

# SOBORNOST

**St. Thomas the Apostle Orthodox Church**  
4419 Leonardtown Road, Waldorf, MD 20601

(301) 638-5035 Church | (703) 380-9673 Cell

Rev. Father Joseph Edgington, Pastor ([fredgington@gmail.com](mailto:fredgington@gmail.com))

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

## SERVICES

*American Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Diocese*  
ECUMENICAL PATRIARCHATE OF CONSTANTINOPLE

**Wed: Moleben to the Theotokos 6:00 AM | Friday: Mol. to the Cross 6:00 AM**

**Saturday: Confession 5:00 PM**

**Sunday: Matins 8:45 AM**

**Great Vespers 5:30 PM**

**Divine Liturgy 10:00 AM.**



**FEBRUARY 19, 2017 – SUNDAY OF MEATFARE OR THE LAST JUDGMENT**

Homily by St. Luke the Surgeon of Simferopol

For three months [February 1946], the Nuremberg trials have been going on, the terrible trial in which are being prosecuted crimes which the world has never seen, and rightly they should fear, for they know that what remains for them is to be condemned to death. Their final verdict is demanded by the conscience of all the people, of all mankind, for the world was struck by their abominable crimes! Never before were we astonished by such crimes, which cannot be related by the human mind. They have destroyed tens of millions of people—a countless multitude—besides those who were killed on the front. In the military base of Osventsim alone, 5,121,000 people were killed. The whole world is full of

resentment, and awaits the hour when the judge will condemn them for their crimes... The conscience of men demands that they be condemned to death, the conscience of men demands that these terrible crimes not remain unpunished.

But what shall we say of the righteousness of God? How does God meet this evil? And though this evil is so fearful and great, it is, however, one tear before the ocean of evil which the eye of God beholds, and which the All-wise mind of the Lord knows, for countless rivers of evil are drowning the human race from the beginning to the end. Since the world was created, before the eyes of God, countless crimes have been committed, and along with blasphemies and unseemly words. But human virtue also continues in this faithless and sinful world, trampled upon and cast out.

Do you know how often criminals triumph and are full of joy, while at the same instant, good and pure men are destroyed? And always, in every age, the conscience of men is troubled by this occurrence, and all the people ask: "Until when, O Lord? When will righteousness triumph?" Because the heart of man does not accept injustice, it does not suffer for evil to go unpunished, and for virtue to not be honored. Is it possible for the whole world to be so senseless, so unbearably unjust, that evil might triumph till the end? This is impossible and will never occur, for above the world is the Just God, Who much more than us knows how much evil there is in the heart of men. God, however, is forbearing. God forbears and endures the disrespect of men for thousands of years now. He endures, for He awaits to gather, in a world full of disrespect and evil, the greatly-precious fruits of reverence and goodness. Because for the reason of these fruits alone did the love of God create the whole world, that the heart of the faithful might shine, and be purified by the light of Christ, that they might shine with the love of Christ, that the righteousness of God might be revealed.

Do you know that, as there are evil-doers, there is a countless multitude of good and pure people, a great army of the Saints of God? They are worth the world, that among the hundreds of thousands of evil men, might shine the tens of millions of sons of God, sons of grace. Because of this the Lord endures. He endures that the sheaves of the garden of Christ might be numbered. When, however, the time comes, when the sheaves shall be numbered, then will begin the time of harvest. Then the Lord will send His angels to gather the sheaves, and the chaff they will cast into eternal fire. Then will come the hour of the Terrible Judgment of God, just and much more terrible than that which is occurring now for the men of Nuremberg.

This judgment will be noted for the number of the indicted, for with the sound of the trumpet of the Archangel, with which the Second Coming of our Lord Jesus

Christ will be proclaimed, all the dead will arise to stand before the Awesome Judgment Seat of God, inevitable judgment, a judgment which St. John the Theologian heard of, when he received the Revelation regarding what will occur at the end of the world. He saw at the Throne of God the Martyrs, who were martyred for the name of Christ. These cried towards God: "Until when, O Master...will you not judge and avenge our blood?" (Revelation 6:10). Now, tens of millions of men were killed by these crimes, not realizing that they would be thrown alive into ovens, men who were killed in aerial bombings, women, old people and children who were stabbed, all cry towards God: "Until when, O Lord, will you avenge our blood? How long will You be patient?" This terrible voice of men cries out so loudly towards God, for it appears, the hour of the Awesome Judgment is approaching.

