

# SOBORNOST

## St. Thomas the Apostle Orthodox Church

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*American Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Diocese*

ECUMENICAL PATRIARCHATE  
OF CONSTANTINOPLE

## SERVICES

**Wednesdays in Great Lent: Liturgy of  
the Presanctified Gifts 7:00 PM**

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

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

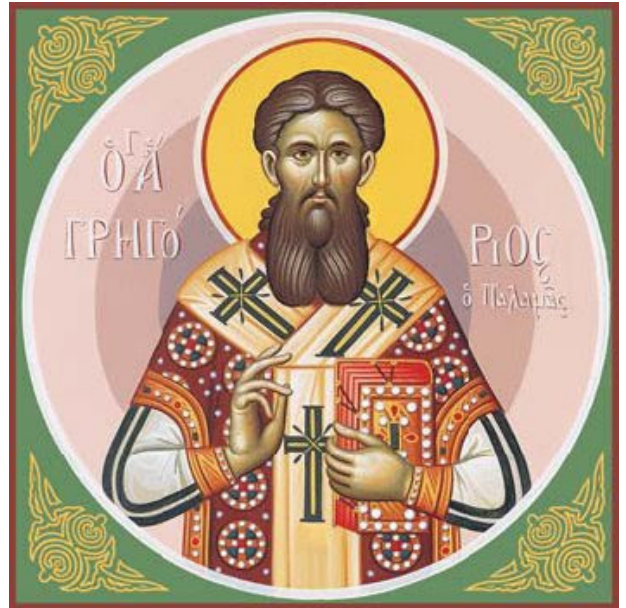
**Sunday: Matins (Orthros) 8:45 AM | Divine Liturgy 10:00 AM.**

## March 5, 2017 – Sunday of Orthodoxy (1<sup>st</sup> Sunday in Lent)

On the Second Sunday of the Fast, we celebrate the memory of our Father among the Saints, Gregory Palamas, Archbishop of Thessalonica.

This son of the Divine Light that knows no evening, a true man of God and wondrous servant and minister of Divine things, hailed from Constantinople. His parents were illustrious and notable people, who were zealous to adorn with virtue and education not only the outward and perceptible man, but also, and much more importantly, the inward and invisible man. When Saint Gregory was very young, his father, Constantine, reposed, and his mother, Kalliste, brought up and instructed Saint Gregory, his brothers, and his sisters, educating and admonishing them in the Lord and with sacred literature, and she also saw to it that they be furnished with secular wisdom by studying at school. Saint Gregory, combining eagerness with his innate intelligence, in a short time acquired every kind of philosophical knowledge, but when he was about twenty years old, reckoning all such things to be unspiritual and more illusory than dreams, he sought to ascend to God, the Cause and Bestower of all wisdom, and to dedicate his whole self to Him through a more perfect way of life.

Hence, he disclosed to his mother his Godloving purpose and his great longing and ardent love for God; and he found her to be similarly disposed, for she had been



thinking along the same lines for a long time, and she rejoiced as much as he did. She immediately gathered her children around her, and, saying with gladness, "Behold, I and the children which God hath given me," attempted to determine what attitude they had towards good things and revealed to them the intention of their older brother. And he, speaking words of exhortation to them, succeeded in winning them over more quickly than one could reasonably expect, and they all eagerly entertained the same longing as he did, namely, to flee from the world.

Hence, after distributing his property to the poor, in accordance with the Gospel, and forsaking imperial favor and the honors and plaudits of the imperial court, Saint Gregory followed Christ. He settled his mother and sisters in a convent and, taking his brothers with him, went to the mountain that is the namesake of holiness, Mount Athos. But he persuaded his brothers to remain for a time in other monasteries, perhaps because they did not have the opportunity to pursue the spiritual life together. He placed himself under obedience to a wondrous man who lived as a Hesychast with God alone, near the Holy Monastery of Vatopedi, Nikodemos by name, from whom he learned every commandment and every virtue through practice and in humility of soul. There, through a mystical revelation, he received the help and invincible succor of the All-Pure Theotokos in all matters. After Nikodemos departed to God, Saint Gregory spent several years in the Great Lavra, where he lived with the greatest of zeal, having the mind of a venerable Elder, but attracted by love for silence, he withdrew from the Lavra and embraced the solitary life. Ever adding longing to longing and striving to abide with God unceasingly, he gave himself over to extreme austerity, and restraining his senses from all sides with scrupulous attentiveness and raising his mind to God, he devoted every moment to prayer and the study of theology. Living an exceptionally disciplined life and with God as his ally, he mightily conquered the demons that made war on him, and cleansing his soul by standing for whole nights and with fountains of tears, he became a choice vessel of the gifts of the Divine Spirit. He had frequent visions of God, and more wonderful still, even after moving to Thessalonica—on account of the Hagarene onslaughts—and establishing a skete in Berea, and being compelled to have contact with certain of the cities, not even then did he depart from his strict way of life.

