

# 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.**

**January 15, 2017 – 30<sup>th</sup>**

**Sunday After Pentecost**

### **Venerable Paul of Thebes & John the Hut-Dweller**

Saint Paul of Thebes was born in Egypt around 227 in the Thebaid of Egypt. Left orphaned, he suffered many things from a greedy relative over his inheritance. During the persecution against Christians under the emperor Decius (249-251), Saint Paul learned of his brother-in-law's insidious plan to deliver him into the hands of the persecutors, and so he fled the city and fled into the wilderness.

Settling into a mountain cave, Saint Paul dwelt there for ninety-one years, praying incessantly to God both day and night. He sustained himself on dates and bread, which a raven brought him, and he clothed himself with palm leaves.

Saint Anthony the Great (January 17), who also lived as an ascetic in the Thebaid desert, had a revelation from God concerning Saint Paul. Saint Anthony thought that there was no other desert dweller such as he. Then God said to him, "Anthony, there is a servant of God more excellent than you, and you should go and see him."

Anthony went into the desert and came to Saint Paul's cave. Falling to the ground before the entrance to the cave, he asked to be admitted. The Elders introduced



themselves, and then embraced one another. They conversed through the night, and Saint Anthony revealed how he had been led there by God. Saint Paul disclosed to Saint Anthony that for sixty years a bird had brought him half a loaf of bread each day. Now the Lord had sent a double portion in honor of Saint Paul's visit. The next morning, Saint Paul spoke to Anthony of his approaching death, and instructed him to bury him. He also asked Saint Anthony to return to his monastery and bring back the cloak he had received from Saint Athanasius. He did not really need a garment, but wished to depart from his body while Saint Anthony was absent.

As he was returning with the cloak, Saint Anthony beheld the soul of Saint Paul surrounded by angels, prophets, and apostles, shining like the sun and ascending to God. He entered the cave and found Abba Paul on his knees with his arms outstretched. Saint Anthony mourned for him, and wrapped him in the cloak. He wondered how he would bury the body, for he had not remembered to bring a shovel. Two lions came running from the wilderness and dug a grave with their claws.

Saint Anthony buried the holy Elder, and took his garment of palm leaves, then he returned to his own monastery. Saint Anthony kept this garb as a precious inheritance, and wore it only twice a year, on Pascha and Pentecost.

Saint Paul of Thebes died in the year 341, when he was 113 years old. He did not establish a single monastery, but soon after his end there were many imitators of his life, and they filled the desert with monasteries. Saint Paul is honored as the first desert-dweller and hermit.

In the twelfth century Saint Paul's relics were transferred to Constantinople and placed in the Peribleptos monastery of the Mother of God, on orders of the emperor Manuel (1143-1180). Later, they were taken to Venice, and finally to Hungary, at Ofa. Part of his head is in Rome.

Saint Paul of Thebes, whose Life was written by Saint Jerome, is not to be confused with Saint Paul the Simple (October 4).

**Saint John the Hut-Dweller** was the son of rich and illustrious parents, and was born in Constantinople in the early fifth century. He received a fine education, and he mastered rhetoric and philosophy by the age of twelve. He also loved to read spiritual books. Perceiving the vanity of worldly life, he chose the path that was narrow and extremely difficult. Filled with longing to enter a monastery, he confided his intention to a passing monk. John made him promise to come back for him when he returned from his pilgrimage to Jerusalem, and take him to his monastery.

He asked his parents for a Gospel so that he might study the words of Christ. John's parents hired a calligrapher to copy the text, and had the volume bound in a golden cover studded with gems. John read the Gospel constantly, delighting in the Savior's words.

The monk kept his promise to come back for John, and they went secretly to Bithynia. At the monastery of the "Unsleeping" (Akoimitoi), he received monastic tonsure. The young monk began his ascetical labors with zeal, astonishing the brethren with his unceasing prayer, humble obedience, strict abstinence, and perseverance at work.

After six years, he began to undergo temptations. He remembered his parents, how much they loved him, and what sorrow he caused them. He regretted leaving them, and was filled with a burning desire to see them again. Saint John explained his situation to the igumen Saint Marcellus (December 29) and he asked to be released from the monastery. He begged the igumen for his blessing and prayers to return home. He bid farewell to the brethren, hoping that by their prayers and with the help of God, he would both see his parents and overcome the snares of the devil. The igumen then blessed him for his journey.