The Lord told His Disciples that no one knows when the end of the world will come, only the Father knows. At the same time, however, the Lord showed the signs which will bear witness that the Awesome Judgment is approaching. He said that: "nation will rise against nation...and there will be wars and rumors of wars, and earthquakes in places. All of these are the beginning of tribulations." (Matthew 23: 78). He said that "there will be then great tribulation, such as has never occurred from the beginning of the world." (Matthew 24: 21). "And if those days were not cut short, no flesh would be saved. Therefore for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short." (Matthew 24: 22). Then, at the awesome day of Judgment, the terrible day of the Second Coming of Christ, the Judge of the whole world, "the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its rays, and the stars will fall from heaven and the powers of heaven will be shaken. Then will appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven, and then all the people of the earth will weep, and behold the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory, and He will send His angels with trumpet and great voice, and gather His elect from the four winds from the corners of heaven. Now learn this lesson from the fig tree: As soon as its twigs get tender and its leaves come out, you know that summer is near." (Matthew 24: 29-32)

From this word of Christ, from this foretelling of what will occur at the Awesome Judgment, we can know with some certainty that this time is not far off. Likely mankind will be forced to experience a third world war, which likely will be the final one, and more terrible than all the previous wars!

We all waited longingly, hoping that, after the victory against the criminal fascists, that there would be total peace and harmony between those peoples who, with their combined efforts, prevented the terrible slavery which was prepared for the whole world by the brutality of the fascists. This is what we were waiting for. But the

more time passes, the more it is confirmed to us that peace and harmony does not exist, for in different countries and more commonly the enemy of our righteous people rises. The horizon is terribly obscured by the black clouds and the specter of the atomic bomb, which endangers the whole world. Our Lord Jesus Christ said: "when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on earth? (Luke 18:8). Do you know how today, in all the countries and in all the people, how much faithlessness is strengthened and increased? Few remaining are those whom the Lord calls His little flock. Terrible is the time in which we live, terrible is the day of the coming Judgment, which we heard of in today's Gospel reading. I will not relate it again, for you heard all the basics. You heard why sinners will be condemned, whom the Lord further calls condemned ones. And you heard how the righteous will shine in the Kingdom of the Heavenly Father. Why? Only for love, for the work of almsgiving, for love is the essence of the law of Christ. Those whose hearts are full of love, those whose love is revealed in works of almsgiving towards his neighbor, they are those who have received the light of the Gospel within them. For them is prepared the Kingdom of the Heavens. They will hear from the Lord in the Awesome Judgment: "Come, O blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." (Matthew 25: 34). And they will enter the New Jerusalem, that Jerusalem which St. John the Theologian saw descending from heaven, and will enter into eternal life and blessedness. And those whom the Lord called condemned, will go into eternal fire, which was prepared for the devil and his servants.

There are many men who do not accept the Awesome Judgment. They say: is it right for the man who did sins in this short life, afterwards to be tortured eternally? This question is posed by all those who do not accept the Gospel of Christ. What shall we respond to this? Will we say that there is likely some part of truth to this thought? Of course not.

To whom is prepared eternal life? For the spirit of man, for that spirit which man received from God Himself, when He created Adam. Then God breathed into the body a living soul. All of us bear this spirit. Truly, it is this spirit which differentiates us from the dumb animals, which never were granted the higher gifts of the Divine Spirit. What happens therefore, during the life of man? There is a ceaseless, daily molding of our spirit. All our works, our senses, our words and thoughts leave an indelible seal on our souls, and mold it. Our spirit grows, changes, and is molded during the course of our life, affected by our deeds, senses and our thoughts.

Within the spirit of man occurs something similar to that which occurs with a grape, which beneath the rays of the sun and with the morning dew, grows

furthermore and is molded by life-giving power, which God granted to His living creations, and which shine with His beauty. He granted life to foster and receive the gifts of the sun and creation. And when it is grown, its death approaches. It is cut and thrown into a vat, trampled upon, and the grape gives up its blood, its juice, which then becomes wine. Though the grape was beautiful, though it is honored more than other things we gather, then through the wine which occurs through this grape, its life continues. Its peels rot like our body rots, and the wine is kept in barrels for many years. And the more time passes, the more precious the wine becomes. This, therefore, is the life of the grape, which resembles our earthly life, and the life of wine, which resembles the eternal and undying life of our spirit, when we will be freed from the bonds of this body, which after death occurs, dissolves like the peels of the grape.