After completely purifying both body and soul over a period of many years, he received the great anointing of the Priesthood by Divine decree. He celebrated the Divine Mystagogy like one without a body and, as it were, in a state of ecstasy, such that the mere sight of him aroused compunction in the souls of those who saw him; he was truly great and was known by those who lived godly lives as a Spirit-bearer. He showed himself to be such even to those who only looked at him from the outside, having power over demons, delivering the possessed from their

deception and trickery, transforming unfruitful trees into fruitful ones, and foreseeing the future, and he was adorned with all the other gifts and fruits of the Divine Spirit.

Since acting virtuously lies within our power, whereas encountering temptations does not depend on us, and without temptations there is no perfection or demonstration of faith in God (for when, it is said, action and desire come together for the good, the godly man is made perfect), this great Saint was permitted to meet with diverse and constant temptations, in order that through all of these he might be proved truly perfect. What mind can comprehend what subsequently happened? What discourse could recount the machinations of the crafty Adversary, which were greater than before, the libels and slanders hurled against Saint Gregory by the newly-manifest fighters against God, and all the maltreatment that he endured at their hands while contending for the sake of piety, over a period of twenty-three years in all? For the Italian beast, Barlaam of Calabria, puffed up by secular wisdom and fancying in the vanity of his own thoughts that he knew everything, stirred up a terrible war against the Church of Christ, against our godly Faith, and against those who unwaveringly adhered thereto. For in his derangement, he taught that the Grace which is common to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, that the Light of the age to come, wherein the righteous will shine like the sun, as Christ revealed in advance when He shone on Mount Tabor; and, quite simply, that every power and energy of the Tri-Hypostatic Godhead, and everything that is in any way whatsoever distinct from the Divine Nature, is created. Those who piously profess that that most Divine light and every Divine power and energy are uncreated, since none of the attributes that belongs naturally to God is of recent origin, Barlaam called “ditheists” and “polytheists,” in lengthy orations and writings, as the Jews, Sabellius, and Arius also call us.

On account of this, the Divine Gregory, being an illustrious champion and defender of Orthodoxy, who fought, above all, for the sake of piety and who was slandered for doing so, was summoned by the Church to Constantinople. A Synod was convened by the most godly Emperor Andronikos, the fourth of the Palaiologoi, who was a defender of Orthodoxy. Barlaam came to this Synod, where he presented his heretical doctrines and his accusations against the pious. Filled with the Divine Spirit, the great Saint Gregory, girt with invincible power from on high, stopped that mouth which had been opened against God and finally, by his fiery orations and writings, put Barlaam to shame and reduced his heretical tinder to ashes. Wherefore, unable to endure the shame, this enemy of the true Faith fled to the Latins, whence he came. Immediately after this, before a Synod Saint Gregory confuted Akindynos—or rather, Polykindynos—and tore asunder his writings with refutatory discourses. Not even in the wake of this did those who

shared their corrupt way of thinking cease to war against God's Church. Hereafter, with much pressure from the Holy Synod and from Emperor John Cantacouzenos himself, and, above all, persuaded by Divine decree, Saint Gregory was elevated to the Episcopacy, being appointed Archpastor of the Holy Church in Thessalonica. In this capacity, he valiantly and steadfastly accomplished much greater struggles than before on behalf of the Orthodox Faith. For he destroyed the evil successors of Akindynos and Barlaam, who turned out to be many and vexatious, the frightful offspring of frightful wild beasts, and he refuted both their teachings and their writings in many different ways, not once, or twice, or thrice, but many times and through many discourses and not under one emperor or Patriarch, but under three successive emperors, an equal number of Patriarchs, and not a few Synods with Divinely-inspired orations and treatises, and he finally won a mighty victory over them. There were some who remained impenitent, taking no thought for Divine retribution; for there still exist remnants of all heresies, which speak with effrontery against the Saints who vanquished them, to say nothing of that most insolent Jewish race, which even now rages against Christ.