Saint John returned to Constantinople, not to resume his former life of luxury, but dressed as a beggar, and unknown to anyone. He settled in a corner by the gates of his parents' home. His father noticed the "pauper," and began to send him food from his table, for the sake of Christ. John lived in a small hut for three years, oppressed and insulted by the servants, enduring cold and frost, unceasingly conversing with the Lord and the holy angels.

Before his death, the Lord appeared to the monk in a vision, revealing that the end of his sorrows was approaching, and that in three days he would be taken into the Heavenly Kingdom. Therefore, he asked the steward to give his mother a message to come to him, for he had something to say to her.

At first, she did not wish to go, but she was curious to know what this beggar had to say to her. Then he sent her another message, saying that he would die in three days. John thanked her for the charity he had received, and told her that God would reward her for it. He then made her promise to bury him beneath his hut, dressed in his rags. Only then did the saint give her his Gospel, which he always carried with him, saying, "May this console you in this life, and guide you to the next life."

She showed the Gospel to her husband, saying that it was similar to the one they had given their son. He realized that it was, in fact, the very Gospel they had commissioned for John. They went back to the gates, intending to ask the pauper where he got the Gospel, and if he knew anything about their son. Unable to restrain himself any longer, he admitted that he was their child. With tears of joy

they embraced him, weeping because he had endured privation for so long at the very gates of his parental home.

The saint died in the mid-fifth century, when he was not quite twenty-five years old. On the place of his burial the parents built a church, and beside it a hostel for strangers. When they died, they were buried in the church they had built.

In the twelfth century the head of the saint was taken by Crusaders to Besançon (in France), and other relics of the saint were taken to Rome. (*from oca.org*)

### **Today's Epistle Lesson – St. Paul's Letter to the Colossians 3:12-16**

Brethren, as *the* elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also *must do*. But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.

### **Today's Gospel Lesson – Saint Luke 18:18-27**

At that time, a certain ruler asked Him, saying, "Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" So Jesus said to him, "Why do you call Me good? No one *is* good but One, *that is*, God. You know the commandments: 'Do not commit adultery,' 'Do not murder,' 'Do not steal,' 'Do not bear false witness,' 'Honor your father and your mother.'" And he said, "All these things I have kept from my youth." So when Jesus heard these things, He said to him, "You still lack one thing. Sell all that you have and distribute to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me." But when he heard this, he became very sorrowful, for he was very rich. And when Jesus saw that he became very sorrowful, He said, "How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God! For it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." And those who heard it said, "Who then can be saved?" But He said, "The things which are impossible with men are possible with God."

### **Parish News**

Holy Water was consecrated on Theophany. If you would like to take some home for personal use, please bring a container to fill. Please contact Fr. Joseph or Pani Stacey if you would like your house blessed.

## On Stewardship and the Orthodox Life – 109: How Are We Judged?



*“for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.” (John 12:43 RSV)*

The secular world judges us in many ways. Our managers at work judge and evaluate us on performance; our families judge us on our success; and we judge ourselves by how successful we are, by our accumulated wealth, by how many things we possess or, maybe even, the number of friends who see life the way we do. We define ourselves by cars, houses, boats, and money in the bank. I am sure you have heard the mantra, “He who has the most toys, wins!” How many times have you seen somebody drive-by in a new Mercedes and think: “Wow, that person is successful!”

There is nothing wrong with material success in this world. God has never objected to us having material things which come from the fruits of our labor. Indeed, the Holy Fathers tell us that having material things is not evil. But having the material things simply for the sake of possessing them is wrong.

God gives us all that we have so that we might “use” our wealth, but never to hoard. I don't know about you, but I have never seen a U-Haul truck filled with earthly possessions awaiting burial with someone. That Mercedes is not going to your tomb so that you may drive it in heaven!

On the contrary, all of our possessions are on “loan” from God. Possessing or loving something so much that you could not part with it is a sin. Christianity, as practiced in the early church, included generosity. Those Christians that were closest to Christ shared in gratitude their time, talents and resources with the Christian Community.