Do you know that there are some kinds of grapes that are not good? There is, in other words, a sour grape and its juice does not make good wine. This wine becomes sour, and with the passing of time, it becomes even worse.

The same occurs with men. There are men who in their spirit, during the course of their life, is ceaselessly completed that which is good and true. Their good works make an indelible seal upon their human spirit, while their spirit becomes more and more perfect, pure and holy. This is the spirit of the righteous, those for whom the Kingdom of the Heavens has been prepared. There are those men, however, whose life is full of crimes and unspeakable sins. Their spirits they daily harm with poisons. And thus, without end, the spirit of these men is conformed according to evil. Our spirit, however, is immortal. Our spirit will live forever, and therefore, the direction which we make in this life - either towards good or towards evil - will remain the stable direction. The spirit of the righteous men who loved Christ, who loved the true good, will be ceaselessly perfected, approaching the perfection of God in continuous communion with Him in the land of Paradise. However, the spirit of sinners, which during the course of their life was drowned utterly and furthermore in evil, is condemned to continue into this eternal choice towards evil, is condemned to have continuous communion with Satan himself, and in its incomparable evil, will approach him even more. This is the eternal torture of sinners. They will sense, in other words, how God has left them, how they are condemned, and they will choke among their evil and hate against God and goodness.

Is God “responsible” for this? Did He condemn them to eternal torture? They themselves unfortunately condemned themselves, as they chose the way of evil alone. He left them free to ever follow this road. (*from full-of-grace-and-truth.blogspot.com*)

## **Today's Epistle Lesson – St. Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians 8:8-9:2**

Brethren, food does not commend us to God; for neither if we eat are we the better, nor if we do not eat are we the worse. But beware lest somehow this liberty of yours become a stumbling block to those who are weak. For if anyone sees you who have knowledge eating in an idol's temple, will not the conscience of him who is weak be emboldened to eat those things offered to idols? And because of your knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died? But when you thus sin against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ. Therefore, if food makes my brother stumble, I will never again eat meat, lest I make my brother stumble. Am I not an apostle? Am I not free? Have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord? Are you not my work in the Lord? If I am not an apostle to others, yet doubtless I am to you. For you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord.

## **Today's Gospel Lesson – Saint Matthew 25:31-46**

The Lord said, "When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides *his* sheep from the goats. And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. Then the King will say to those on His right hand, 'Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; I *was* naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.' Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed *You*, or thirsty and give *You* drink? When did we see You a stranger and take *You* in, or naked and clothe *You*? Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?' And the King will answer and say to them, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did *it* to one of the least of these My brethren, you did *it* to Me.' Then He will also say to those on the left hand, 'Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels: for I was hungry and you gave Me no food; I was thirsty and you gave Me no drink; I was a stranger and you did not take Me in, naked and you did not clothe Me, sick and in prison and you did not visit Me.' Then they also will answer, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to You?' Then He will answer them, saying, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did not do *it* to one of the least of these, you did not do *it* to Me.' And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

## 2017 LENTEN DIOCESAN RETREAT



### EASTERN REGION INTER-DIOCESAN LENTEN RETREAT



**SATURDAY, APRIL 1, 2017**

9:00 AM TO 6:30 PM

AT

**ST. FRANCIS CENTER FOR RENEWAL  
395 BRIDLE PATH ROAD  
BETHLEHEM, PA**

**COST TO ATTEND (INCLUDES BREAKFAST, LUNCH & DINNER):  
\$30.00 ADULTS / TEENS (Until March 15) \$55.00 after March 15  
\$7.00 (AGES 6 TO 12)**

**REGISTRATION DEADLINE:**

**March 15, 2017**

**OLEH OR NATALIE BILYNSKY  
nsufler@aol.com  
610-892-7315**



**SPONSORED BY THE NATIONAL A.C.R.Y &  
THE UKRAINIAN ORTHODOX LEAGUE OF THE USA**

New for this year, this is a joint retreat with the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the USA (Oleh and Natalie attended our Eastern Region retreat last year as observers). If you are interested in attending, please let Fr. Joseph know by March 12 so we can get the registration form in by the deadline. Make checks payable to St. Thomas – the parish will send a group payment with the registration form. If you have any questions, please contact Oleh or Natalie (see contact info above). Please note that pictures from the Retreat may be used for publicity; let Fr. Joseph know if you do not want pictures of you and/or your child used.

