Volhynia as a good shepherd. Young Alexander received a good Christian upbringing from his parents, who instilled in him love for the Orthodox Church and for the people of God. The future pastor was educated at the Volhynia Seminary and the St Petersburg Theological Academy, from which he graduated with a Master's degree in 1895.

After graduation from the Academy, he was sent for missionary service to the Diocese of the Aleutians and North America, where he was assigned to the position of reader at the newly-established St Nicholas Orthodox Church in New York City. Following his marriage to Maria Scherbuhina, a graduate of the Pavlovsk Institute in St Petersburg, the Hieromartyr Alexander was ordained to the diaconate, and soon after, on February 25, 1896, to the priesthood by Bishop Nicholas (Ziorov) of the Aleutians, whom Father Alexander would always later remember with gratitude and love.

The ordination took place at the diocesan cathedral in San Francisco. In his address to the newly-ordained Father Alexander, Bishop Nicholas explained his selection of the new priest for ordained ministry in these words: "Your special sense of decency, your good upbringing, your noble idealism, and your sincere piety immediately caused me to look favorably upon you and compelled me to single you out among the young people, with whom you used to visit me in St Petersburg...I could see that you had that special spark from God, which makes any service an action truly done for God's sake, and without which a vocation becomes soul-less and dead work...Your first experience in preaching has shown you the power of this kind of inspiration: you saw how the people gathered around you and how attentively they stood and listened at length to your discourses... Why did these people listen to you rather than going to hear other preachers? Clearly the spark which burns within you attracts the hearts of these people like a magnet."

A week after his ordination, the young priest returned to New York to assume the pastorate of the parish where he had previously served as reader. From 1898 to





1907, the New Martyr Alexander served as a pastor under the omophorion of Bishop Tikhon. Saint Tikhon, who, in the tragic year of 1917, was to be elevated by Divine Providence to the primatial see as Patriarch of Moscow, valued highly Father Alexander's sincere piety, his gift of pastoral love, and his multifaceted theological erudition. The spectrum of his activity in the United States was quite broad and very fruitful. He was successful in missionary service, primarily among Uniates newly-emigrated from Galicia and Carpathian Rus. He was also one of the closest collaborators of the Orthodox archpastors in America and represented the Orthodox Church

before American religious institutions and meetings. Father Alexander's missionary work was not without many temptations and sorrows. Archbishop, later Metropolitan, Platon (Rozhdestvensky) expressed gratitude for the Passion-bearer Alexander's labors in America in an address delivered at the Divine Liturgy on February 26, 1914. Bidding farewell to Father Alexander, the Archbishop said, "One morning, during the years we worked together, you came to my room and, without saying much, unbuttoned your shirt, revealing a very large, bluish, bloody abrasion on your chest. That wound from a fanatic, who in a fit of rage attacked you wildly with a stick, followed the meeting of Russian people at which you had encouraged your own ethnic brother to renounce the pernicious Unia with Rome... My entire being was shaken to the core and I was profoundly moved, for before me at that moment was a genuine example of witness for Christ." Through Father Alexander's efforts, Orthodox parishes were established in Philadelphia, Yonkers, and Passaic as well as other large and small towns throughout North America. The parishioners of these churches were cradle Orthodox whom fate had brought to the New World, as well as Carpatho-Russians converted from the Unia and former Protestant converts to the Orthodox Church. An important contribution to the witness of the truth of Orthodoxy before heterodox American society was made by the American Orthodox Messenger, which was published in English and Russian under Father Alexander's editorship. Articles by the editor regularly appeared in this journal. The New Martyr Alexander actively participated in the establishment of an Orthodox diocesan mutual aid society and at various times, he served as treasurer, first secretary, and president of this organization. The society provided material aid to Austrian Carpatho-Russians, Macedonian Slavs, Russian troops in Manchuria, and to Russian prisoners of war in Japanese camps.

Father Alexander also took upon himself the ascetical burden of constructing the architecturally remarkable and majestic St Nicholas Cathedral in New York to replace the small parish church. The cathedral was to become an adornment of the city. He visited Orthodox communities through-out America soliciting funds for the construction of the Cathedral. In 1901, he also traveled to his homeland, Russia, for this purpose. In the annals of St Nicholas Church, which in 1903 became the diocesan Cathedral, it is recorded that, “This Cathedral was established and constructed in the City of New York in North America, under the supervision and through the efforts and labors of the most honorable Archpriest Father Alexander Hotovitzky in the year of Our Lord 1902.”

