

SOBORNOST

St. Thomas the Apostle Orthodox Church

(301) 638-5035 Church
4419 Leonardtown Road
Waldorf, MD 20601

Rev. Father Joseph Edgington, Pastor

(703) 532-8017

fredgington@gmail.com

www.apostlethomas.org

American Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Diocese

ECUMENICAL PATRIARCHATE
OF CONSTANTINOPLE

SERVICES

Wed: Moleben to the Theotokos 6:00 AM

Friday: Moleben to the Cross 6:00 AM

Saturday: Confession 5:00 PM

Great Vespers 5:30 PM

Sunday: Matins (Orthros) 8:45 AM

Sunday School 9:30 AM

Divine Liturgy 10:00 AM

October 28, 2018 – 22nd Sunday After Pentecost

Martyrs Terence, Neonilla, & Children

The Martyrs Terence and Neonilla and their children: Sarbelus, Photius, Theodulus, Hierax, Nita, Vele and Eunice suffered martyrdom during a persecution of Christianity under the emperor Decius (249-250). They zealously confessed Christ and denounced idolatry. For this the pagans subjected the entire Christian family to terrible tortures and torments, but failed to get them to renounce the true Faith. So, the holy martyrs were beheaded, and received crowns of martyrdom. (from *oca.org*)

Ven. Stephen the Hymnographer of St. Sabbas Monastery

Caliphate under the rule of the Umayyad and Abbasid dynasties). On this occasion many monks of the Lavra of Saint Savvas met their deaths. Saint Savvas was a witness of this massacre, and he wrote the account in what is known as the Passion of the Twenty Sabaite Martyrs. The event is commemorated by the Church on March 20th.

Stephen the Ascetic (often confused with the hymnographer, commemorated July 13) died around three years before the attack on the Lavra. St. Stephen whom we





commemorate today was not part of the same generation as the ascetic, he was younger than him: he was a monk of the Lavra in 797, when he witnessed the attack on the Lavra by the Saracens; he was still a monk when he composed the Passion of the Martyrs, shortly after the event, at the time when one of the victims of the attack, the monk Thomas, a doctor, had become abbot of the Lavra of Chariton; he was still a monk of the Lavra when Leontios wrote the Life of his master, Stephen the Sabaite the ascetic, under the patriarchate of Thomas, the monk doctor, then a patriarch, and whose dates are sadly not known, but who was certainly patriarch in 807. This second Stephen was probably also a doctor himself, considering the clinical precision of his description of the suffocation of the monks, when they were suffocated with smoke by the ‘Barbarians,’ and of the trepanations conducted by the monk Thomas. Stephen the Melodist was also the author of the Passion of Saint Romanos the New, who died at Raqqa between 780 and 787. He is said to have reposed around 807.

He and Andrew the Blind were among the first to compose hymns (idiomela) in the Triodion, chanted during the period between the Sunday of the Publican and Pharisee and Palm Sunday. These idiomela are stichera of which two were written for each weekday of Great Lent. One is chanted at the aposticha of Vespers and one at the aposticha of Matins, each being chanted twice. The idiomela are exceptionally rich in doctrinal content, summing up the whole theology of the Great Fast. He also wrote a Canon to Saint John of Damascus, though he nowhere mentions that it was his uncle. (*adapted from johnsanidopoulos.com*)

Today’s Epistle Lesson – St. Paul’s Letter to the Galatians 6:11-18

Brethren, see with what large letters I have written to you with my own hand! As many as desire to make a good showing in the flesh, these *would* compel you to be circumcised, only that they may not suffer persecution for the cross of Christ. For not even those who are circumcised keep the law, but they desire to have you circumcised that they may boast in your flesh. But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but a new creation. And as many as walk

according to this rule, peace and mercy *be* upon them, and upon the Israel of God. From now on let no one trouble me, for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus. Brethren, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be* with your spirit. Amen.