<u>Age</u>	<u>Topic</u>	<u>Presenters</u>
Adults & Adolescents	“Peace Be Unto All”: Encountering the Divine Liturgy	Fr. Anthony Perkins Fr. Bazyl Zawierucha
Ages 6-11	The Divine Liturgy: The Five Senses	Fr. William George Fr. William Bennett

## **CAMP NAZARETH**

Glory be to Jesus Christ!

Camp Nazareth is eagerly awaiting and preparing for the arrival of the Summer Camping Season. Diocesan priests and parents have already been calling to find out the details of the 2017 Summer Camping Schedule. The 2017 Schedule is posted on the Camp's website.

REGISTRATION FOR CAMP WILL ONLY BE ABLE TO BE DONE ONLINE THROUGH THE CAMP'S WEBSITE – [CAMPNAZARETH.ORG](http://CAMPNAZARETH.ORG).

The Online Registration system will be up and running starting March 1, 2017. Here is what is different from previous years in this information:

1. The Most Important Change is the Clearances now required of all Clergy, Staff, and Volunteers. This is all explained through the Camp website.
2. The Dates for the Diocesan Weeks have been updated!!
3. The Fee for Camp is: \$315/diocesan camper and \$365/non-diocesan camper.
4. Staff applications are due March 15<sup>th</sup>, 2017.
5. If anyone is interested in being on the Camp's Medical Staff (MD or RN), please contact Fr. Stephen at the Camp (724-662- 4840 or [campnazareth@acrod.org](mailto:campnazareth@acrod.org)). The Nurse or Doctor on staff each week will receive a Stipend (\$400) and a campership for one of their children or for someone whom they designate.

Those who are of age (at least 18 by the beginning of the Summer Season and have completed High School) are encouraged to be part of the Camp's Summer Staff. There are positions available as counselor, head counselor, kitchen staff, maintenance staff, athletic director, program director (and assistant program director), technology director (and assistant technology director), Ropes Course Facilitator and Lifeguard. This is a wonderful opportunity to get involved in this vital and meaningful diocesan apostolate, form lasting friendships, and use your God-given talents for the benefit and up-building of our Church. Fr. Stephen never attended Camp as a Camper or as part of the Staff, but his experience as a clergy volunteer, and now as Administrator, has made him wish he had. Staff Applications can be found on the Camp website [campnazareth.org](http://campnazareth.org).

Please note the following deanery weeks at Camp:

Week 1, July 16-22, 2017: Johnstown, Pocono, Southern Tier, Youngstown and Chicago Deaneries

Week 2, July 23-29, 2017: Pittsburgh, Mid-Atlantic, Tri-State and **Washington D.C. Deaneries**

Week 3, July 30 - August 5, 2017: New England, NY, NJ, Florida and Canada Deaneries

Remember also the following dates:

1. March 15 -- Staff Applications due
2. May 15 -- Clergy and Volunteer Applications due
3. May 15 -- Last Day for Early Bird Discount (\$20) and Camper Registrations are due

### 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

## On Stewardship and the Orthodox Life – Part 114: Being Lazy



*“Be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.” (James 1: 22 RSV)*

God has given us free will and opened a pathway to salvation. It is because of our laziness that we fall off that path. Each and every day we are called to do our part, to be like Christ, yet we miss the mark. We hear what we are called to do but do we do it? Is it easier for us to fall in line with the secular world rather than follow that straight and narrow path that Christ has set for us? Do we forgive those that cause us problems, do we love those who hate us, do we extend charity to others in the form of time, talents and treasure, and are we peacemakers?

If Christianity has a bad reputation in the world, perhaps it is because of us! We use foul language, become angry, take the Lord's name in vain and engage in other disdainful acts. If we as Christians are one spirit with Christ, how do our actions then look to the world? Every action we take as Christians is important because we are seen by the world as representing Christ. *Be doers of the word* of Christ and not just listeners. Do as God has asked us to do and provide to others from the talents and skills He has given you. Let the light of Christ shine through you to the world! *(from acrod.org)*

## *A Word From the Holy Fathers*

What of us, already purified through the Spirit, perfected through grace, deemed worthy of the Gift - the royal priesthood, the peculiar people, the holy nation, whom not the blood of calves, goats and rams sacrificed according to ancient rites, but the Lord Himself has purchased with His own blood, who have renounced wicked deeds, and have professed goodness and justice, who have put off the old man with his desires of the flesh and have put on Christ? Indeed, as many of us as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ and have become members of Christ; for we have learned from the divine Paul's teaching that our bodies are members of Christ.