Such, in brief, and so many were the victories of this great Saint over the impious. God, in His ineffable ways, sent him out also as a teacher to the Orient. He was sent as an envoy from Thessalonica to Constantinople in order to reconcile the Emperors, who were at odds with each other; but when he arrived in Gallipoli, he was arrested by the Hagarenes and detained for an entire year, passing martyringly from place to place and from city to city, dauntlessly teaching the Gospel of Christ. Those who were steadfast he confirmed still more, beseeching them to be loyal to the Orthodox Faith, and he strengthened with Divine wisdom those who were confused about the Faith and who put various difficulties and questions to him regarding current events (that is, the astounding progress and expansion of the most ungodly race of the Hagarenes), applying the most effective remedy to what they had to say. To the rest, the infidels and those Christians who had fallen into pitiful apostasy, converted to Islam, and ridiculed our Faith, he spoke frequently and openly about the Incarnate Economy of our Lord and God and about our veneration of the Precious Cross and the Holy Icons; he also talked about Mohammed and about many other questions posed by them. Some admired him, but others were furious at him and stretched out their hands, and they would have put him to a martyr's death had they not, by Divine Providence, seen fit to spare him, in the hope of receiving money in exchange for him - which is, in fact, what happened. The great Saint was freed by certain Christ-loving people, and the bloodless Martyr returned in triumph to his flock, being adorned, in addition to his many other great gifts and accomplishments, with the wounds of Christ, having in himself that which was lacking of the afflictions of Christ, according to St. Paul.

Let us indicate some of his characteristic traits. He was exceedingly meek and humble, insofar as the conversation did not have to do with God and things Divine; for in these matters he was very combative. He did not remember wrongs at all and was forbearing; he was eager to requite, as far as possible, with good things those who struck him as being in any way evil. He had a firm aversion to accusations made against other people; he displayed patient endurance and magnanimity in the face of difficulties; he was above pleasure and vainglory; he was always frugal and did not give excessive attention to his bodily needs, despite being in poor health for much of his life; in his patience, he was calm and peaceful, and he was always so gracious that it was quite evident to those who saw him; above all, he was pensive, attentive, and focused, and as a result of this, his eyes were almost never devoid of tears, but poured forth fountains of tears.

So martyrically did he struggle, from the beginning of his life until its end, against the passions and the demons, driving heretics far away from the Church of Christ and expounding the Orthodox Faith in orations and writings, through which he confirmed practically all of Divinely-inspired Scripture, that his life and words constitute a kind of recapitulation and authentication of the lives and words of the Saints. Having shepherded his flock in an Apostolic and God-pleasing manner for twelve years, adorned it with moral sermons, guided it to the heavenly sheepfold, and proved himself to be, as it were, a fellow-worker with all the Orthodox, both living and yet to come, he was translated to the heavenly life in the year A.D. 1359, having lived for a total of sixty-three years. He committed his spirit into the hands of God, but to his flock he left his sacred body as a Relic, which is preserved in the Metropolis of Thessalonica and which, in due course, became extraordinarily distinguished and glorified as an inheritance and a most precious treasure; for it ever bestows miracles on any who approach it with faith and deliverance from all maladies, not a few of which are recorded in the story of his life. By his intercessions, O God, have mercy on us and save us. Amen (*Synaxarion for the Second Sunday of Great Lent*)

### **Today's Epistle Lesson – St. Paul's Letter to the Hebrews 1:10-2:3**

In the beginning, “You, Lord, in the beginning laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of Your hands. They will perish, but You remain; and they will all grow old like a garment; like a cloak You will fold them up, and they will be changed. But You are the same, and Your years will not fail.” But to which of the angels has He ever said: “Sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool”? Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation? Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away. For if the word spoken through angels proved steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience

received a just reward, how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard *Him*?

