

# SOBORNOST

## St. Thomas the Apostle Orthodox Church

(301) 638-5035 Church

4419 Leonardtown Road

Waldorf, MD 20601

Rev. Father Joseph Edgington, Pastor

(703) 532-8017

[fredgington@gmail.com](mailto:fredgington@gmail.com)

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

*American Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Diocese*

*ECUMENICAL PATRIARCHATE  
OF CONSTANTINOPLE*

## SERVICES

**Wed: Moleben to the Theotokos 6:00 AM**

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

**Saturday: Confession 5:00 PM**

**Great Vespers 5:30 PM**

**Sunday: Matins (Orthros) 8:45 AM**

**Sunday School 9:30 AM**

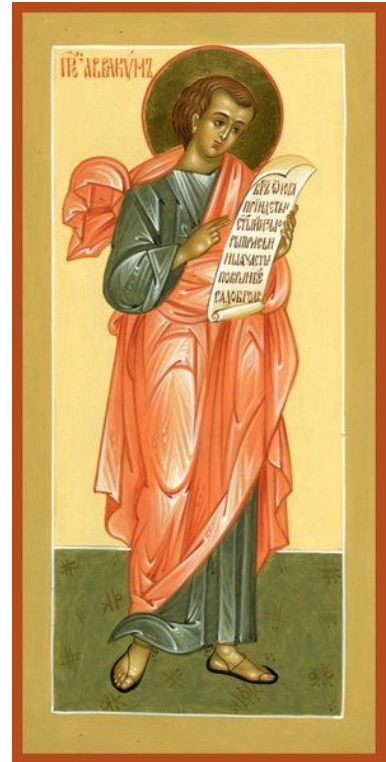
**Divine Liturgy 10:00 AM**

**December 2, 2018 – 27<sup>th</sup> Sunday After Pentecost**

## Prophet Habakkuk

The Holy Prophet Habakkuk, the eighth of the Twelve Minor Prophets, was descended from the Tribe of Simeon, and he prophesied around 650 B.C. The Prophet Habakkuk foresaw the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple, the Babylonian Captivity and the later return of the captives to their native land. During the war with the Babylonians the prophet withdrew to Arabia, where the following miracle occurred. When he was bringing dinner to the reapers, he met an angel of the Lord, and instantly by the strength of his spirit he was transported to Babylon, where at the time the Prophet Daniel was languishing in prison. The food intended for the reapers assuaged the hunger of the exhausted Prophet Daniel (Dan. 14:33-37).

After the end of the war with the Babylonians, the Prophet Habakkuk returned to his homeland and died at a great old age. His relics were found at the time of Emperor Theodosius the Younger (408-450), together with the relics of the Prophet Micah (August 14). (*from oca.org*)



### **Today's Epistle Lesson – St. Paul's Letter to the Ephesians 6:10-17**

Brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual *hosts* of wickedness in the heavenly *places*. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

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

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

## *A Word From the Holy Fathers*

No monk [Christian] became holy without ascetic exercises. No one can ascend to spirituality without exercising himself. These things must be done. Ascetic exercises are such things as prostrations, vigils and so on, but done without force. All are done with joy. What is important is not the prostrations we will make or the prayers, but the act of self-giving, the passionate love for Christ and for spiritual things. There are many people who do these things, not for God, but for the sake of exercise, in order to reap physical benefit. But spiritual people do them in order to reap spiritual benefit; they do them for God. At the same time,

however, the body is greatly benefited and doesn't fall ill. Many good things flow from them.

Among the various ascetic exercises, prostrations, vigils and other deprivations, is fasting. "A fat belly does not make for a refined mind", as I know the Fathers like to say! All the books of the Fathers speak of fasting. They emphasize that we should not eat foods that are difficult to digest, or that are rich and fatty, because they are bad for the body and for the soul. They say that a lamb eats only grass and that is why it is so placid. That's why we say someone is like a lamb. The dog or cat and all the carnivorous animals are all fierce animals. Meat is bad for people. Fruit and vegetables are good. That's why the Fathers speak about fasting and condemn overeating and the pleasure one feels when one eats rich foods. Let our food be more simple, and let's not occupy ourselves so much with it.