On February 26, 1906, Orthodox America celebrated the tenth anniversary of priestly service of Archpriest Alexander, one of its most remarkable pastors. Bishop Tikhon greeted the jubilarian with these words: “As you remember your ordination as a priest of God at this anniversary, you are doubtless unwillingly contemplating how you have used your God-given talents, and asking yourself if the Grace of God was bestowed on you in vain and how far you have advanced on the path of moral perfection. As you judge yourself in this way, you are at the same time the judge and the accused. In order for a judgment to be fair, the testimony of onlookers, the witnesses, must be heard. Now they are speaking before you—listen to them. Thanks be to the Lord! We just heard their eloquent and heartfelt testimony praising you. For myself as your superior, I can testify that you have proven to be trustworthy, and have justified the expectations which were hoped for at your ordination.”

The sacrificial and dedicated pastoral service of the New Martyr Alexander in America was concluded on February 26, 1914, exactly eighteen years after his ordination to the priesthood. In his farewell address, Father Alexander said, “Farewell, American Orthodox Rus—my dear Mother, the Holy American Church. I, your ever-grateful son, bow fully to the ground before you. You gave birth to me spiritually, you nurtured me, from your depths you inspired me by your strength. Through the shining witness of your founders, through the enlightened apostolic teachings of your preachers, through the fervor of your faithful flock, you have given me the greatest possible joy—to be your son.” From 1914 to 1917, Father Alexander served as a priest in Helsinki, Finland, where the majority of the population was Protestant. Although Finland was then part of the Russian Empire, the Orthodox clergy there had to exert great efforts to protect the Orthodox Karelians from the proselytic expansionism of the Finnish Lutherans. In Finland, the New Martyr Alexander was a loyal, active, and dedicated assistant to his archpastor—Sergius (Stragorodsky), the future Patriarch. In August 1917, Archpriest Alexander was transferred to Moscow and assigned as assistant pastor

of Christ the Savior Cathedral. Here he was again under the direct guidance of Saint Tikhon, with whom he had already been closely associated in America.

The Passion-bearer Alexander participated in the deliberations of the Church Council of 1917-18. When the Council discussed the drafting of a message to the Orthodox flock concerning elections to the State Council, he stated that, as the fate of Russia was at stake, the Church and the Council in particular should not shy away from the struggle to save the nation. Speaking about the efforts of the Council to upbuild the Church, he outlined his preliminary plans for order and healing in the internal life of the Church and stated with some bitterness, "It seems as if there were builders who were furiously preparing blueprints, plans and so forth for the construction of an edifice and at the same time were calmly observing the destruction brick by brick of this edifice by enemies."

During the difficult years of the Civil War, the New Martyr Alexander collaborated closely with St. Tikhon in the administration of the Moscow diocese. In 1918, under the spiritual leadership of the rector, Father Nicholas Arseniev, and the assistant pastor, Father Alexander, a brotherhood affiliated with Christ the Savior Cathedral was established. As its first activity, the brotherhood issued an appeal to the Orthodox flock, which Father Alexander helped write.

This document stated, "People of Russia! Christ the Savior Cathedral, the adornment of Moscow, the pride of Russia, the joy of the Orthodox Church has been condemned to slow destruction. This glorious monument to the great exploits of Russian warriors, who gave their lives for their native land and the Holy Orthodox Faith, has been denied state support...People of Russia! Will you really surrender this wonderful church of the Savior to mockery? Is it really true, as is claimed by the persecutors of the Holy Church, that the people of Russia no longer need holy things—Churches, sacraments, services, because all this is outdated and superstitious? Respond, you faithful! All of you, respond as one! Rise up and protect your holy things! May the generous and well-intentioned donations of the rich be added to the precious pennies of the faithful poor. Moscow, you are the heart of Russia! Preserve your holy shrine—your golden-domed Church of the Savior!..." In response to this appeal, Orthodox inhabitants of Moscow joined the brotherhood of Christ the Savior Cathedral, and gave their alms to support the majestic church.

Pastoral service at that time was accompanied by much grief and danger. In May 1920 and November 1921 Father Alexander was arrested for brief periods. He was accused of violating the decrees concerning the separation of the Church from the state, and the school from the Church, by holding church school for the children. In 1922, the Church was subjected to harsh tribulations when, under the pretext of helping the starving, ecclesiastical treasures including sacred vessels, icons, and

other holy things were violently confiscated by the state. Heeding the appeal of Her holy primate, the Orthodox Church made generous donations to assist the starving. However, when Saint Tikhon issued a statement to his flock throughout Russia forbidding the cooperation of the clergy in surrendering sacred vessels for non-ecclesiastical use based on canon law, a slanderous campaign against the Church was begun in the press, Her primate was arrested, and a wave of court cases took place throughout Russia, in which servants of the Lord's altar were accused of counter-revolutionary activity. During these trials many faithful servants of the Church of Christ were sentenced to death and shed their blood as hieromartyrs and martyrs.