### **Today's Gospel Lesson – Saint John 1:43-51**

At that time, Jesus entered Capernaum after *some* days, and it was heard that He was in the house. Immediately many gathered together, so that there was no longer room to receive *them*, not even near the door, and He preached the word to them. Then they came to Him, bringing a paralytic who was carried by four *men*. And when they could not come near Him because of the crowd, they uncovered the roof where He was. So when they had broken through, they let down the bed on which the paralytic was lying. When Jesus saw their faith, He said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven you." And some of the scribes were sitting there and reasoning in their hearts, "Why does this *Man* speak blasphemies like this? Who can forgive sins but God alone?" But immediately, when Jesus perceived in His spirit that they reasoned thus within themselves, He said to them, "Why do you reason about these things in your hearts? Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven you,' or to say, 'Arise, take up your bed and walk'? But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins"—He said to the paralytic, "I say to you, arise, take up your bed, and go to your house." Immediately he arose, took up the bed, and went out in the presence of them all, so that all were amazed and glorified God, saying, "We never saw *anything* like this!"

### *A Word From the Holy Fathers*

Do you wish to attain satiety of enjoyment, and suffer no penalty, but instead make yourself worthy of many favors? Turn your gaze with the wondrous David on your blooming and fertile meadow of the Lord's commands, turn your gaze, and do not depart from it; but fixing the eyes of your mind on it, and dwelling on the variety of its beauty, say, "How I have loved your law, O Lord! It is my meditation all day long," (Ps. 118:97) and let your actions correspond to this utterance. Having thus filled yourself with the holy and fragrant sweetness from that source, you will sing from true experience, "How sweet your words are to my throat! More so than honey to my mouth." (Ps. 118:103) Such is the pleasure that the choir of the faithful enjoys; she cleanses and raises us towards a more Godlike desire and enjoyment, snatching the soul away from carnal enticements, and seating it on its natural and kindred throne that is free from passion; she drives away softness, while stimulating the manly quantity of unwavering in the face of matter.

I know also of another companion and fellow lodger of this pleasure who has much kinship with her: for she too is begotten from the persistent study of the divinely wise Writ, and produces an extraordinary and wonderful delectation. For she gladdens man in his food, she gladdens him in sleep, in bodily health, in sickness, when he is invested with rule over others, when he is placed under authority, in wealth, in poverty, in each and every condition of life. Who then is she? Perhaps you wish to know. I will tell you gladly. She is the pleasure arising from the interrogation of the conscience, when the latter is found to be not altogether condemned and without excuse.

For when a man examines himself upon his actions, and does not find his conscience condemning him, nor wounding him with charges that he has robbed his fellows of their bare sustenance while he himself lives in luxury, or that he is sumptuously clad at the expense of his shivering brother; if he has not despoiled others of their marriage rights, if he has not made the misfortunes of others into his own delight, if he has not shared in his neighbor's prosperity with envy, if he has not been a leader of unjust hands (see 2 Macc. 4:40); not to mention if he has not also taken vengeance, which is a greater matter than men nowadays regard it in their everyday lives: when, as I say, a man examines himself, and does not find his conscience charging him bitterly with crimes such as these, then, O me, how great a pleasure, how much happiness, what gladness does that man enjoy! It is an image of the future felicity: it too gives an undefiled joy, and as it grows old it reaches maturity, and as it matures it becomes eternal, and makes blessed and happy those in whom it is implanted. Indeed, he who bears an undisturbed conscience likewise flourishes in good things.

If, on the other hand, a man's conscience hurts because he has used for luxury his neighbor's food, or seized his garment or gold, or has undermined a marriage with which he had no concern, or has been guilty of any similar offense, I know not what that man can win to be happy, or what he can take his fill of and be pleased, of how such a man could be in a state of joy, and not bear about with him a conscience pricking at every point and consuming him inwardly, moreso than the passion itself, unless he has fallen headlong into the precipice of insensibility and impiety. It is not therefore possible for a man who does evil to be happy, even if every luxury flows down his throat, and the treasures of Croesus, rich in gold, lie in his power; nor if he is the acknowledged possessor of all the silken yarn in the world, will he, even so, live happily. For outside things smile favorably yet do not remain steadfast, while the condemnation of the conscience distresses inwardly, and wounds, and does not move away. It is not possible there-fore for a man who is conscious of his foul deeds to live with true pleasure, nor is it possible for a good and honest man not to rejoice at the welfare of his soul, even if his bodily hunger is

satisfied but with barley, and his body is clothed with rags, and all his possessions are worth but a penny.