What then of us? Have we preserved our bridal condition unsoiled, not letting it be polluted by any evil? Have we maintained our earnest of the future blessedness free from trafficking, not enticed by the allurements of harlot Pleasure, or repelled and spat upon the procurer Negligence by means of a temperate mind and a diligent life? Have we, mindful of the covenant which before angels and men we have pledged to God, kept it inviolate, showing ourselves by the fulfillment of our promises faithful to the commandments of which we have been deemed worthy? Have we barred all entry to the Evil one, and have we made our souls a temple of the most-holy Spirit, or rather the temple built for the most-holy Spirit - as the blessed Paul cries out, "Do you not know that your bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you?" - have we kept it undefiled that we may not be destroyed? For, he testifies again, "if any man defile the temple of God, God shall destroy him." 1 Cor. 3:17. Has not the gift of grace been stolen from us, has not our liberty been enslaved, our purity soiled, our brightness darkened? Have we not betrayed our security through negligence? Is our watchman still keeping his sleepless and slumberless watch? Are we still caroled by the angels, ministers of the mysteries, who joined in rejoicing at our rebirth and stood by as unexceptionable witnesses to our covenant with God (in baptism)? Blessed are they whose transgressions are forgiven and whose sins are covered. Do we still speak boldly to our enemies and say menacingly, "The Lord is my light and my Savior; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the defender of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?" (Ps. 26:1) Do we still have the courage to sing to the Lord, "I have done judgment and justice; do not deliver me to those who injure me" (Ps. 118:121) and "I will not be afraid of evils, for You are with me" (Ps. 22:4)?

If we still do these things, and are held worthy of these mysteries, and regulate our life with virtues, turning away from the seat of pestilent men and avoiding their path and loathing the designs of the impious, then our feats against the Evil one are truly good and noble, but are hopes are greater by far: an endless blessedness, the

kingdom of heaven, rejoicing with the angels, and unspeakable joy, where the patriarchs have their choirs, the fathers their assemblies, the martyrs their ranks, and all who have pleased God their happy and spacious abode. But if we have slipped away from these things, and set at naught our pacts with God, and moreover the Devil laughs at our actions, seeing the tares of his wickedness sprouting up among them; if we have so fallen away from God's commands, and have denuded ourselves of assistance from above, and have slipped down to the passions, allowing all liberty and authority over us to our enemies - O, what a fall! Alas, the inconsolable disaster! We have fallen, we have been raised. For common is the plight of our ancestor, and the fall as well as the restoration is the inheritance of all. We fell again after grace, after the restoration - a pitiable fall, a fall distressing, unpardonable, inexcusable, a fall worthy of many tears. The enemy is unarmed: for the swords of the enemy have failed utterly; while we are armed with the weapons of grace. Yet he acts shamelessly while we cover ourselves up; he attacks and we collapse, as if we were armed for the very purpose of ascribing him a more outstanding victory against us.

What device of salvation remains? What refuge of salvation? We have received the gift of baptism and have made it useless through our wickednesses. We have been illuminated with a heavenly and divine light, and we have darkened it with the murk of our deeds. We have been sealed with a precious and terrible seal (which was unapproachable to enemies and irresistible to foes), but we have torn the seal to pieces, we have broken it up, we have prepared the way against us to savage and wicked robbers - impassioned thoughts. What then do we hope for? Do we look to a second baptism? Do we expect a second re-birth? Do we perhaps await Christ coming down from heaven again, being crucified, made dead and buried, yes and even baptized beforehand that he may renew our baptism again?