Today's Gospel Lesson – Saint Luke 8:26-39

At that time, they sailed to the country of the Gadarenes, which is opposite Galilee. And when He stepped out on the land, there met Him a certain man from the city who had demons for a long time. And he wore no clothes, nor did he live in a house but in the tombs. When he saw Jesus, he cried out, fell down before Him, and with a loud voice said, “What have I to do with You, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg You, do not torment me!” For He had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. For it had often seized him, and he was kept under guard, bound with chains and shackles; and he broke the bonds and was driven by the demon into the wilderness. Jesus asked him, saying, “What is your name?” And he said, “Legion,” because many demons had entered him. And they begged Him that He would not command them to go out into the abyss. Now a herd of many swine was feeding there on the mountain. So they begged Him that He would permit them to enter them. And He permitted them. Then the demons went out of the man and entered the swine, and the herd ran violently down the steep place into the lake and drowned. When those who fed *them* saw what had happened, they fled and told *it* in the city and in the country. Then they went out to see what had happened, and came to Jesus, and found the man from whom the demons had departed, sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind. And they were afraid. They also who had seen *it* told them by what means he who had been demon-possessed was healed. Then the whole multitude of the surrounding region of the Gadarenes asked Him to depart from them, for they were seized with great fear. And He got into the boat and returned. Now the man from whom the demons had departed begged Him that he might be with Him. But Jesus sent him away, saying, “Return to your own house, and tell what great things God has done for you.” And he went his way and proclaimed throughout the whole city what great things Jesus had done for him.

A Word From the Holy Fathers

If we hasten toward repentance, and cease our shameful acts, after hearing the words, “If you are willing and hearken unto me, you shall eat the good of the land,” I beg of you, let us strive to avoid the threat which follows. “Turn to me” not in word alone, but in deed, “and I will turn to you.” Let us not deceive ourselves that by sowing evil, we will someday reap good.

– St. Athanasius I, Patriarch of Constantinople, *Letter 110*

Also Commemorated Today: St. Athanasius I, Patriarch of CP



Saint Athanasius I, Patriarch of Constantinople (1289-1293; 1303-1311), in the world Alexius, was from Adrianopolis. While still in his youth, thriving upon the knowledge of the wisdom of Christ, he left his home and went to Thessalonica, where he was tonsured in one of the monasteries with the name Acacius. He soon withdrew to Mount Athos and entered the brethren of the Esphigmenou monastery, where for three years he served in the trapeza. In his works and his ascetic deeds he acquired the gift of tears, and by his virtuous acts he won the overall goodwill of the brethren.

Shunning praise, Acacius humbly left Mt. Athos at first for the holy places in Jerusalem, and then to Mount Patra, where for a long time he lived ascetically as an hermit. From there the ascetic transferred to the Auxention monastery, and then to Mount Galanteia to the monastery of Blessed Lazarus, where he accepted the great angelic schema with the name Athanasius, was ordained a priest and became ecclesiarch (monk in charge of the sacred relics and vessels in the church). Here the saint was granted a divine revelation: he heard the Voice of the Lord from a crucifix, summoning him to pastoral service.

Wishing to strengthen his spirit still more in silence and prayer, Saint Athanasius again settled on Mount Athos after ten years. But because of disorders arising there he returned to Mount Galanteia. Here also he was not long to remain in solitude. Many people thronged to him for pastoral guidance, and so he organized a women's monastery there.

During this time the throne of the Church of Constantinople fell vacant after the disturbances and disorder of the period of the Patriarch John Bekkos. At the suggestion of the pious emperor Andronicus Paleologos, a council of hierarchs and clergy unanimously chose Saint Athanasius to the Patriarchal throne of the Church in 1289. Patriarch Athanasius began fervently to fulfill his new obedience and did much for strengthening the Church. His strictness of conviction roused the dissatisfaction of influential clergy, and in 1293 he was compelled to resign the throne and to retire again to his own monastery, where he lived an ascetic life in solitude. In 1303 he was again entrusted with the staff of patriarchal service, which he worthily fulfilled for another seven years.

Patriarch Athanasius was also an important figure in the history of the Russian Church. In 1308 he appointed Peter, abbot of the St. Savior Transfiguration Monastery on the Rata River, which is a Bug tributary, to the vacant see of Kiev. Peter had arrived in Constantinople on initiative of Yuri Lvovich, Prince of Galicia and Volynia, as a candidate for the post of the metropolitan of Galicia. By consecrating Peter as a metropolitan, the patriarch rejected Herontius, hegumen of Tver, dispatched to Constantinople with the holy symbols he had received after the death of Metropolitan Maximus.