Should we not avoid on all sides the filthy and miry pleasures, and to pursue and desire those which are, as it were, sisters of purity and akin to impassivity? For the former, linked as they are with luxury, intemperance and drunkenness, generate within us the many-headed hydra of the passions, by which those who suffer this wretched plight have the faculties of their soul and body devoured, and, blind as well as maimed, they are dragged down to the abyss of complete perdition; while the pure pleasures grow in a pure manner out of fasting, and by them we are conveyed to the bright and lovely meadow of the virtues, beautiful to behold, beautiful to dwell in and to enjoy its charms; and truly blessed it is to be transported thence to the heavenly tabernacles, where grief is banished, where gladness and joy dwell, and wherein the summit of things desirable is to be seen. Wherefore it is necessary to avoid luxury and passionate pleasures, and instead to practice fasting and self-control. Besides, the annual course of holy fasting is upon us, inviting us to the race, and urging us to wrestle with the foe, whom we ought to oppose, not by brandishing weapons and darts, or drawing bows, but by fortifying the body with fasting, bracing it with discipline, whereby the mortification of the flesh is achieved, and we re-live Christ's death, and put on the armor against the Evil one, and are awarded victory if we struggle zealously to the end.

Let no one therefore be left out of the contest, let no one slacken, beloved ones, let no one desert the ranks. Let us all strip readily and contend valiantly. Let us endure staunchly, let us hold our ground manfully. For the crown-giver, Christ, stands in our midst, holding out the prizes of victory, granting strength to zeal, giving victory to willingness, and bestowing on us crowns for ardor. May we all win them by the grace and love of Christ, our true God, who gave Himself in exchange for us, and has wiped off our sins with His stripes, has freed us from the ancient curse, has delivered us from bondage, and has deemed us worthy of adoption. May it be by the intercessions of our most-holy Lady, the Mother of God, and of all the saints. Amen.

– St. Photius, Patriarch of Constantinople, *Homily 1.5-8*

### ~ FROM THE LENTEN TRIODION ~

Let us keep a spiritual fast: let us loose every bond; let us avoid the stumbling blocks of sin; let us absolve our brothers from their debts, that we too may be forgiven our transgressions. Then we shall be able to cry aloud to God: “Let our prayer be set forth in Your sight as incense, O Lord.”

*(from the Aposticha at Vespers, Monday in the Second Week)*



## 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

## On Stewardship and the Orthodox Life – Parts 117-119:

### Why Am I Here?



*“For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.” (Eph. 2:10 RSV)*

Have you ever asked yourself the question, “Why am I here?” Have you heard others ask that same question? It is within each of us to know the purpose of our life here on earth. Each of us ought to want to know why He created us uniquely, with individual skills, experiences, and talents. We ought to ask questions. What am I supposed to do with what God has given me? What is my calling and what will give purpose to my life?

We all have occupations that provide us with a means to support our life and our family. Most people have more than is necessary to live a complete life. Beyond the “complete life” all becomes a selfish endeavor perhaps to compete with our neighbor. But we must ask the question, “What gives meaning to our life?” I will tell you now, competition with our neighbor does not give meaning to life.

In the passage above, St. Paul tells us that we are to do **good works** which **God prepared beforehand**. God has a plan for us, and what we are to do with the skills, experiences, talents and treasure He has given us. The question before us then is: Are we listening to what He is telling us? If we listen intently to His words, we will learn of our purpose is in this life.

*“I therefore, a prisoner of the Lord, beg you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all lowliness and meekness, with patience, forbearing one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” (Ephesians 4: 1-3 RSV)*

Bill Marianes, GOA Stewardship Evangelist, tells us if we want to know the purpose to our life we must use the GPS available to us. No, it is not the Global

Positioning System we all know and use but the **GOD Positioning System** which we too often forget to turn on.

If we accept the reality that *God is in control* and listen for the messages that He is continuously sending us, we should prayerfully consider them. Then we will be able to effectively use the GOD Positioning System. The next steps are to ask, what am I **G**ood at, what am I **P**assionate about and finally, what makes me **S**mile? Another, GPS - good, passionate, and smile. When was the last time you prayed about what God was calling you to do? Have you ever thought about it? Each of us must take the time to pray on what God is calling us to do and then go do it.