The secular world drives us to believe that wealth is the barometer on which we are judged and praised. However, as Christians, generosity and gratitude are the metrics by which God will judge us. Do we spend our time in the service of God and our community? Do we use the skills that God has given us for Him and the service of His community? How much of our time do we spend in providing support to the various ministries of the church?

A mantra that one hears is, “I would rather be judged by 12 than be carried by six!” Know that you will be carried by six, only if you are blessed!

The Christians mantra should be: “I pray to be judged by God for the generosity and gratitude I have given to His Church and community than be judged by the secular world as to how much wealth I have accumulated.” Being judged by this secular world in which we live is **ephemeral**. Being judged by God is **eternal!**  
*(from acrod.org)*

## *A Word From the Holy Fathers*

You said to me, O rich man, "My wealth is a gift of God." Yes, it is a gift of God. Well, is it not suitable for you to give to God from the things that are his? If they are God's, then give to God from the things that are his! Have you not listened to what the author of Proverbs, Solomon, says? "The rich man and the poor man," he said, "have met one another. God has created them both." (Prov 22:2)

Is it not possible for God to make every man rich? Yes, it is possible for him to cause heaven to rain gold and silver. But he has appointed the rich man to show mercy to the poor man and glorify God who has made him rich. God is a tester, testing man to see whether he will turn away from wickedness and do good. God exalts the rich man and glorifies him first, and enlarges him with all riches, if he sees him eating righteously - like Job who said, "I have not eaten my bread alone, but I have opened my door to every one" (Job 31:17,32) - and if he stretches forth his hand to the one in need and if he receives a stranger, like Abraham who received angels to himself, thinking that they were men. For the holy scripture says, "He was sitting outside the tent at midday" (Gen. 18:1), and he did not go back into his tent until he obtained this great gift, that God and his angels visited him and ate with him.

Abraham was a rich man, and was called the friend of God and the father of all families. And it is because of his hospitality to strangers that he is called the friend of God. David was a rich man and a king. The Lord said concerning him, "I have found a man coming after my own heart, David the son of Jesse." (1 Sam. 13:14) Why did God say, "I have found him coming according to my heart"? Because he was good and was never arrogant. For he said in a psalm, "Those who hate you, O Lord, I have hated." (Ps. 138:21) "I have abominated these rich who transgress, but you law I have loved." (Ps. 118:113)

Solomon was a man richer than all the kings before him. God gave him great wisdom, more than to anyone else. He did love wealth as he loved the wisdom of God, crying out, reproving the rich, "Vanity and dust is everything upon the earth; it is a vanity and an evil distraction." (Eccl. 1:13-14) "A man to whom God has given great wealth, God has not given power to eat of it. This, too, is a vanity and a desire for wind." (Ecc. 6:2)

For all his toil with which he troubled himself, he did not gain any profit from it, like these wicked rich men living now. For not only do they not give charity, but they deprive their souls of the blessing which the Lord gave them by saying, "If we spend it now, where will we find it in the end?"



How long, then, O pitiless rich man, will you wallow in this filthy mud, which is the love of money? Have you not stopped being foolish, and saying to yourself, "There have been many rich men before me who did not manage themselves well and died and perished quickly"?

What became of Belshazzar the unjust king? When God saw that he was trusting in his riches and power, so that he ate and drank from the votive offerings of the house of the Lord, as recompense was not his kingdom taken from him and given to his enemies? His body too, did not deserve burial; he was cast out upon some high mountains until he died of hunger and thirst, and the birds and beasts ate his flesh.

If I did not wish for you to be saved, O rich man, I would not continue disciplining you to your advantage. Do I hate you or envy you? Not at all! But I wish to find boldness before the Great True Shepherd on the day in which there is no respect of persons, that I might say to him, "those who have been entrusted to me, I have not lost any of them. Behold, the sheep that you gave to me saying, 'Feed them,' not one of them has fallen. The rich man has shared his wealth with the poor man. And the poor man, on the other hand, has been thankful for everything." May it be for all of us to become worthy to hear him say, "Come to the joy of your Lord."

