

# 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 19, 2017 – Veneration of the Cross (3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday in Lent)**

this day, the Third Sunday of the Great Fast, we celebrate the Veneration of the Honorable and Life-giving Cross.

Since through the forty-day Fast we are also crucified in a certain way, deadened as we are by the passions, and feel a sense of bitterness, so that we become exhausted and fall down, for this reason the Precious and Life-giving Cross is set forth, to refresh and strengthen us, and to remind us of the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ. It exhorts us with this thought: If our God was crucified for us, how much ought we to do for Him! It lightens our burdens by comparing them with the afflictions of the Master. It reminds us of the glory that comes through the Cross and gives us the hope of this glory. For, as our Savior ascended the Cross and was glorified through being led around dishonorably and by the bitter treatment that He received, so must we also act, in order that we may be glorified with Him, even if we suffer some unpleasantness for a time.

And we venerate the Cross in other ways. Just as those who traverse a rough and lengthy road and have grown faint through weariness, if they should happen to find a tree that affords plenty of shade, sit down for a while and are refreshed, and, as if

rejuvenated, accomplish the remainder of the journey; so now in the season of the Fast and on the laborious road that we traverse, the Life-bearing Cross was planted in the midst by the Holy Fathers, providing us with relaxation and refreshment and making those who have become weary well-equipped and nimble for the subsequent toil. Or, just as at the coming of a king, his banners and scepters precede him, and then he arrives in person, rejoicing and taking delight in his victory and at the same time making his subjects glad; even so our Lord Jesus Christ, Who is soon going to display the Trophy of victory over death and come forth in glory on the day of Resurrection, has sent His scepter in advance, the royal Banner, the Life-giving Cross, preparing us to make ready and welcome Him soon as King, and to praise Him Who has gloriously triumphed.

By the middle week of Holy Lent, the holy period of forty days resembles the spring of Marah because of the discipline that we apply to our bodies and because of the bitterness and weariness that are in us as a result of fasting. Therefore, just as the Divine Moses threw the tree into the middle of that spring and made it sweet, so also God, Who has led us through the noetic Red Sea and away from Pharaoh, sweetens the bitterness from the forty days of fasting with the life-giving Tree of the Precious and Life-giving Cross, consoling us as we spend time in the desert until He leads us up to the noetic Jerusalem through His Resurrection.

Or, since the Cross is called the Tree of Life and is this Tree, and since the Tree of Life was planted in the middle of the Paradise of Eden, it was appropriate that the most Divine Fathers should plant the Tree of the Cross in the middle of the holy forty days, thereby simultaneously reminding us of Adam's gluttony and describing his restoration through the Tree of the Cross. For if we taste of this Tree, we shall no longer die, but be made alive.

By the power of Your Cross, O Christ our God, protect us from the assaults of the Evil One, and vouchsafe us, having passed through the arena of the forty days with ease, to venerate Your Divine Passion and Your Life-bearing Resurrection; and have mercy on us, for You alone are good and love mankind. (*Synaxarion for the Third Sunday of Great Lent*)

### **Today's Epistle Lesson – St. Paul's Letter to the Hebrews 4:14-5:6**

Brethren, seeing that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast *our* confession. For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all *points* tempted as *we are*, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need. For every high priest taken from among men is appointed for men in things *pertaining* to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins. He can have compassion

on those who are ignorant and going astray, since he himself is also subject to weakness. Because of this he is required as for the people, so also for himself, to offer *sacrifices* for sins. And no man takes this honor to himself, but he who is called by God, just as Aaron *was*. So also Christ did not glorify Himself to become High Priest, but *it was* He who said to Him: “You are My Son, today I have begotten You.” As *He* also *says* in another *place*: “You *are* a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.”

### **Today’s Gospel Lesson – Saint Mark 8:34-9:1**

At that time, when Jesus had called the people to *Himself*, with His disciples also, He said to them, “Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel’s will save it. For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him the Son of Man also will be ashamed when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels.” And He said to them, “Amen, I say to you that there are some standing here who will not taste death till they see the kingdom of God present with power.”

### *A Word From the Holy Fathers*

Let us look at the table of agreements which has been read out to us, and each man setting up his own conscience as his judge and examiner, let us consider which of our pledges we have kept, and which we have neglected. And those we have kept - if in fact, we have kept any - let us multiply, and let us retrieve those we have betrayed. Let us not be proud in case we have done well in anything, but let us be ashamed of our errors, and let us hasten to fulfil what we have left out. No, a righteous deed is not an acquittal for our sins, but our righteous deeds are spoiled by our sins, or rather, we are condemned by our righteous deeds for our sins - for the observance of like commandments renders the transgression of the rest voluntary and inexcusable. Thus, if even he who does not pay back his debt with interest is not guiltless, then surely he who has not even restored the principal in full must be guilty; for if he who failed to multiply the talent is to be judged, how shall he who did not even make good the debt escape condemnation? And if he who prays and gives thanks that he has not done anything of what the many do is guilty of boastfulness, then he who takes pride in things he ought to be ashamed of, is he not worthy of the worst punishment? If he who has no wedding garment is cast out of the bridal chamber, is not he whose very soul and body are full of stains banished also?