This is not the end of the story about Patriarch Athanasius' participation in affairs of the Russian Church and the destiny of Metropolitan Peter. After receiving a complaint against the metropolitan from bishop Andrei, Athanasius sent one of his clerics, 'a clever, wise and cunning man', with a proposal to hold a church council to hear accusations against the holy hierarch. The council took place in Pereslavl-Zalessky in 1309 or early 1310. The confrontation was so severe that Peter was on the point of resigning the metropolitan throne. The appearance of the cleric sent by Athanasius who defended the metropolitan and read off the letter of the Constantinople patriarch was of immense significance to ensure Peter's acquittal. The church council of 1309/1310 is one of the most dramatic events of the Moscow-Tver confrontation and an important milestone in the history of the Russian Metropolitan see. The selection of Pereslavl as a venue for the council was in the interests of Moscow princes, as this city, which had been in the center of the struggle between the princes in the 1290s, was brought under the rule of the Moscow Principality in 1302. The ruling of the church council strengthened Peter's position in the Russian Metropolitan See as well as the positions of the Moscow princes who supported him.

Again, because of some sort of dissatisfaction, and not wanting to be the cause of church discord, Saint Athanasius resigned the governance of the Church in 1311. He departed to his own monastery, devoting himself fully to monastic deeds. Toward the end of his life, the saint was again found worthy to behold Christ. The Lord reproached him because Athanasius had not carried out his pastoral duty to the end. Weeping, the saint repented of his cowardice and received from the Lord both forgiveness and the gift of wonderworking. Saint Athanasius died at the age of 100. (*adapted from oca.org*)

Curing the Sickness of Pharisaism by Met. Athanasius of Limassol

People think that the first commandment is "love your neighbor"... God's first and only commandment - the first and only one, as all the other commandments are the result of this first one - is to love God with all of your heart. Christ Himself said

that the first commandment is: "You shall love the Lord your God with all of your soul, with all of your heart, with all of your might and with all of your mind."

And a second commandment - a second one, similar to the first - which springs from within the first commandment - is the one that says "love your neighbor". Everything else is a result of these. If you love your neighbor, you will not rob him, you will not lie to him, you will not be unjust with him, you will not take his things, you will not tamper with his wife, you will not interfere with his home, you will not censure him...that's what we mean by "results of the first commandment." The "love your neighbor" is likewise a result of the first commandment. If you truly love God, it is impossible to not love your neighbor. A person who loves God will have - as a natural result of his love towards God - a love towards his brethren also.

Therefore, the first and only commandment by God is to love God Himself with all our heart. Subsequently, whatever we do in church, has that precise purpose. And that is why we go to pilgrimages, why we fast, why we pray, why we go to confession, why we light candles, why we read the lives of saints, why we do everything: it is our way of loving Christ.

Now, where is the mistake? The mistake is that unfortunately, we say that we do all these things in order to just become good people.... to become better people.... and that is where the big hoax lies. It is the step that we all stumble over. Because, if the purpose of the church was just to make us better people, then there wouldn't be any need for a personal relationship with Christ, nor would there be any reason for Christ to have come to the world. Why do you think we aren't able to understand the saints? Or, to say something simpler, why we can't understand those who love God.

We tend to say "is it necessary to do this thing in order to be saved - to be near to God? Is it necessary - let's say - to depart to the mountains? Must we go and do all these things?" Of course not. It is not a necessity. If we could understand that our relationship with God is not only for the sake of salvation, but is a relationship of love, only then will we understand the saints also and why they did the things they did (which can't be interpreted rationally). This is because love transcends logic. Even secular love - the way that one person loves another person - for example when one wants to get married he loves his wife; he loves the young lady that he will wed - and the same applies to the young lady - then they do things that seem totally irrational. If - for example - you were to ask her or him who is the most beautiful or handsome one in the world, they will probably say it is their beloved. Naturally, they are seeing the other through their own eyes.... Our eyes see other things.... If, for example, you were to ask her who the best man in the

world is, she will describe the man she loves with the finest words. She sees no flaws in him, no faults... she can't see anything bad about him, because love transcends all these things.