See how Christ-loving you are, who do not love Christ, but desire Christ to suffer for you; no, rather you are indeed a trafficker in Christ, exceeding the Jews in folly and cruelty, who desires your Lord to be crucified and lashed, that you may revel unstintingly in your passions, and that no difficulty should run counter to your dissolute wantonness. Is it for this purpose that you expect Christ to come again? He shall come, but to separate the chaff from the wheat, gathering the latter in the barns with honor, while burning the former with fire. He shall come, yet not in the spirit of mercy, but exacting the penalty for our actions in life, using harshness, and uttering to the sinful that awful and inexorable sentence: "Depart from me, you accursed, into the outer fire." He shall come, but to judge, on a terrible day. "For near," says the prophet, "is the great day of the Lord, and very harsh; the sound of the day of the Lord is made bitter. A mighty day of wrath is that day, a day of

affliction and distress, a day of desolation and destruction, a day of gloom and darkness, a day of cloud and vapor, a day of trumpet and cry," (Zeph. 1:14-16) on which, says the Lord, "I will make the world desolate, and I will destroy the sinners out of it; and the stars of heaven, and Orion, and all the host of heaven shall not give their light. For I will command," he says, "evils for the whole world, and will visit their sins on the ungodly; and I will destroy the pride of transgressors, and will bring low the pride of the haughty." (Is. 13:9-11)

Do you see how He shall come? He shall come that these things may be accomplished; for listen to Malachi too as he says, "Behold, a day comes burning as an oven, and it shall consume them, and all the lawless shall be stubble, and the day that is coming shall set them on fire, says the Lord Almighty, and there shall not be left of them root or branch." (Mal. 3:19) Do you hear, beloved, the coming of the Lord, how terrible it is and inexorable? For He shall not come to preach repentance, nor to show compassion, but to give to each man according to his works. "As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire," the Lord Himself says in the Gospels, "so shall it be in the end of this world. The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and those who do iniquity, and shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth." (Mt. 13:40-42) He shall come as a judge, to part and separate those who have kept His ordinances from those who have not, bestowing on the former the unceasing kingdom, while sending the others to the everlasting worm and fire.

What does He say then?.... "Turn to me, and I will turn to you," says the Lord Almighty (Zech 1:3). How shall I confess? By turning with all my heart, and by humbling myself with fasting and lamentation and rending of the heart. "For now, says the Lord our God, "turn to me with all your heart, and with fasting and with weeping and with lamentation; and rend your hearts and not your garments, and turn to the Lord your God, for He is merciful and compassionate, long-suffering and plenteous in mercy." (Joel 2:12-13) How shall I confess? By pitying the poor and the beggar, and by forgiving my neighbor's faults. For it says, "the merciful shall obtain mercy," (Mt. 5:7) and "forgive, and it shall be forgiven you," (Mt. 6:14) and "a man's mercy is to Him as a signet" (Sir. 17:22), and it is a good gift to those who do it before the most High. Thus is sin wiped out, thus we are cleansed of faults. It is He again who cries out through the prophet Isaiah, "I, even I, am He who blots out your transgressions, and they shall not be remembered. But remember, and let us plead together; first confess your transgressions, that you may be justified;" (Is. 43:25-26) and "Behold, I have blotted out as a cloud your transgressions, and your sins as darkness." (Is. 44:22)

But if the Evil one shamelessly plots against you again, and inspires thoughts of fornication or, in general, of corporeal passions, inviting you to unseemly deeds, then set up against his designs this apostolic saying, and put it forward like a shield: it will show the missiles ineffectual, if it is wielded wisely and vigorously in the grasp of attention and temperance: "Flee fornication. Every sin that a man does is without the body; but he who commits fornication sins against his own body," (1 Cor. 6:18) that is, he plots against and robs his own body, tearing it away from its kinship with Christ, our true God (for we are indeed His members), and fastening himself onto the unclean demon. For, "he who is joined to a harlot is one body," (1 Cor. 6:16), and "Do not be deceived, none of those who commit fornication can inherit the kingdom of God," (1 Cor. 6:9-10) for "corruption does not inherit incorruption (1 Cor. 15:50).