Let us therefore seek diligently which of the agreements we have disregarded and departed from, and let us readily take them upon ourselves. Let us not appear beliers of our profession, nor put it off from day to day, for you do not know what the next day will bring. It is said, "Watch, for you do not know at what our your Lord will come," and "If the evil servant shall say to himself, 'My lord delays his coming', and shall begin to smite his fellow servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken, the lord of that servant shall come in a day unlooked for, and at an unexpected hour, and shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." (Mt. 24:42,48-51) Who does not fear the threat? Who can resist the wrath? Who does not shudder at so great a punishment? Who does not tremble at the harshness of the cutting asunder? For that servant is severed asunder who does not watch, but treats his fellow-servants offensively, and he is condemned with the hypocrites, and is given over to the gnashing of teeth and inconsolable weeping.

He then reaps such fruit from such seed, but what to you say? Do not even these things tear you away from drunkenness and gluttony? Do not even these make you sober and awake? Do not even these choke your brother-hating, haughty thoughts, and guide you to fellow-love and equity? You see your like severed asunder, and do you not expect to undergo the same condemnation, committing the same iniquities even though you are liable to pay more? For you, if you wished, had him as an incitement to correction and as an inducement to moderation, while he was tripped up before your time, and without your example in sight was induced to do deeds for which he was condemned to suffer what he deserved. There will not be a different judge, but the same will judge you who has already shown His judgment on him. He shows the judgment beforehand, not that He may inflict it on you, but that He may deliver you from it, if you are only willing, and He puts forth the threat not that He may plunge you in despair, but that He may save you through repentance. He plants the threat that you may reap repentance, and sows the condemnation so that with the fear of hell as with a scythe you may cut away the very roots of hell, and harvest the crop of joy. If then He both shows and does everything that He may save you in various ways, and yet you are not converted by any of them - indeed, you even turn up, as they say, every stone to appear neglectful of them all - you sever yourself asunder, usher in disaster, and renew the pain of punishment.

Let us not too, therefore, beloved ones, cause a future so bitter and terrible to come upon us, nor let us make the time of reward a time of condemnation, nor prepare the day of resurrection as a day of downfall, for God has appointed the day to come to be a day of resurrection and joy, not of sorrow and sentence. Those, however, who prefer the transgression of the commandments to their observance, and whose

love for God has been quenched by mutual hate, those have made for themselves the time of enjoyment into a time of torment, and find the resurrection not a "rising up" but an ultimate fall. To such evils are submitted the disdainers of the Lord's commands, and the furtherers of their own wishes, who have fallen into forgetfulness of good works, while keeping the memory of transgressions fresh through practice, whose manner and deeds we ought to avoid with every effort, and not to envy their conduct, even though the prosperity of life may smile at some of them. Do not fret because of evil-doers, for the same David, God's forefather, cries out, "I saw the ungodly highly exalted and lifted up like the cedars of Lebanon. Yet I passed by, and lo, he was not; and I sought him, and his place was not found." Ps. 36:1-2

Let us not, therefore, envy those men in anything. Let us rather avoid greed, through which injustice thrives and justice is banished, brotherly love is spat on and hatred of mankind is embraced. Let us avoid drunkenness and gluttony, which are the parents of fornication and wantonness; for excess of every kind is the cause of insolence, and outflow is the begotten child of plentitude, from which fornication and wantonness are hatched. Let us avoid strife, division, seditions, whereof plots are born and murders begotten; for evil crops grow from evil seed. Let us avoid foul speech, whereby those who are accustomed to it slip easily into the pit of evil deeds; for what one is not ashamed to say, one will not be ashamed to do either, and what one enjoys hearing one will be drawn into committing. Let us abominate these things and spit upon them, but let us love the Lord's commandments and adorn ourselves with them. Let us honor virginity, let us attain gentleness, let us preserve brotherly love, let us give lodging to hospitality, let us cling to fortitude, let us cleanse ourselves with prayers and repentance, let us welcome humbleness that we may draw near to Christ; for the Lord is near to those who are of a contrite heart, and He will save the lowly in spirit. Let us embrace moderation; let us practice the judgment and distinction of the good from the bad. Let the soul be undaunted by the evils of life, especially if they are inflicted on us on account of Christ and His commandments, for we know that justice will follow, and it is thanks to them that we are easily carried up to heaven.