During this difficult time for the Church, Father Alexander was unwaveringly guided by the statements of the Holy Patriarch to his flock and also followed his directives. Funds to assist the starving were collected at Christ the Savior Cathedral. At the same time, measures were undertaken to protect the sacred objects of this church. Meetings of the clergy and parishioners of Christ the Savior Cathedral were held at Father Alexander's apartment in order to draft a resolution of the general parish meeting concerning the state decree. A draft of the resolution, prepared by Father Alexander, protested against the violent confiscation of church valuables. A general meeting of parishioners was convened on March 23, 1922 at Christ the Savior Cathedral, presided by Archpriest Nicholas Arseniev. Father Alexander had already been arrested. This meeting adopted the final text of the resolution, which demanded guarantees from the state that all donations be used to save the lives of the starving. The participants in the meeting protest the poisonous publications against the Church as well as insults against the hierarchy. The drafting of this document was deemed by the authorities to be criminal counter-revolutionary activity.

After two court cases against the Church, in Petrograd and Moscow, which resulted in the executions of hieromartyrs and martyrs, a new highly visible trial of clergy and laity began in Moscow on November 27, 1922, during which they were accused of supposedly "attempting to retain in their hands possession of church valuables and, through the resulting starvation, to topple the Soviet regime." The most significant part of the indictment submitted to the Court concerned the activity of the clergy and laity of Christ the Savior Cathedral. The indictment stated, "The main organizers and leaders of this criminal activity were Priest Hotovitzky, chairman of the council of parishes in this area, Priest Arseniev, rector of the Cathedral, Priest Zotikov, Priest Gromoglasov, former lawyer Kayutov, former deputy minister Shchepkin, the merchant Golovkin, and engineer Anohin. When the decree of the Supreme Central Executive Committee concerning the confiscation of church valuables was issued, they began their preliminary activities

under the leadership of the priest Hotovitzky, who repeated to secretly gather the above named people at his apartment in order to plan with them the measures which they proposed to enact to achieve their criminal intentions.” The case was in court for two weeks. After the detailed indictment was read, questioning of the defendants began. Fr. Alexander remained cool and calm during the questioning as he tried to protect the other defendants. He did not admit any guilt, stating, “I consider that it is not counter-revolutionary to ask for a corresponding amount of metal in return for church valuables.” Following the interrogation of all the defendants and witnesses, at the Court session on December 6, the later infamous, sinister prosecutor Vishinsky delivered the concluding statement for the prosecution. He asked the court for a sentence of capital punishment for thirteen defendants including Archpriests Alexander Hotovitzky, Nicholas Arseniev, Sergius Uspensky, Priest Ilya Gromoglasov, Abbess Vera (Pobedinskaya) of the Novodevichy Women’s Monastery and L.E. Anohin. Vishinsky requested that the other defendants be sentenced to prison terms of varying length. On December 11, defendants were given an opportunity to say a final word to the court. In his comments, Father Alexander attempted, first of all, to obtain the court’s leniency and mercy for his brother clergy, “I direct your attention to those who were at the meeting in my apartment: some of them are old and the others are very young and guilty of nothing. This was a completely ordinary meeting, it was not counter-revolutionary and it cannot by any means be characterized as a shady plot.” The lengthiest final comments were delivered by the professor and priest Ilya Gromoglasov. This defendant attempted to gain the favor of the court by expounding on his former opposition to the Holy Synod. Concerning the conclusions of the prosecution, he said that he “knew nothing of the criminal organization headed by Hotovitzky.”

On December 13, the verdict of the revolutionary tribunal was announced. It was milder than the bloodthirsty verdicts delivered at previous trials held in Petrograd and Moscow in conjunction with the confiscation of church valuables. Each of the main defendants—Abbess Vera (Pobedinskaya), Archpriest Sergius Uspensky, and Archpriest Alexander Hotovitzky were sentenced to ten years in prison, the confiscation of their personal property and the deprivation of their civil rights for five years. The others were sentenced to lesser terms of imprisonment. Appeals for pardon, made by those who were sentenced to the longest terms of imprisonment, including that of Archpriest Alexander, were rejected by the presidium of the Supreme Central Executive Committee on February 16, 1923. After the holy Patriarch Tikhon resumed his administration of the Church and made several statements regarding loyalty to the governmental authorities, many hierarchs, clergy, church leaders and laity, who had previously received sentences

from the judiciary in conjunction with the confiscation of church valuables, were granted amnesty. Father Alexander was among those freed in October 1923. Following his liberation, he was not assigned to a parish but served by invitation at various churches in Moscow.