It is not food or good conditions in life that secure good health. It is a saintly life, the life of Christ. I know hermits who fasted with the greatest austerity and were never ill. You're not in danger of coming to any harm by fasting. No one has become ill by fasting. People who eat meat and eggs and milk-products are much more likely to become ill than those who adopt a meagre diet. This is an established fact and endorsed by medical science. Indeed, this is what doctors recommend. Not only do those who fast not come to any harm, but they are cured of illnesses.

To do this, however, you need to have faith. Otherwise you will feel empty and nauseous and have a craving for food. Fasting is also a matter of faith. It does you no harm when you digest your food properly. The hermits transform air into albumen and fasting doesn't affect them. When you have love for things divine, you can fast with pleasure and everything is easy; otherwise everything would seem impossibly difficult. All those who have given their heart to Christ and pray with fervent love have managed to overcome and control their craving for food and lack of continence.

There are many people today who were unable to fast for a single day and now live as vegetarians, not for religious reasons, but simply because they believed it would be good for their health. But you have to believe that you won't come to any harm by not eating meat.

\*\*\*\*

In the eyes of God, the married and the unmarried person are the same, provided they live in accordance with the commandments of God and provided they live the life of God. Chastity, lack of possessions and poverty, which are the virtues of the monk, are to be found in a person's heart. Someone may be a virgin as far as the body is concerned, but be like an inveterate whore as far as the soul is concerned

on account of his malice and passions. Someone may own a dozen houses and yet in his soul be liberated from material things and live like someone who owns nothing. On the other hand, someone may be poor in an external sense, but not be free of possessions internally. It is not the quantity of possessions that makes someone propertied or unpropertied, but the attachment of the heart.

— St. Porphyrios, *Wounded by Love*

## Also Commemorated Today: Saint Porphyrios of Kavsokalyva



On December 1, 2013, the Holy Synod of Bishops of the Patriarchate of Constantinople glorified as a saint, the Elder Porphyrios of Mount Athos, Greece. St. Porphyrios is one of a number of contemporary holy men who sought God on the Holy Mount of Mount Athos and were filled with the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Mount Athos is a peninsula in northeastern Greece that is called “*The Garden of the Theotokos*”. This sacred ground has been reserved for the practice of the monastic life for over 1,000 years and is the home of 20 major monasteries and numerous small sketes and hermitages.

This new saint of our Orthodox Church was born on February 7, 1906 in Greece and was baptized with the name of Evangelos. His parents were poor but pious farmers, his father serving as the village cantor who at times chanted the services with St. Nectarios. Due to their poverty, the Elder’s father was forced to emigrate to America to work on the construction of the Panama Canal. The young Evangelos only attended the village school for two years, starting work at a young age first in a coal mine and later in a grocery store in order to help support his family. Under the influence of his pious parents and from reading the Lives of the Saints, young Evangelos was determined to follow the examples of these holy saints. At the age of 15 he set off for Mount Athos to devote himself to the monastic life, living at the Skete of Kafsokalivia. There, under the guidance of the elders in the monastic life, Evangelos devoted himself to prayer, fasting, and struggle against the sinful passions. During his nighttime prayers, he would at times strip to the waist in order to help him pay attention and to keep from falling asleep. He immersed himself in the liturgical services of the Church which he participated in for hours each day, learning many of the prayers and hymns by heart. With only two years of formal education, the Bible and the services of the

Church became his tutors. Young Evangelos was eventually tonsured a monk and given the name Nikitas.

While still a teenager, Nikitas was blessed to receive the gifts of the Holy Spirit. He was able “*to see*” people who were arriving at the monastery while they were still a long distance away. He was able to bring God’s healing to people with a touch. The hidden thoughts of people were revealed to him. He was able to see the past, the present and the future at the same time. He confessed these experiences to his spiritual father who advised to him to be cautious about this gift and to tell no one. The experienced monk knew well the warning of St. Paul that “*Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light*” (2 Corinthians 11) meaning that mystical experiences and visions can be temptations of the devil to lead a person into pride and delusion.