If you are dragged down towards acquisitiveness and the insatiable desire for money, say to yourself this Davidic utterance, or rather the utterance of the Spirit: "You lay up treasures, and do not know for whom you will gather them," (Ps. 38:7) and "many have been given to ruin because of gold," (Sir. 31:6) and "he who loves gold will not be justified," (Sir. 31:5) and "behold the man who did not make God his helper, but trusted in the abundance of his wealth, and strengthened himself in his vanity. (Ps. 51:9) Add, if you will, the Savior's threat as well: "You fool, who rebuilds your houses and buildings and renders them more magnificent, so that the bulk and burden of your insatiable greed should be hoarded up with greater pomp, this night your soul shall be taken away from you, then whose shall those things be which you have gathered?" (see Lk. 12:20)

If the evil one attempts to inflame your soul and puff it up with haughty and boastful thoughts, do not overlook that "the Lord resists the proud, but He gives grace to the humble," (Prov. 3:34) and that "man is like vanity: his days pass as a shadow," (Ps. 143:4), and that "you are dust, and to dust you shall return," (Gen. 3:19) and "why are dust and ashes boastful?" (Sir. 10:9) and "everyone who is proud in heart is unclean before the Lord," (Prov. 16:5) and "do not exalt yourself, lest you fall and bring disgrace on your soul, and the Lord reveal your secrets, and strike you down in the midst of the assembly: for pride is hateful before the Lord." (Sir. 1:30, 10:7)

If you are forced to the abyss of unrighteousness, you should say to him outspokenly, with the boldness that virtue has granted you: "I have hated and abhorred unrighteousness, but I have loved the law of the Lord," (Ps. 118:163) for he who works righteousness shall be exalted; and "so to yourselves righteousness, and you will reap the fruit of life," (Hos. 10:12) for, another prophet testifies, "the way of righteousness and mercy will find life and glory." (Prv. 21:21)

If he tries again to entice you with gluttony and drunkenness, do not overlook Job who exhorts and reminds you that Satan's force is in the navel of the belly. Remember also the prophet Isaiah who cries out saying, "Woe to those who rise up in the morning, and follow strong drink; who wait at it until evening; for the wine shall burn them." (Is. 5:11) Neither disobey yet another who exhorts and counsels you well, "Do not walk in the wake of your desires, and restrain yourself from your appetites," (Sir. 18:30) and, "If you grant your soul contentment of desire, it will make you a rejoicing to your enemies." (Sir. 18:31) Keep also in mind the Lord's command, or rather His awesome and terrible curse, as He threatens, "Woe to you who are full, for you shall hunger," (Lk. 6:25) and "Take heed to yourselves lest at any time your hearts be weighed down with carousing, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that Day come upon you unawares; for as a snare it shall come on all those who dwell on the face of the earth." (Lk. 21:34-35)

If, after attacking through every species of sin, and having been repulsed with the aforesaid weapons, he falls back on God's goodness and mercy, trying to persuade you to disregard the punishments, do not be neglectful: you have other swords and shields forged by God, afforded to you from divine Scripture, wherewith arming yourself and struggling against the enemy, you will show him vanquished, and filled with every shame and dishonor.... Using such and similar examples, scatter the murk of negligence, drive off the cloud of despair, dispel the plot, show the enemy grieved, take courage in repentance: indeed, divest yourself of filth, and he shall not choke our souls.