Let us consider in our mind, if nothing else, at least the mystery of this day; how the Lord and Creator of the universe, the unbounded and uncircumscribable, who holds the earth aloft by His word alone, and moves the sky with His nod, and grasps the world in His palm - let us consider how, having come forth for us, incarnate from a virgin's blood, He is hanging on the cross, and surrenders His hands to the nails, and His feet are transfixed, and His side is pierced, and He is spat on and smitten - He at whom the Cherubim tremble, and by whose providence the universe is governed. Why does He suffer these things? That He may pour

forth salvation for you, that He may deliver you from the bondage of the devil, that He may snatch you away from the ancient domination. He, then, suffers these things that He may redeem us who have been once sold through sin, yet do we try by such foul and unseemly pleasures and negligence to sell ourselves back again? He is lashed that He may remove from us the lashes of our sins, and do we submit to them again as to good masters? He surrenders His body to death that He may vivify our soul, and do we, by goading our own body with unnatural deeds, allow it to wage war and breathe death against the soul? He is tasting death that He may give us immortality, and do we strive to strangle ourselves with the noose of our passions? The earth quakes, the sun is darkened, the veil of the temple is rent, because they see the Lord crucified for us, and do we not even grieve for our sins? The elements are altered, and do you not change for the better even so? Do not even these things call you to repentance? Do they not soften the hardness of your soul?

Let us take thought of these matters, beloved ones, and taking thought, let us strive to show that the foregoing are not reproaches and accusations directed against us, but that they fulfill the function of exhortation and incitement to what even we cannot achieve without toil. For the judges of the games too, as they watch those who race eagerly for a prize, indeed take pride in the contest, but do not tire of exhorting and urging on the contestants, until they have won their wreaths. You also I behold by the grace of Christ filled with contrition, gushing tears, and showing supplication on your faces. May I be assured that they remain with you! May I rejoice in your righteous deeds and take pride in your godly ways! Would that the expressions of compassion and contrition which I see now be confirmed in very deeds, and that your souls be kept in this condition and state, that I too through you and together with you may be made worthy of the heavenly kingdom in Christ Jesus our Lord, through the intercessions of our most holy Lady, the Mother of God, and of all the saints who from the beginning of time have pleased God, to whom be glory and power forever and ever. Amen.

– St. Photius the Great, Patriarch of Constantinople, *Homily 2.10-15*

## **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]



## CAMP NAZARETH

Camp Nazareth is eagerly awaiting and preparing for the arrival of the Summer Camping Season, and registration is now open. Apostle Thomas campers will be attending Week 2, July 23-29, 2017. May 15<sup>th</sup> is the deadline for clergy and volunteer applications, and is the last day for registrants to receive the \$20 early bird discount. For more information, please visit the Camp website.

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

### On Stewardship and the Orthodox Life – Part 120:

#### Are you a Consumer or Steward?



*“For the kingdom of God does not mean food and drink but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, he who thus serves Christ is acceptable to God and approved by men.” (Romans 14:17-18 RSV)*

When God created all things, He said, *“It is Good!”* Everything is **GOOD!** God did not create anything that was evil. So how did all these good things become evil? How did all these gifts that God gave us become bad? Or did they become bad? *What we have done with those gifts?* The answer lies within us. We became **consumers** of those gifts using them for our **personal gain**. We did not and still do not use the gifts for the purposes they were intended. Yes, there are many that use God’s gifts for the right purpose, but sadly the majority of us do not.

God gave us those gifts to benefit our lives but the misuse of our time, talents and treasures to satisfy ourselves instead of God has made us ill and will lead us to sin and death. Misused gifts from God become our addiction, our illnesses. God has given us the free will to use the gifts as we choose but He asks us to use them to benefit others, our loved ones, those in need, offering them up to God so that He might return them to us with an increase. Are you afraid that God will not give them back to you? If that were the case, why would He give them to you in the first place?

Look around at all the gifts God has provided. Look and see how wonderful your desires and passion should be and how they will, when used properly, transform you and the world. If you simply open your eyes and your ears and look you will become a true Steward of God and see everything in this world as a gift from God.  
*(from acrod.org)*

## **ALSO COMMEMORATED TODAY: MARTYR CHRYSANTHUS AND THOSE WITH HIM AT ROME**

The Holy Martyrs Chrysanthus and Daria and with them the Martyrs Claudius the Tribune with his wife Hilaria and their sons Jason and Maurus, and Diodorus the Presbyter and Marianus the Deacon. Saint Chrysanthus came from a pagan family who had moved to Rome from Alexandria. He received a fine education, and among the books he read were those in which pagans discussed Christianity. The young man, however, wanted to read books written by Christians themselves. He finally managed to find a copy of the New Testament, which enlightened his rational soul. Seeking someone to instruct him in the Holy Scriptures, he found the presbyter Carpophoros hiding from persecution, and received holy Baptism from him. After this, he began to preach the Gospel. Chrysanthus' father tried to turn his son from Christianity, and finally married him to Daria, a priestess of Minerva. Saint Chrysanthus managed to convert his wife to Christ, and the young couple mutually agreed to lead celibate lives. After the death of the father, they began to live in separate houses. Saint Chrysanthus converted several young men to Christ, and many pious women gathered around Saint Daria.