By the age of 19, Nikitas’ health problems forced his elders to move him to less remote monastery: the Monastery Lefkon of St. Charalambos. There at the age of 21 he was ordained to the diaconate and the priesthood and given the name Porphyrios. At this monastery and in several parishes, he functioned as a spiritual father hearing confessions often for hours each day. His spiritual gift of discernment, the ability to read the hearts of those who came to him, led many to genuine repentance and a new life.

### **Hospital Chaplain**

With the outbreak of World War II, Father Porphyrios was assigned to the Athens Polyclinic in the heart of the city. Here he served the sick for thirty years, making his rounds through the hospital wards, celebrating the sacraments, praying with and guiding the sick. In February, 1970 he retired from his position as hospital chaplain and began work on his lifelong dream: to establish a monastery in which his pious spiritual daughters could completely devote themselves to the Lord. In 1981 the Holy Convent of the Transfiguration of our Savior was formally established and it was here that the Elder began to live. As he advanced his years, Elder Porphyrios suffered from numerous health challenges: kidney disease, heart attack, loss of vision and in 1987 becoming completely blind. Knowing that his end was nearing his one desire was to return once more to his little hut on the Holy Mountain – Mount Athos. After receiving Holy Confession and the Holy Eucharist, the Elder departed this life on December, 2, 1991.

### **Monastic Life For Us?**

The life and example of St. Porphyrios seems to have little to say to us who live in this world, raising a family, paying a mortgage, holding down a job. The lives of monks and nuns like the Elder seem far removed from mine. On my pilgrimage to Mount Athos several years ago, I felt surrounded by holiness, prayer, peace and

quiet. There were few distractions: no television, radios, newspapers, cars, internet. Arriving back into the town of Ouranopolis after a week in this environment, it literally felt as if I had arrived on a different planet: cars, trucks, radios, music, people everywhere. The temptation that sets in is this: *If only I were living in a monastery, then I could live a true Christian life... If only I were in such a place of holiness as Mt. Athos, then I could really pray.... If only..... If only.....* We make a grave error if we think that only monks and nuns are called to fulfill Christ's commandments and way of life. St. John Chrysostom wrote:

*You greatly delude yourself and err, if you think that one thing is demanded from the laymen and another from the monk; since the difference between them is in that whether one is married or not, while in everything else they have the same responsibilities....*

*Because all must rise to the same height (of virtue); and what has turned the world upside down is that we think only the monk must live rigorously, while the rest are allowed to live a life of laziness.*

If we claim to be disciples of Jesus and desire salvation we must commit ourselves to prayer, fasting, and struggling against our sinful passions. All of us are required to keep the Lord's commandments but it requires effort and work. Our sinful human nature tends toward pleasure, selfishness and avoiding any kind of discomfort. Our Lord Jesus said:

*Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it. (Matthew 7:13-14)*

The only difference a monastic and a lay person is that monk and nuns are in an environment that nurtures and encourages their commitment to live as disciples of Jesus. Our battle is much more difficult, we are surrounded by a culture that inhibits the practice of prayer, humility, chastity, struggle against our sinful passions. May the life and witness of the Holy Elder Porphyrios help and inspire us as we walk on this narrow path that leads to life.

### **His Teachings**

“When someone injures us in whatever way, whether with slanders or with insults, we should think of him as our brother who has been taken hold of by the enemy. He has fallen victim to the enemy. Accordingly we need to have compassion for him and entreat God to have mercy both on us and on him, and God will help both....We should feel the malice of the other person as an illness which is tormenting him and which he is unable to shake off. And so we should regard our brethren with sympathy and behave with courtesy towards them, repeating in our

hearts with simplicity the prayer: ‘*Lord Jesus Christ...*’ so that the grace of God may strengthen our soul and so that we don’t pass judgment on anyone.”

“Devote yourselves to the Scriptures. Love reading and studying them. Read clearly and distinctly, word by word. Read the words aloud and listen to them; that’s a great help. And where you come across a particularly meaty passage, read it again to understand to understand it better....On the Holy Mountain they didn’t use to allow you to read *The Philokalia* and the other ascetic fathers –only Holy Scripture and the lives of the saints.”