Love cannot be forced into the molds of logic. Love is above logic. That is how God's love is. God's love surpasses human logic. That is why we can't judge with logical criteria those people who love God. That is why the saints reacted with a logic of their own - they had a different kind of logic, and not the logic of humans; because their logic was the "logic" of love. So, the church does not teach us just to become good people - not in the least. It is only natural, that we have to become good people, because if we don't, then what have we succeeded in doing? These are nursery school things. Our Church teaches us to love Christ - to love the person of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Inside the church, a relationship develops. It is a personal relationship between man and Christ; not with the teaching of Christ - no - not with the Gospel. The Gospel is something that helps us to reach the point of loving Christ. When we reach that point of loving Christ, the Gospel will no longer be needed. Nothing will be needed...all these things will cease...only man's relationship with God will remain. That is the difference between the church and religion.

Religion teaches you to do your duties, the way the idolaters did. An example: let's say that we went to our pilgrimage sites, paid our respects, left some money in the charity box, left some lit candles, some oil, or even our entreaties, our names, our offering-bread, everything. All these things are religious duties, but our heart has not changed in the least. The hour of duty ends, and we are the same as we were before: we are ready to attack the other, ready to protest about the other, ready to be sour again, the way we were before.... Our heart doesn't change. We do not acquire that relationship with Christ, because we simply confine ourselves to duties - to religious duties.

And you must know that such people - you know, "religious" people - are the most dangerous kind in the church. Those religious people are truly dangerous. May God preserve us from them... Once, when I was officiating in church and we were citing the words "Lord, save the pious...", a Holy Mountain monk jokingly remarked: "Lord, save us from the pious...." In other words, God save you from those "religious" types, because "religious person" implies a warped personality, which has never had a personal relationship with God. These types [of persons] merely perform their duties towards Him, but without any serious relationship involved and that is why God does not say anything about this type of person. And I too must confess that - from my own experience - I have never seen worse enemies of the church than "religious people".

Whenever the children of religious people, or of priests and theologians - or even of those who in church act like theologians and with self-importance - tried to become monks or priests, they [the parents] became even worse than demons. They would become exasperated with everyone. They became people's worst enemies. I remember parents who would bring their children to homilies, and when their child moved one step further, they became the worst of people, who would say the worst about others. And I would say to them: "but you were the ones who brought the child to the homily; I didn't bring it."

One other time, I told a father whose daughter I could tell had a zeal for the church: "Make sure you don't bring her again to any homily. Don't bring her to talk with me, because your daughter will become a nun and afterwards you will say that I was to blame." He replied: "Oh no, father, far be it! We adore you!" And his daughter did in fact become a nun.... It has been seven years now, and he still isn't talking to me...

People who wouldn't miss a homily - not a single homily... those who were always the first... at homilies, night-vigils, reading books... I don't know... at doing everything.... they would also bring their children along, but when the time came for the child to exercise its freedom - to decide by itself which path to choose - then those people would move to the extreme opposite camp, thus proving that Christ had never spoken to their hearts.... They were merely "religious people". That is why religious people are the toughest kind in the church. Because you know what? Sometimes, people like these will never be cured, because they only think they are close to God.

Sinners, on the other hand - the "losers", so to speak - at least they know they are sinners. That is why Christ said that publicans and whores will go to the Kingdom of God, whereas to the Pharisees He had said: "You, who are 'religious', shall not enter the Kingdom of God. Because the word of God had never changed your heart." They had merely adhered to the observance of religious formalities. Therefore, we should all pay close attention and understand that the church is a hospital that cures us and helps us to love Christ, and our love for Christ is a flame that ignites inside our heart so that we can examine ourselves, to see if we are within God's love. If we discern all those forms of malice and selfishness and wickedness inside us, then we should be concerned, because it is not possible for Christ to be in our heart when we are full of "vinegar" inside. How can you be praying and at the same time be full of bile towards another person? How is it possible to read the Gospel and not accept your brother? How is it possible to say "I have been in the church for so many years" - either as a monk or a priest or whatever - and yet, where is that alpha and omega, which is love? Where is that

patience - showing some patience towards your brother? By not embracing that, it means you have accomplished nothing. Nothing. Absolutely nothing....