The people of Rome complained to the eparch Celerinus that Saints Chrysanthus and Daria were preaching celibacy and attracting too many young men and women to monasticism. Saint Chrysanthus was sent to the tribune Claudius for torture. The torments, however, did not shake the bravery of the young martyr, since the power of God clearly aided him. Struck by this, the tribune Claudius himself came to believe in Christ and accepted holy Baptism together with his wife Hilaria, their sons Jason and Maurus, and all his household and soldiers. When news of this reached the emperor Numerian (283-284), he commanded them all to be executed. The Martyr Claudius was drowned in the sea, and his sons and soldiers were beheaded. Christians buried the bodies of the holy martyrs in a nearby cave, and Saint Hilaria constantly went there to pray. Once, they followed her and led her off for torture. The saint asked that they give her a few moments to pray, and as soon as she finished, she gave up her soul to God. A servant buried the saint in the cave beside her sons.

The torturers sent Saint Daria to a brothel, where she was protected by a lion sent by God. A certain man who tried to defile the saint was knocked to the ground and pinned down by the lion, but the lion did not kill him. The martyr preached to them about Christ and set them to the path of salvation. They threw Saint Chrysanthus into a foul-smelling pit, into which all the filth of the city flowed. But a heavenly light shone on him, and the pit was filled with a sweet fragrance. Then the emperor Numerian ordered Saints Chrysanthus and Daria to be turned over to the executioners. After many cruel tortures, the martyrs were buried alive in the



ground. In a cave near the place of execution, Christians began to gather to honor the anniversary of the saints' martyrdom. They celebrated Church services and partook of the Holy Mysteries. Learning of this, the pagan authorities sealed the entrance to the cave, and those within received the crown of martyrdom. Two of these martyrs are known by name: the Presbyter Diodorus and the Deacon Marianus. (*from oca.org*)

### **WHEN THE CROSS YOU BEAR SEEMS UNBEARABLE**

When, my beloved, your Christian life begins to become difficult and it seems like your cross is unbearable, remain steadfast, become a martyr. Say to yourself, "Let us stand aright," remain steadfast. Say, like the Prophet, "Behold, Lord, I stand here to execute Your will," or like the Panagia, "Behold, the servant of the Lord, may it be done to me according to your word." If you will endure, then after the storm will come the calm, and your life will again become festive. Now you will also have additional insight into the spiritual struggle, you will have experience. After this trial, after you have lifted up your cross, there will light up within you the flame of divine eros. You will acquire the most beautiful, the most strong, the most pure and the most angelic love, the love of God. (*from johnsanidopoulos.com*)

## **ICONOGRAPHY WORKSHOP IN THE RUSSIAN-BYZANTINE STYLE**

September 11 – 16, 2017, 9 a.m. – 4 p.m. daily

St. Herman of Alaska Orthodox Church. Stafford, VA

In this workshop/retreat you will create an icon learning the ancient techniques of egg tempera painting in the 15-16th c. Russian-Byzantine style and applying gold leaf, with emphasis on the underlying symbolism of the theology of the icon and the process.

Instructor: Father Igumen Mefodii, from the Skete of St. Maximos the Confessor, in Palmyra, VA and Master Iconographer and teacher for the Prosopon School of Iconology.

Artistic talent is not necessary. Beginning students will receive instructions and all necessary materials to paint the icon of Archangel Michael or another according to your experience. More advanced students will be doing The Feast of the Resurrection of Our Lord, or they may contact the coordinator to discuss options.

Although the deadline to register is August 14, 2017, plan now to attend and reserve your place, as seating is limited. Local discounted hotel rooms are available for your convenience.

For more information: [www.sthermanorthodox.org/iconographyworkshop.html](http://www.sthermanorthodox.org/iconographyworkshop.html)

## Upcoming Saturday Service

On Saturday, March 25, we will celebrate the Annunciation with a Divine Liturgy at 9:00 AM. Please come if you can and celebrate one of the 12 Great Feasts of the Church with us.

### 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, 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, the newly reposed servant of God Steve Stephanadis, and all those in need of our prayers. (Please advise Fr. Joseph of changes.)