“The divine services of the Church are words in which we converse and speak to God with our worship and with our love. The hours spent closest to Paradise are the hours spent in the church together with all our brethren when we celebrate the Divine Liturgy, when we sing and when we receive Holy Communion....But the snares of Satan are many for those who worship God. Temptation manages very successfully to ensure that we pay no attention to the worship. We go to church frequently, only to continue our sleep....Think what we are missing when we are in church in this thoughtless state!” (from *acrod.org*)

## **Sts. John, Andrew, Heraclemon & Theophilus of Egypt**



Saints John, Andrew, Heraclemon and Theophilus lived in Egypt in the fourth century, and are mentioned in the Life of Saint Onuphrius.

After he had buried Saint Onuphrius, Saint Paphnutius came upon an oasis which impressed him with its beauty and abundance of fruit-bearing trees. Four youths inhabiting this place came to him from out of the wilderness. The youths told Abba Paphnutius that in their childhood they had lived in the city of Oxyrhynchus (Upper Thebaid) and they had studied together. They had burned with the desire

to devote their lives to God. Making their plans to go off into the desert, the young men left the city and after several days’ journey, they reached this place.

A man radiant with heavenly glory met them and led them to a desert Elder. “We have lived here six years already,” said the youths. “Our Elder dwelt here one year and then he died. Now we live here alone, we eat the fruit of the trees, and we have water from a spring.” The youths gave him their names, they were Saints John, Andrew, Heraclemon and Theophilus.

The youths struggled separately the whole week long, but on Saturday and Sunday they gathered at the oasis and offered up common prayer. On these days an angel



would appear and commune them with the Holy Mysteries. This time however, for Abba Paphnutius' sake, they did not go off into the desert, but spent the whole week together at prayer. On the following Saturday and Sunday Saint Paphnutius together with the youths was granted to receive the Holy Mysteries from the hands of the angel and to hear these words, "Receive the Imperishable Food, unending bliss and life eternal, the Body and Blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, our God." Saint Paphnutius made bold to ask the angel for permission to remain in the desert to the end of his days. The angel replied that God had decreed another path for him. He was to return to Egypt and tell the Christians of the life of the desert-dwellers.

Having bid farewell to the youths, Saint Paphnutius reached the edge of the wilderness after a three day journey. Here he found a small skete, and the brethren received him with love. Abba Paphnutius related everything that he had learned about the holy Fathers whom he had encountered in the desert. The brethren wrote a detailed account of what Saint Paphnutius said, and deposited it in the church, where all who wished to do so could read it. Saint Paphnutius gave thanks to God, Who had granted him to learn about the exalted lives of the hermits of the Thebaid, and he returned to his own monastery. *(from oca.org)*

**NATIVITY LENTEN RETREAT**  
**HOLY APOSTLES GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH**  
21580 ATLANTIC BLVD., BLDG. D, UNIT 160 DULLES, VA



**ARCHIMANDRITE SERGIUS, ABBOT OF ST. TIKHON'S MONASTERY**  
**WILL CONDUCT A NATIVITY LENTEN RETREAT AT HOLY APOSTLES**  
**ON SATURDAY, DECEMBER 8, 2018**  
VESPERS, DEC. 8, 6:00 PM, LENTEN REFLECTIONS, ABBOT SERGIUS  
SUNDAY, DECEMBER 9, ORTHROS, 8:45 AM, DIVINE LITURGY, 10:00 AM  
HOMILY OFFERED BY ABBOT SERGIUS  
THE MIRACULOUS ICON OF ST. ANNA WILL BE HERE FOR VENERATION BY THE  
FAITHFUL





## December Anniversaries and Birthdays



### *Anniversaries:*

Ramius & Anna Connour 1<sup>st</sup>

### *Birthdays:*

Katrina Robinson 2 <sup>nd</sup>	Ronnie Robinson 2 <sup>nd</sup>	Luke Cooper 5 <sup>th</sup>
Kara David 9 <sup>th</sup>	Andrew Dewey 11 <sup>th</sup>	Jocelyn Gray 12 <sup>th</sup>
William Howl 14 <sup>th</sup>	Gabriela Howl 14 <sup>th</sup>	Andrew (AJ) McNeil 16 <sup>th</sup>
Barbara Maston 23 <sup>rd</sup>	Tina Harris 26 <sup>th</sup>	James Stiver 27 <sup>th</sup>

### 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 Eminence Metropolitan 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, 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. 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.)