Marianes often reminds us of the story Alice in Wonderland. In it, Alice comes to a fork in the road and asks the Cheshire Cat that is sitting there, “Which way should I go?” The Cheshire Cat asks, “Where are you going?” Alice says, “I don’t know.” The Cat replies, “Then it doesn’t matter!” We do not want to be Alice! *You have been called, you have a stewardship calling, discover what it is!*

God has showered us with gifts all our life! Have you opened your gifts? Are you using those gifts for the glory of God and the service of your neighbors? Have you realized what your calling is? We have discussed the ways to discover your calling: *acknowledge* God is in control, *listen* for his messages and messengers, *prayerfully consider* the messages (discernment).

Your journey begins with humility. You must *submit* yourself to God, lest your judgment be clouded. In the latter case you may never know what God has called you to do. He has given you gifts use them wisely and lovingly *for His service*. The gifts are His unique calling to you - for you. I have heard people say, “I am too old to serve!” *As long as you are alive, your mission on earth is not finished*. A slight change in the direction you are going can put you on a new path that may have dramatic effects on your life as well as the lives of countless others.

*Use your time and talents to serve others and God. Help others find salvation through Christ our Savior. “...let him know that whoever brings back a sinner from the error of his way will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins” (James 5:20 RSV). (from acrod.org)*

## **Patriarchal Pence – Support Patriarch Bartholomew**



During this season of increased prayer, fasting, and charity all the parishes in our Diocese send a token of our affection to support the work of the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew. To this end we will take a special collection on the Sunday of Saint Mary of Egypt (April 2). Please be generous! [Photo Credit: Nikolaos Manginas]

## **ALSO COMMEMORATED TODAY: VENERABLE THEOPHANES THE CONFESSOR OF SIGRIANE**

Saint Theophanes the Confessor was born in 759 at Constantinople into a pious and renowned family. His father was a relative of the Byzantine emperor Leo the Isaurian (717-741). Three years after Theophanes was born, his father died, leaving his family under the care of the emperor himself. Theophanes grew up at the court and became a dignitary under the emperor Leo IV the Khazar (775-780). His position obliged him to enter into marriage, but he persuaded his bride to live with him in virginity.

After the death of his parents, Theophanes and his wife visited monasteries in the Sygrian district (Asia Minor), Theophanes met the Elder Gregory Stratitios, who predicted to Theophanes' wife that her husband would earn the crown of martyrdom. Later the wife of Theophanes was tonsured a nun in one of the monasteries in Bithynia, and Theophanes went to a monastery in the Cyzicus region. With the blessing of his Elder, Theophanes founded the Kalonymon monastery on an island in the Sea of Marmara and secluded himself in his cell, transcribing books. Theophanes attained a high degree of skill in this occupation. Later, Saint Theophanes founded another monastery in Sygria, at a place called the "Big Settlement", and became its igumen. He participated in all the work of the monastery, and was an example to all in his love for work and ascetical effort. He received from the Lord the gift of wonderworking, healing the sick, and casting out demons.

The Seventh Ecumenical Council met in Nicea in 787, which condemned the heresy of Iconoclasm. Saint Theophanes was also invited to the Council. He arrived dressed in his tattered garments, but he revealed his wisdom in affirming the veneration of the holy icons. At the age of fifty, Saint Theophanes fell grievously ill and he suffered terribly until the day he died. Even on his deathbed, the saint continued to work. He wrote his CHRONOGRAPHIA, a history of the Christian Church covering the years 285-813. This work has remained an invaluable source for the history of the Church.

During the reign of the emperor Leo the Armenian (813-820), when the saint was advanced in age, the Iconoclast heresy returned. They demanded that Saint Theophanes accept the heresy, but he firmly refused and was locked up in prison. His "Big Settlement" monastery was put to the torch. The holy confessor died in 818 after twenty-three days in prison.

After the death of the impious emperor Leo the Armenian, the "Big Settlement" monastery was restored and the relics of the holy confessor were transferred there.  
*(from oca.org)*

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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, Presbyteria 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.)