I may [fast and] not eat olive oil - for example - but I devour my brother from morning to night.... They used to say on the Holy Mountain "don't ask if I eat fish; as long as one doesn't eat the fisherman, he can eat fish"; or, "as long as you don't eat the oil-bearer, you can have a drop of olive oil to eat"... To "devour" someone with a sharp tongue is far worse than consuming a spoonful of olive oil. And yet, we focus on things like that: we eat oil - we don't eat oil; we eat fish - we don't eat fish... You, who are a churchgoer, tell me how the church has benefited you. As we said yesterday you went to the pilgrimage sites, you saw the fathers, you saw the holy relics, you saw the Holy Mountain, the Holy Mother at Tinos Island - all those places that we went to, and returned. What was the end benefit of all those things? Was our heart transformed? Did we become humbler people? Did we become more sweet-natured? Did we become meeker people in our homes, our families, our monastery? Or at our place of work? That is what counts. If we did not achieve those things, at least let us become humbler... from within our repentance.... let us become humbler... If we didn't manage that either, then we are worthy of many tears - we are to be pitied. Because unfortunately, Time flies, and we are counting years.... So, we quite often say "I've been here for forty years" - and we priests and monks tend to say these words: "I have been in the monastery for forty years".

But what you don't realize is that those years are not in your favor. God will say to you "Forty years, and you still haven't managed to become something? You are still angry after forty years, you still censure, you still contradict, you still resist, you still don't submit? You've had forty years, and you still haven't learnt the alpha - the first thing - about monastic life, about Christian life? What am I supposed to do with your years? What am I to do with you, if you have spent fifty years with confessions and you can't respond to another person with a kind word? What use are all these things to me?"

...If we humble ourselves and cease to have grand ideas about ourselves, maybe then can a person begin to correct himself gradually through repentance - which is born out of humility. A person who doesn't strive to justify himself truly repents. He who keeps justifying himself will never repent; and that person who always justifies himself - either externally or internally - will never learn what repentance means. That is why we should always examine ourselves. "Test yourselves, brothers" the Apostle says. Test yourself, to see if there is a love of God inside you. And not so much that, but more so if we are living within the realm of repentance, so that God can cure our existence - so that this kind of association with the Church can heal us, and so that we can become people who have been

cured of their passions and their sins. Many ask how we can reach that point. How do we get there? Well, when we leave ourselves in the hands of the good physician - God; when we leave ourselves trustingly in God's hands; because when we are in various circumstances, in difficulties, God knows what is best for each one of us and will lead us along those paths that will slowly, slowly, slowly over the years perfect us - they will perfect us... All we need to do is give ourselves to God with trust, the way we give our trust to a doctor, or - say - the captain of a ship. We show trust. He leads us, and we don't worry about the destination and when we will arrive, because we know that the one steering the ship is mindful, vigilant, and he knows the way and is careful. (*adapted from findingthewaytotheheart.blogspot.com*)

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, Santiago Alzugaray, Jeffrey Carey, Tatyana and Slava Chumak & family, Xenia Chilkowich, Jon Church, Ramius Connour, Curtis Cooper, Luke Cooper, Tina Crull, Mary Diane David, Ron Dominiecki, Linda A. Georgiev, Heather Himler, John Homick, Cameron Houk, Helen Janowiak, John M. Janowiak, Tucker Karl and family, Robert & Pam Karpin, Andrew Kinn, Kopan family, Brian, Helen, and Luke Mahony, 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, Alexander Shostko, Bernie Takabayashi & family, Dawn & Faith Ulmschneider, Lydia Vita, Christine, Marshall, Nathaniel, Subdcn. Nectaros and Ia, the Syrian Christians displaced by war, Mother Virginia Marie and the Carmelite Nuns of Port Tobacco, the newly reposed handmaiden of God Alicia Barosio, and all those in need of our prayers. (Please advise Fr. Joseph of changes.)