– St. Photius the Great, *Homily 1.2-4*

### **Also Commemorated Today: Apostles Archippus, Philemon, & Appia of the LXX**

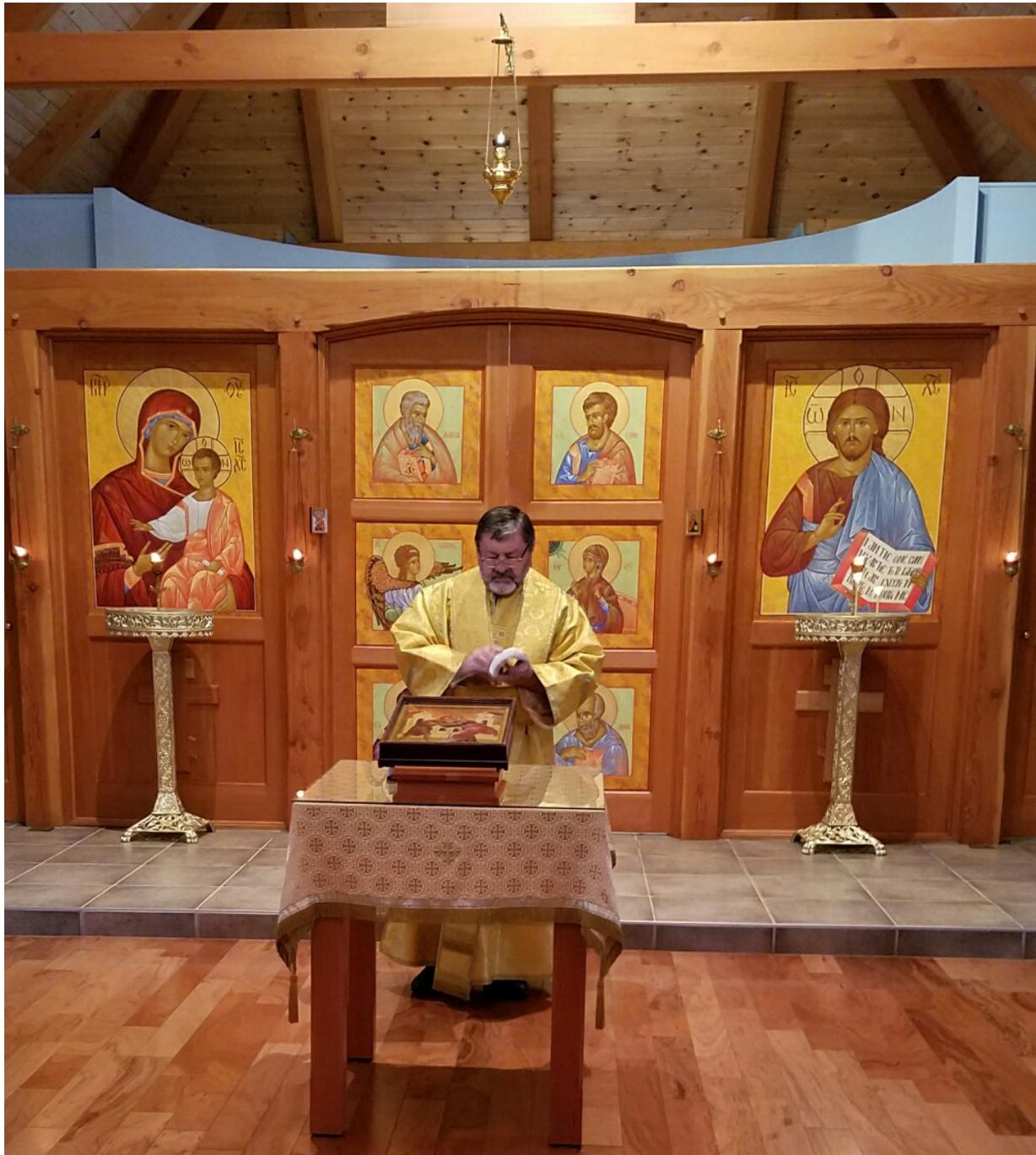
Saints Archippus, Philemon and Apphia, Apostles of the Seventy were students and companions of the holy Apostle Paul. In the Epistle to Philemon, the Apostle Paul names Saint Archippus as his companion, and mentions him again in the Epistle to the Colossians (Col. 4:17).

Saint Archippus was bishop of the city of Colossae in Phrygia. Saint Philemon was an eminent citizen of this city, and the Christians gathered in his home to celebrate church services. He was also made a bishop by Saint Paul and he went about the cities of Phrygia, preaching the Gospel. Later on, he became archpastor of the city of Gaza. Saint Apphia, his wife, took the sick and vagrants into her home, zealously attending to them. She was her husband's co-worker in proclaiming the Word of God. During the persecution against Christians under the emperor Nero (54-68), the holy Apostles Archippus and Philemon and Apphia were brought to

trial by the ruler Artocles for confessing faith in Christ. Saint Archippus was brutally slashed with knives. After torture, they buried Saints Philemon and Apphia up to the waist in the ground, and stoned them until they died.

## Parish Life in Pictures

Fr. Joseph was down for the count last Sunday with pneumonia. In his place, Sub-deacon Theophan (Karoli) David led a Reader's Service. Many thanks, Kari!



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***In Your Prayers – Please Remember...*** His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch BARTHOLOMEW, His Grace Bishop GREGORY, Fr. Joseph & Family, Greek Orthodox Archbishop Paul Yazigi of Aleppo, Syriac Orthodox Archbishop Yohanna Ibrahim of Aleppo, His Grace Bishop Neofitos of Nyeri and Mt. Kenya, Fr. John & Pani Betty Jean Baranik, Fr. Vincent Saverino, 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, John Reece, Mary Reed, Chris & Kaitlin Rixey, Jerry Von Ronne, Anne Rosario, James, Theodore and Christina Ristas, Samson Family, Sharon Sheptak, 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.)