He remained free for only a short time. Already on September 4, 1924, E. Tuchkov, head of the 6th section of the Department of State Political Management, compiled a list of thirteen clergy and church leaders of Moscow and recommended that they be subjected to administrative exile. The New Martyr Alexander, who was included in the list, was characterized as follows in this document, "A priest and preacher with a post-graduate education, very active, zealous and influential among the Tikhonites. His outlook is anti-Soviet." On September 9, 1924, the New Martyr Alexander was subjected to an interrogation. "In my religious convictions," he said at that time, "I consider myself to be a Tikhonite. My relations with the Patriarch are intimate rather than just strictly administrative, but lately, I have avoided meeting with Patriarch Tikhon, as I felt that this might inconvenience him due to my conviction in conjunction with the confiscation of church valuables. I have never expressed an opinion concerning the restoration of the former government and such a thought has not even crossed my mind." By a decision of a special meeting of the administration of the Department of State Political Management, the New Martyr Alexander was exiled to the Turuhan region for a period of three years. His already failing health was further weakened by his sojourn in the far north. Following his return from exile, Father Alexander was raised to the rank of protopresbyter and became one of the closest assistants of the Deputy Locum Tenens of the Patriarchal Throne, Metropolitan (later Patriarch) Sergius, who knew him well since the time of his service in Finland.

In the 1930s, Protopresbyter Alexander served as rector of the Church of the Deposition of the Robe on Donskoy Street. One of the parishioners of this church recalls, "In 1936, Father Alexander did not preach, as he was apparently forbidden to do so. In 1936-7, I was present many times when Father Alexander served. He was a tall, gray-haired priest with gentle facial features, who looked extremely intelligent. Gray, trimmed hair, a small beard, very kind gray eyes, a high-pitched, loud tenor...pronounced exclamations distinctly and with inspiration...His appearance reminded me of many priests who were exiles from the western regions...Father Alexander had many parishioners who greatly revered him...Even today, I remember Father Alexander's eyes. It seemed as if his glance penetrated your heart and embraced it with affection. I had the same feeling when I saw the holy Patriarch Tikhon...The same light also shining in Father Alexander's eyes was testimony of his sanctity." In the fall of 1937, the New Martyr Alexander was arrested again. The documentary evidence about him at our disposal ends with

this; however, a majority of oral reports testify to his death as a martyr. The Orthodox Church in America, on whose territory Protopresbyter Alexander served as a priest until 1914, venerates him as a passion-bearer, whose life as a confessor ended with sufferings for Christ. The place of his burial is unknown. (*from oca.org*)

## *A Word From the Holy Fathers*

After the normal nine-month gestational period, Christ was born at the beginning of the tenth, in accordance with the law of gestation. It was the birth that surpassed the established order of birthgiving, as it was without pain; for, where pleasure had not preceded, pain did not follow. And just as at His conception He had kept her who conceived Him virgin, so also at His birth did He maintain her virginity intact, because He alone passed through her and kept her shut [Ezekiel 44:1-3]. While the conception was by 'hearing,' the birth was by the usual orifice through which children are born, even though there are some who concoct an idle tale of His being born from the side of the Mother of God. For it was not impossible for Him to pass through the gate without breaking its seals. Hence, the Ever-Virgin remained virgin even after giving birth and never had converse with a husband as long as she lived.

– St John of Damascus

### **Giving Good Gifts**

In this Nativity season, we have an opportunity to help establish a young family in their first apartment. So, if you have beds, couches, chairs, tables, TVs, microwaves, and other working furniture and household items, please let us know who you are and what you have on the sign-up sheet in the social hall. The need is imminent so don't delay!



### **Request from Johnstown**

Christ the Saviour Seminary is in need of a vehicle. Would you kindly inquire in your parish if there is a parishioner willing to make a donation of a reliable used vehicle – any make, any year, preferably an SUV if possible; an all-wheel drive vehicle is necessary for the Johnstown area. The Seminary community is grateful for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Very Rev. Protopresbyter Frank P. Miloro

## Follow Our Diocese On-Line

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

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

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

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

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

***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 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, John Sparks, Dawn & Faith Ulmschneider, Lydia Vita, Christine, Marshall, Nathaniel, Subdcn. Nectarios and Ia, the Syrian Christians displaced by war, Mother Virginia Marie and the Carmelite Nuns of Port Tobacco, and all those in need of our prayers. (Please advise Fr. Joseph of changes.)