Let us examine and see who has taken his possessions with him, coming out of this place of sojourn. Is it those who love the material things of this world? Or is it not those who have renounced everything which is theirs for the sake of their love toward God? Behold, nodding your heads, you are agreeing with my speech, and you are saying, "Perhaps it is the one who has abandoned everything for God's sake. He is the one who will find his wealth before him."

But certainly one of you is murmuring in his heart, "How will I find what is mine in the other age if I distribute it in this age and give to the poor?" I will satisfy you with that which I shall say. Did not Christ, true God, testify to us in the beginning of the speech when Peter asked him, "Behold, we have abandoned everything and have followed you. What then shall we have?" "Everyone," Jesus said, "who has left behind house or wife or mother or child or everything for my name's sake will receive many times more in the kingdom of heaven and will inherit life forever." (Mt. 19:29)

But you will still say to me, "Our fathers the apostles are the only ones to whom he said this." Pay attention to what he is saying: "Everyone," he says, not "you alone." If he does not forget a cup of cold water, if one gives drink to the thirsty with it, then Christ will not forget the one who will give his labors of love for the church of God, or the one who will have pity on someone in distress because of merciless creditors.

But some find excuse, saying, "Since the burden of the emperor's taxes are upon us, as well as the care of our sons and daughters, it is not possible for use to give charity." It is not to me that you are speaking falsehood, O man, but to God. If you, moreover, are concerned for these things, you are concerned for the things of the earth and not for heavenly things. Let us care for heavenly things and those things which are profitable for us first of all; but he will not permit us to lack them, for he is the one who cares for us. "Seek first," he said, "his kingdom and righteousness, and all these things will be added unto you." (Mat 6:33)

– St. Peter of Alexandria, *On Riches*

### **ALSO COMMEMORATED TODAY: ST. ITA, HERMITESS OF KILLEEDY**



Saint Ita, “the Foster Mother of the Irish Saints,” was born in the fifth century. She, like many of the Irish saints, was of the nobility. Her parents were devout Christians who lived in County Waterford. She founded a school and convent at Killeedy (Cille Ide) which still bears her name near Newcastle West in County Limerick. A holy well still marks the site of her church.

When she decided to settle in Killeedy, a local chieftain offered her a grant of land for the support of the convent. Saint Ita accepted four icons, which she cultivated. The convent became known as a training ground for young boys, many of whom became famous churchmen. She received Saint Brendan the Voyager (May 16) when he was only a year old, and kept him until he was six. She also cared for her nephew Saint Mochaemhoch (March 13) in his infancy. She called him “Pulcherius,” because he was such a handsome child. Many people sought her spiritual counsels, and she also seems to have practiced medicine to some degree. Her life was spent in repentance and asceticism.

Saint Ita once told Saint Brendan that the three things most displeasing to God are: A face that hates mankind, a will that clings to the love of evil, and placing one’s entire trust in riches (Compare Proverbs 6:16-19). The three things most pleasing to God are: The firm belief of a pure heart in God, the simple religious life, and liberality with charity. Saint Ita fell asleep in the Lord in 570. Her Feast Day is a local holiday in the district, and her name is a popular one for Irish girls. (*from oca.org*)



## SAVE THE DATE

The March for Life is a [peaceful, prayerful, and \[massive\] rally](#) that takes place every year in Washington, D.C., on the sorrowful anniversary of the Supreme Court decision \*Roe v. Wade\* that legalized abortion in the United States over forty years ago. Participants process from the National Mall to the Supreme Court Building where, at the end of the route, Orthodox Christians gather together with our archpastors and clergy to offer memorial prayers in memory of the departed unborn. This will occur on Friday, January 27. Please see Fr. Joseph for details.

## ASSESSMENTS FOR 2017

We paid our Assessment to the Diocese for 2017. As in previous years, we trust that you will pay your assessments over the course of the year. The Diocesan Assessment remains \$68.00 for each adult over 18 or \$17.00 if paid quarterly. Please remember that without the Diocese and our Bishop we would not be an Orthodox Church. Thank you for being good Stewards of God's House. Kari

### 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, Curtis Cooper, Luke 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. Nectaros 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.)